

A CONTEXT-BASED STUDY OF THE WRITING
OF EIGHTEEN YEAR OLDS, WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO A-LEVEL BIOLOGY,
ENGLISH, GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY, HISTORY OF ART,
AND SOCIOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

The development of written literacy has been a major concern of educators and language scholars throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. Theoretical discussions and empirical investigations of language acquisition, development, and use have contributed to an increasing understanding of writing as emerging from a network of interrelationships among context, task, text, language, and cognition. In my first chapter, I look at some of this work of recent years which elaborates upon these interrelationships within a general view of writing as a cognitive act emerging from varied layers of contextualizing influences. What this work reveals is the need for extensive empirical investigations into the nature of these contextualizing influences in order to understand more fully the shaping power of these interrelationships. In view of this need, this study sets out upon a context-based investigation of the writing of sixth formers in six different A-level subjects in order to see how writing emerges from the classroom (and wider) contexts.

The task of the next two chapters is to present the empirical data base for the ensuing analysis of classroom language environments. Chapter two elucidates the setting up and carrying out of the investigation, explaining the most critical decisions involved in designing the study, describing the strategy for laying out the ethnographic material accumulated during the period of research, and introducing the teachers and students involved in the research. Chapter three offers six views of writing in A-level classrooms, in the form of contextualized vignettes which try to evoke the language atmospheres of the respective classrooms. These vignettes examine the nature of knowledge which is drawn upon in assigned writing, how students are enabled to transform this knowledge into written text, and how particular written texts relate to the writing registers and conventions generally expected in each discipline. The A-level examination system is shown to be a major contextualizing factor in shaping students' and

teachers' perceptions of the nature of writing which is most appropriate for engaging with the evidence of the six different disciplines.

The fourth chapter synthesizes and comments upon the 'thick description' of writing in the six A-level classrooms. In so doing, it proposes an account of the relations between knowledge and composing within the classroom context, showing how different writing tasks bear differently upon levels of knowing in ways which may be characteristic of particular subject areas. It further shows writing to be, for both students and teachers, the site of competing claims upon this knowledge, in terms of demonstrating or extending it. Within these claims, the six teachers converge upon one major aim, somewhat differently conceived and executed within each subject area, of enabling their students to compose "lucid argument" in response to particular topics. It is this enabling process, the range and sensitivity of strategies which teachers develop in order to help their students transform information, knowledge, and understanding to written text, which chapter four identifies as the key contextualizing influence in shaping the writing of the students in these six classrooms.

Chapter five takes a thorough analytical look at these enabling strategies, at how and why they are presented in the classroom, at how they are interpreted and taken on board by the students, and at how they are manifested in written text. This chapter is the focal point of the study, drawing upon the theoretical and empirical work discussed in the first chapter in order to explore some of the implications of these strategies in relation to the view of writing as emerging from a network of interrelationships among context, task, text, language, and cognition which informs this investigation.

In chapter six, I show how looking at writing in context opens the door to a complexity of issues about the composing of written text. The data reveal writing in its educational context to be the site of conflicting aims which position both teachers and students in serious dilemmas. It is in the reconciliation of these dilemmas that the findings of the study and the implications of these findings have value.

CHAPTER ONE WRITING AND LEARNING IN CONTEXT

The worst problem came when using the data to plot a depth and velocity map of the reach. The most detailed plan available (by courtesy of the GLC) was a scale of 1:1250, and this plan was obviously too small to be used for showing the measurements. Eventually I decided to scale this map up until it was sufficiently large to use to show channel depth and velocity (Vernon, '11 A-level Geography).

What can influence a historian's stance? The time at which they write is one factor; their place in society is another. The historian will always reflect something of their age and their culture. This, in turn, will be reflected in their own opinions, and by their reason for writing. A Marxist historian of the late twentieth century might interpret the French Revolution as a stage in the "class struggle"; Carlyle interpreted it as a biography of Napoleon; Ranke would have tried merely to record 'what happened', oblivious of his value judgements; Acton would have seen it as a stage of progress. Even if a historian is not trying to argue a case, he can be 'objective' only within the limits of his own conditioning and status... (Christine, A-level History).

I'll sum up now, as I see you've heard enough. I am just an ordinary hard-working, family-loving American. I came out of jail hoping for work and peace. Instead I was forced to cross America in a crowded jalopy. Situations changed me. I became hungry and aware, aware of the injustice of my position. Slowly I awoke to the truth. The system was not there to help the Oklahoma refugees, but to destroy us. It is up to you to restore my faith in American justice. Find me guilty if you wish, for guilty I am; but take into consideration my position and the attitudes of those around me. Think carefully to yourself. Would any honest American have acted differently? Your conscience will punish me; my conscience is clear. (Virginia, A-level English).

From the first scribble of crayon on paper (or perhaps on the wall) to an investigation into the causes of riffles in streams, or to a written assessment of the nature of objectivity in historical writing, or to an attempt to view circumstances through the eyes of a fictional character: what a tremendous achievement in literacy! What students

can articulate in writing by the time they finish secondary school marks one of the most exciting and yet still mysterious 'rites of passage' our children undergo in their journey through the educational system. How does this development in writing 'happen'? We know that the culturally and historically shaped path to written literacy begins long before that scribble on the wall, and extends long past formal schooling; we know that talking and thinking and writing and reading are interdependent, and interrelated throughout life with socialization and problem-solving; we also know that critical contextual factors operate within our schools and society to influence the development of literacy. Yet within these broad, almost axiomatic generalizations, there is much that is still unknown. Understanding writing development is a complex problem, a problem which has been approached from a broad range of perspectives and intellectual traditions. At the outset of any investigation of writing, it is therefore needful to survey the nature of the work which has already been undertaken, and which has contributed to our understanding of how writing 'happens'.

The most obvious area of agreement underlying recent and current investigations into writing, whether empirical or theoretical, is that writing does not just 'happen'. It is an individual, personal act of cognition which emerges from a vast and intricate network of historically and culturally shaped contextualizing influences. When, for example, a small child names her or his marks on paper, the names are drawn from cultural-specific referentials; when this child puts pencil to paper in school, not only what is written, but also where that pencil is positioned on the paper, whether it moves from left to right and horizontally or from right to left and vertically, are historically and culturally determined; when this child, several years later, writes a history essay, or an English essay, or a report on an investigation of land formations, the written text will be an artifact of discipline-specific, institutionally authorized conventions at the same time that it will be an artifact of one person's individual response to an assigned writing task. How does it happen that writing can be, in apparent paradox, simultaneously conventional and individual? simultaneously social and personal? Attempting to answer this question requires us to

look not only at the contexts from which written text emerges, but also at our picture of relationships between language and cognition within particular contexts, for it is in this interplay between thought and language that idiosyncratic experiential knowledge and socially shaped conventionalized knowledge become integrated into each person's construction of the world.

We have, then, two major areas of study which are central to understanding the developmental process of a child's induction into written literacy: first, the interrelations between text and context; and secondly, the interrelations between thought and language. However, since text, context, thought, and language are virtually inseparable during any writing event, it becomes important to consider how all four interrelate during the processes of composing, and to locate these interrelationships in a general theory of language use. Several theories of discourse and models of writing have been developed in recent years to try to find explainable patterns in the complexity of these interrelationships. Within each of the models and theories is an implicit or explicit version of context and of relationships between thought and language. These broadly schematized frameworks for looking at language each offers a particular perspective of language use which incorporates particular contextual and cognitive relationships. In looking at these differing models and theories, it is not my intention to valorize some over others, but rather to explicate what each has to offer, showing at the same time some common origins and themes among them. What I propose to do in the remainder of this chapter is, first of all, to examine some of these theories of discourse and models of writing, to see how they inform us about the nature of writing processes, writing development and/or written text in relation to contextual influences and interrelationships among thought and language. Secondly, I will look at context in much greater depth, in order to clarify the multivaried levels of contextual influences which shape written text. I will then turn to some recent discussions of interrelationships between thought and language, in itself a major theme of psychological study, to see how they contribute to a further understanding of interrelationships between text and context. The

resulting picture of writing as a network of interrelationships among text, context, thought, and language will provide the basis for the view of writing which informs the argument of the thesis.

THEORIES OF DISCOURSE AND MODELS OF WRITING

Attention to writing in recent history has been complexly shaped by different questions coming from different intellectual traditions. Significant influences in this have been the emergence of language as a field of academic inquiry shaped by developing structuralist perspectives in linguistics and the need to develop theoretical views of language in applied contexts such as education. Central themes emerging from these traditions have been how we learn to write, the implications of this in relation to language development, relations between text and context, and considerations of writing at whole text or below whole text levels. Here I cannot review the totality of this work. What I have sought to do is to select a number of powerful thinkers who illustrate aspects of these varied traditions. I shall begin with Roman Jakobson, with work more oriented toward the linguistic perspective, and then move to applied work which both draws upon and contributes to these linguistic traditions.

Jakobson's model of the factors and functions of discourse, offered at the closing session of the 1958 Conference on Style at Indiana University as a contextual basis for his "summary remarks about poetics in its relation to linguistics"⁽²⁾, presents both a structural and a multivariantly functional view of language:

Figure 1.

Jakobson's Model of Factors and Functions of Discourse

FACTORS

ADDRESSER

CONTEXT
MESSAGE

ADDRESSEE

CONTACT
CODE

FUNCTIONS

EMOTIVE

REFERENTIAL
POETIC

CONATIVE

PHATIC
METALINGUAL

According to Jakobson, all acts of verbal communication have six constitutive *factors*: ADDRESSER, ADDRESSEE, CONTEXT, MESSAGE, CONTACT, and CODE, each of which corresponds to a different *function* of language: EMOTIVE, CONATIVE, REFERENTIAL, POETIC, PHATIC, and METALINGUAL, respectively. Because all six factors are co-present in any communicative event, all six functions are potentially co-present, but hierarchically arranged with respect to dominance. The dominant function controls the verbal structure of any specific discourse event, while the auxiliary participation of the other functions completes its design. Possibly the most significant implication of this model for investigating the writing of children in school follows from his postulation that *function* controls all of the six factors of any speech or writing event, since it draws attention to and necessitates determining the dominant function(s) of the text in order to appreciate how the linguistic features of the verbal structure interrelate.

A comment is in order here, which I will be picking up later in the discussion of the Jakobson model. In the structural linguistic perspective, wherein the function of a piece of writing is generally considered to be inferrable from its textual context, a consideration of the dominant function has the theoretical potential to shift the focus of investigation from the word and sentence level to ways in which words and sentences function within the context of the whole text. In the educational theoretical perspective, a consideration of the dominant function of a piece of writing, in accordance with the Jakobson model, entails a shift from the basic "who said what to whom?" communicative model which dominated pedagogical literature on writing prior to the sixties to the much richer potential of "who is saying what to whom, in what way, in what context (or in reference to what) and why?" The former question implies a view of verbal events as decontextualized from the processes of their being formulated and the contexts of their being expressed. The latter question directs subsequent investigations of writing explicitly to the the circumstances in which verbal events are or were expressed, and therefore, implicitly, to the processes of their formulation, directions which have substantially influenced recent and current research into writing. Despite their apparently

contradictory approaches to investigating written text, both intellectual traditions offer ways of looking at writing, particularly in terms of its textual and/or situational contexts, which can further our understanding of how the development of written literacy occurs.

Jakobson's emphasis on the design of the verbal structure and on internal textual relationships locates itself within the history of linguistic theory which looks at speech events in terms of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, a history which has, until recently, focused its investigations into language at the word and sentence level. Jakobson's model of the factors and functions of language, which explores the implications of what happens when we consider the dominant function of a complete utterance or text, heralds an attempt to look at language, and at writing, in a whole new way, at the level of whole text. Van Dijk, a later writer in this tradition, has developed a theory of macrostructures which addresses abstractive processes fundamental to articulation at the level of whole text as well as below whole text. He suggests that semantic macrostructures are much more than simply organizers for cognitive processing; they are at least that, but they are also a crucial part of the process of arriving at meaning through discourse:

...macro-structures are not merely postulated in order to account for cognitive information processing. **The hypothesis is that they are an integral part of the meaning of a discourse, and that, therefore, they are to be accounted for in a semantic representation.** The basic idea is that the meaning of a sequence is not merely the 'sum' of the propositions underlying the sequence, but that, at another level, we should speak of the meaning of the sequence as a whole, hierarchically ordering the respective meaning of its sentences.⁽³⁾

In proposing to account for the processing of complex information in discourse, although he develops his theory through examples of constructing text as a reader rather than as a writer, van Dijk attempts to describe what occurs cognitively when diverse sets of information must be sifted through, selected, integrated, and hierarchically organized to make meaning. By providing "semantic mappings" of what he identifies as the four major processes of abstraction whereby

macrostructures subsume the detailed information of microstructures at a more global level, he offers a possible explanation of part of what occurs cognitively during the act of writing, particularly the process of responding to the focus of a particular writing task.

Since we cannot 'store' or remember everything we read, and we cannot, for a variety of possible reasons, articulate all of the details or information related to a given topic, we utilize certain cognitive processes, or what Van Dijk refers to as 'macro-operations', which help us to understand, to remember and to articulate information in a more compressed manner. Van Dijk identifies two basic types of 'macro-operation' in the construction (whether reading or writing) of text: 'selection', whereby particular details are excluded; and 'construction', whereby particular details are subsumed or combined at a more global level. The abstractive process whereby we select which information to remember or to write he calls 'deletion', but deletion can have differing consequences for what is remembered or written, depending on the nature of the information we delete. If we delete 'accidental' or non-typical information, such as the number of pages of an essay, or the fact that it was handwritten, and write just the word 'essay', neither we nor our readers can induce the deleted information. It is irrecoverable. However, 'normal' or typically constitutive information, such as that the essay contained sentences and paragraphs, is inductively recoverable without needing to be mentioned. According to van Dijk, there are two abstractive processes whereby we perform 'constructive' macro-operations when reading or writing text. The first is 'generalization', whereby we incorporate a range of particular details under a more global heading. An example would be to refer to Dario Fo, Alan Bleasdale, and John Osborne as 'playwrights'; once again, the particular details are irrecoverable from the generalization. The second is 'integration', whereby essential information is combined or integrated in the more global formulation, for example, the integrated concept, 'semiotic', which integrates the ideas of 'signifier', 'signified', and 'sign'. These details are inductively recoverable from the integrated concept. As we see in the following chart which summarizes his discussion, in the process of formulating macrostructural propositions in the composing of written

text, much of the subsumed information is necessarily 'lost', some of it semantically irretrievable, and some of it inductively recoverable, depending on the type of "macro-operation" and the nature of the abstractive process:⁽⁴⁾

Figure 2. MACRO-OPERATIONS TO ACHIEVE SEMANTIC INFORMATION REDUCTION FOR MACRO-PROPOSITIONS

TYPE OF OPERATION	ABSTRACTIVE PROCESS/OPERATION	KIND OF INFORMATION INVOLVED	EXAMPLE	RECOVERABILITY OF ABSTRACTED MATERIAL
SELECTIVE	DELETION	ACCIDENTAL INFORMATION	(20 page handwritten) ESSAY	IRRECOVERABLE
SELECTIVE	DELETION	CONSTITUTIONAL OR NORMAL INFORMATION	(sentences and paragraphs) ESSAY	INDUCTIVELY RECOVERABLE
CONSTRUCTIVE	GENERALIZATION	ESSENTIAL DETAILS OR INFORMATION DELETED	(Dario Fo, Bleasdale, Osborne) PLAYWRIGHTS	IRRECOVERABLE
CONSTRUCTIVE	INTEGRATION	ESSENTIAL INFORMATION COMBINED OR INTEGRATED	(signifier, signified, sign) SEMIOTIC	INDUCTIVELY RECOVERABLE

What I have tried to make clear in the above compression of van Dijk's discussion is that while transforming received information and tacit knowledge to written text, much of what is known to the writer is lost to the reader, and much of what has been combined, integrated, or otherwise transformed by the writer may (or may not) be inductively recovered by the reader. The semantic macrostructures do not in themselves give evidence of the full extent of the abstractive processes which have led to their production. In fact, as van Dijk says, the above general principles are "ideal and theoretical. They do not indicate how individual language users will in fact construct macrostructures from a given discourse".⁽⁵⁾

Van Dijk's theory opens up a two-pronged problem for investigating writing, particularly writing in response to a task which draws upon a range of received information and already integrated knowledge or understanding: the first part of the problem relates to how we understand and remember or record what we read; the second part of the problem relates to how we reformulate this received information into written text which responds to the focus of a particular writing task. We take in information continuously, some of it quite familiar and readily integratable with our current view of the world, and some of it

novel, less easily assimilated into our ways of perceiving reality. How do we retain these different kinds of information? Do we store them in the form of macrostructures processed according to the cognitive operations suggested by van Dijk? or in bits and snippets? or both? And if we do store (at least some) information in the form of macrostructural propositions, to what extent is the formulation of macrostructures dependent on contextual variables, such as the nature of the information in relation to how we perceive the world, or what we are expected to do with the information? If we are subsequently required to draw upon this information in response to a writing task, it becomes even more evident that a deeper awareness of the formation of macrostructures can help us determine how we transform information, knowledge, and understanding to written text. For example, in response to a particular writing task, do we retrieve received information in the form of macrostructures, or in bits and snippets, or both? If we do retrieve it in the form of macrostructures, are they similar to the macropropositions in which the information was stored, or are they somehow transformed in response to the focus of the particular writing task? Are there differences in the answers to these questions depending on the nature of the information stored and drawn upon, upon the context of its being received or learned, and upon the degree of its integration with already learned material?

The theory of macrostructures posited by van Dijk addresses a particular kind of cognitive engagement during the processes of both reading and writing, and raises questions which are important to furthering our understanding of how written text is formulated. The linguistic indicators of macrostructures described by van Dijk⁽⁶⁾ appear to suggest that we develop the cognitive ability to restructure information into macrostructures virtually automatically and experientially. Empirical evidence which would seem to support this view has been presented by cognitive psychologists such as Flower and Hayes⁽⁷⁾, working with oral protocols, and Scardamalia and Bereiter, particularly their current investigations into the formation of 'gists'.⁽⁸⁾ If the capacity to formulate macrostructures in order to facilitate comprehension and production of discourse is a natural

developmental process, then it has critical implications for investigating writing, particularly as a taught process within its educational context. Although organizing seems to be a basic human tendency, ways of organizing vary tremendously, so one might conclude that if the macrostructural features of a number of students' texts for the same writing task (one which has not already been 'pre-structured' for them) are similar, then somehow they have become conventionalized for that particular kind of text, and students have somehow learned to construct text within appropriately conventional macrostructures. It would certainly add to our understanding of the development of written literacy to trace this 'modelling' process, the process whereby the macrostructural features of particular discourse genres become internalized. On the other hand, do we invariably comprehend or produce text by formulating macrostructures? Could it be that we do so primarily when we know that we have to recall information for some purpose? or when material is highly didactic? It would seem that context might play a critical role in whether and how we consciously formulate macrostructures in the constructing of text. Although van Dijk's theory of macrostructures provokes more questions about composing written text than it provides answers to, it focuses on an area of investigating writing which is critical to our understanding of how, during the process of composing, we transform information, knowledge, and understanding to written text.

Jakobson's model of the factors and functions of language locates itself not only in the history of the development of linguistic theory from which van Dijk's views emerge, but also in the history of more applied educational theory, where its influence can be seen most profoundly in the work of James Britton and the London Writing Research Group. The model of writing development formulated by the London Writing Research Group in the mid-seventies offers, as does the Jakobson model, a functional view of writing. It draws upon the earlier model's most salient feature, the assertion that the function of a verbal event controls all of the factors of the verbal structure. The London Writing Research Group's selection of *function*, as perceived by Jakobson, as a primary basis for classifying written text at the level of whole text is

indicative of an operational view of writing, as language put to use, not in a purely transactional or pragmatic sense, but rather in a productive interrelationship with mental activity. But *function* is in itself a problematic concept. How does one determine the predominant function of a piece of writing? What the writer intends is not necessarily what the reader interprets, and frequently different readers construct the same text differently. The London Writing Research Group's solution to this problem is to take away the idiosyncratic intentions of particular writers and the idiosyncratic effects of particular texts on particular readers, and look rather at what is typical. They write:

It is the conventions and presuppositions maintained by "the mutual acknowledgement of communicating subjects" (Lyons) that provide a mature writer with a repertoire of known choices of function within our culture, and enable a mature reader to recognize which choice has been made.⁽⁹⁾

This idea of function underscores their view of the writer, the act of writing, and the written text as component and instrumental parts of a network of social interrelationships, a view with strong theoretical and pedagogical implications which will be explored later in the discussion.

Within the conventional and social view of the nature of written text posited by the London Writing Research Group are its assumptions of the idiosyncratic features of written text:

Assumptions: That written utterances vary from each other

- (a) in accordance with linguistic resources of the writer (lexical and syntactical, spoken and written);
- (b) in accordance with other abilities and characteristics of the writer - perceptiveness (selectivity, conscious and unconscious), power of logical thought, habitual modes of imagery, more general personality traits;
- (c) in accordance with the strategy (or principle of selection and organization) chosen by the writer which itself will vary with the writer's intention (real or ostensible), his relation to his subject, his relation to his reader(s) - detachment or involvement (respect, love, hate, fear, etc.).⁽¹⁰⁾

Coupling these assumptions with a statement from the 1966 briefing paper, "that there is likely to be a hierarchy of kinds of writing which

is shaped by the thinking problems with which the writer is confronted"⁽¹¹⁾, it is possible to identify four discrete yet interdependent generalizations that the London Writing Research Group is making about the nature of written text:

1. it is **social** (in the sense of being historical and conventional as well as communicative)
2. it is **functional** in the sense of being operational
3. it draws upon a complex network of **cognitive** processes (which integrate the historical-conventional features of discourse with idiosyncratic experience and personal knowing, all of which is strongly influenced by the nature of the writing task)
4. it is **developmental**

Each of these generalizations has implications for investigating writing which the London Writing Research Group's exploration of the development of writing abilities of children 11-18 addresses. If written text is constrained by social circumstances, for example audience, or other features of situational and cultural contexts, then any analysis of text must consider it as a social document, not as an autonomous entity. If written text is functional, then ways of determining function and its influence on written text must be explored. If written text draws upon complex cognitive processes, then interrelationships between thinking and writing must be examined. If writing is developmental, then certain questions need to be asked, for example is development linear-sequential or randomly selective? If the former, is each step essential before progressing to the next? Can development be hastened? If so, should it be? Does development vary within individuals according to different cognitive, functional, and social demands in different disciplines?

By addressing itself to the above issues, the theory of language and model of writing offered respectively by James Britton and the London Writing Research Group have profoundly influenced both the theory and pedagogy of composition over the past decade. Drawing from the work of Vygotsky on concept formation in young children,⁽¹²⁾ and applying it to writing in an educational context, Britton offers two critical observations about the cognitive aspect of writing which underpin his and the London Writing Research Group's view of writing

development: first, that language shapes thought,^{'13'} and second, that cognitive demands [of the writing task] provide the fundamental catalyst for the developmental aspect of written text.^{'14'} It follows that the increasing complexity of (primarily) school-imposed writing tasks might motivate differentiation of writing competence from early *expressive* writing, which is closest to the child's way of talking, to *poetic* and *transactional* writing, until the mature writer emerges, theoretically able to accommodate her or his writing to a broad spectrum of functions and audiences. However, as the evidence of the London Writing Research Group's investigation into writing development indicates, the broadening which occurs in the middle years of schooling narrows by the final year of the sixth form to predominantly one function for one audience, the transactional (at the analogic level) for an examining audience,^{'15'} suggesting that factors within the educational context, such as, for example, the A-level examination system, in which writing functions almost solely as a means of demonstrating learning, can inhibit as well as encourage writing development. Since this conclusion has serious implications for writing as a taught process within the educational context, it has, over the past decade, evoked concern which has led to further investigations of writing in secondary schools, such as the Applebee study in the United States,^{'16'} which, on the other side of the Atlantic, parallels the findings of the London Writing Research Group in England, suggesting that the narrowing phenomenon is not necessarily exclusive to the British A-level examination context, but possibly the result of deeper historical and cultural traditions not limited to national boundaries. More comprehensive investigations into the contexts from which written text emerges should further our understanding of which features of the educational context promote or inhibit the development of written literacy.

The work of James Britton and the London Writing Research Group was preceded by two other influential thinkers in the area of applied educational theory, James Moffett and James Kinneavy. Although Kinneavy's influence is primarily confined to studies of rhetoric in American tertiary education, Moffett's work has implications at all levels of schooling, and has influenced curriculum design in Canada, the United

States, and Australia. Although the later, more theoretically grounded work of Britton and London Writing Research Group, which draws on Moffett's views of function and levels of abstraction, has had a more lasting and profound impact on the way in which writing development is currently viewed by language researchers and educators, Moffett was the first to offer a view of discourse which relates cognition, language development, and the contextualizing influences of schooling. The pedagogical thrust of Moffett's theory is evident in the title of his discussion, *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*,⁽¹⁷⁾ and in the fact that it was developed hand-in-glove with a theory of curriculum founded on Piagetan principles of psychological development. His view of language development is structured along two major dimensions or axes, the 'I-IT' axis, which describes development in terms of moving along an abstractive ladder from recording to reporting to generalizing to theorizing, and the 'I-YOU' axis, which describes development in terms of moving to a broader range of lesser known audiences, both of which feature strongly in the London Writing Research Group's model of writing development. However, whereas the London Writing Research Group's model suggests a general tendency towards progression along the function categories which correspond (roughly) to Moffett's levels of abstractions, from recording to theorizing and speculating, Moffett describes a seemingly paradoxical two-way movement up and down his ladder of abstractions:

...a simple cell becomes a complex organism by differentiating itself into specialized parts at the same time that it maintains integrity by continually interrelating these parts....This increasing interrelationship corresponds to the organism's continual reintegrations of differentiated functions....In the sense that abstraction means hierarchical integration, the child does climb the ladder as he matures, but this integration necessarily depends on a downward thrust into details, discriminations, and subclasses. He is on a two-way street: sometimes he needs to trace his over-generalizations down to their inadequate sources, and sometimes he needs to build new ideas from the ground up.⁽¹⁸⁾

He suggests that in the fictive world that children create to represent their "unconscious psychic life", development moves from speculating about far-fetched and fantastical, distant and remote realms down the ladder to details of the here-and-now realms of reality. Conversely, in their observable, empirical, non-fictive world, they move up the abstractive ladder from recording what is happening now to theorizing possibilities as yet unapprehended.⁽¹⁹⁾

This two-way development of symbolic expression, according to Moffett, "depends on nothing less than mental growth".⁽²⁰⁾ But what spurs this mental growth? Moffett stresses the importance not only of biological but also of social, cultural, ethnic, familial, and educational contexts with respect to children's acquisition of language, stating that development of writing abilities is more dependent on the "out-of-school environment and previous school training than age".⁽²¹⁾ He suggests that traditionally accepted developmental limitations "may show the ineffectuality of present schooling rather than a developmental limit",⁽²²⁾ anticipating not only the recent and current work of Donald Graves⁽²³⁾ in exploiting more fully the writing abilities of very young children, but also Britton's observation mentioned earlier that how children write may be constrained by what they are asked to write, and Andrew Wilkinson's comment that "inevitably, we define development within the limitations we set".⁽²⁴⁾

The theories of discourse developed by Moffett and Britton have profoundly influenced the way that writing is currently perceived by language-in-education theorists. They both describe the development of written literacy in terms of language variety and audience variety, they both emphasize the importance of considering language in context, and they both highlight the key role of schooling in developing writing, both suggesting that writing has been conceived too narrowly throughout the history of schooling. Underpinning all the above is their common view that language shapes thought, and that writing can and should function in schools to further cognitive growth.

The theory of discourse envisioned by James Kinneavy in America at the same time that the London Writing Research Group was investigating the development of writing abilities in England also stresses the cognitive basis of written articulation, but draws upon a different theoretical tradition in its development of the discussion. While Britton and Moffett probe the psychological and cognitive aspects of the development of writing abilities, Kinneavy presents a comprehensive theory of what he terms the pragmatics of discourse, located within and based firmly upon the history of logic and rhetoric. He defines the scope and focus of his theory in the following manner:

Scope: A theory of discourse will...comprise an intelligible framework of different types of discourse with a treatment of the nature of each type, the underlying logic(s), the organizational structure of this type, and the stylistic characteristics of such discourse.⁽²⁵⁾

Focus: Since pragmatics is viewed as the study of complete discourse, it does not include semantics as such or syntactics as such. These two constitute linguistics; and linguistic analysis is not discourse analysis, though, of course, it can contribute to the understanding of discourse. Consequently, semantics and syntactics are beyond the borders of discourse theory.⁽²⁶⁾

Although textlinguists such as van Dijk and de Beaugrande⁽²⁷⁾ might disagree with Kinneavy's limitations on the boundaries of discourse theory and with his definition of pragmatics,⁽²⁸⁾ Kinneavy is, in the above words, clearly disassociating his theory of discourse from the intellectual tradition of structural linguistic theory and locating it, in part, within a theoretical tradition similar to that of Britton and Moffett. His major concerns are the basic signals of discourse (i.e. texts), the basic kinds of references made by discourse, and the basic functions of discourse.⁽²⁹⁾ His underlying hypothesis, that

different kinds of thinking correlate with each of the aims of discourse and with each of the modes also. Each aim and mode has its correlative logic⁽³⁰⁾

and his definition of 'pragmatics' as "the study of the situational uses of the potentials of language"⁽³¹⁾ indicate a functional, contextual, and cognitive view of discourse similar to the view assumed by the Britton

and Moffett theories. More concrete correspondences can be seen between Kinneavy's AIMS (the 'why' of discourse) - REFERENCE, PERSUASION, LITERATURE, and EXPRESSION - and Britton's major function categories - TRANSACTIONAL (including INFORMATIVE and PERSUASIVE), POETIC, and EXPRESSIVE. His MODES (the 'what' or subject matter of discourse) - NARRATION, DESCRIPTION, CLASSIFICATION, and EVALUATION - are a variant hybrid of Bain's traditional categories and Moffett's adaptation of them in his scale of abstractions: RECORD, REPORT, CLASSIFY, and THEORIZE.⁽³²⁾ Britton, in a sense, subsumes or combines Kinneavy's AIMS and MODES in his function categories, in that we may find the narrative mode, for example, in expressive, poetic, and transactional writing, and the same with the descriptive, evaluative, and classificatory modes. Kinneavy's MEDIA - from MONOLOGUAL through SMALL and LARGE GROUP to MASS parallel Moffett's and Britton's movement from writing for small, known audiences to writing for a larger, less known audience. The ARTS - SPEAKING, WRITING, READING, and LISTENING - indicate that Kinneavy's theory, like Britton's and Moffett's, is concerned with the whole range of discourse (although the model offered by the London Writing Research Group, based on Britton's theory of language and learning, focuses on writing).

Where Kinneavy's theory departs from Britton's and Moffett's theories is in his discussion of the cognitive aspects of written discourse. He postulates a different kind of thinking for each aim and mode of discourse, equating thinking with formal kinds of logic. He then applies the particular 'logic' of each aim and mode of discourse to the finished texts of mature, competent writers. His discussion of cognition as logic derives from a different intellectual tradition than the psychological view of cognition posited by Britton and Moffett, drawing instead from the vast history of classical rhetorical theory and logic.

Although not so influential as Britton and Moffett's theories at the primary and secondary levels of schooling, Kinneavy's theory of discourse has been widely accepted by teachers of rhetoric (composition) in American universities. Because its empirical basis is drawn from

adult texts, Kinneavy's theory does not deal with relations between speaking and writing, or relations between cognition and writing, in any developmental way, and assumes finished products, instead of looking at the process of composing them. These are critical differences, offering a view of writing, despite the strong similarities, essentially different from that offered by Britton and Moffett. Both Britton and Moffett speak of writing as having the power to alter the nature of thought, power to alter the way in which we perceive meaning, power, therefore, to 'create' our world of meaning. Kinneavy, on the other hand, speaks of writing in terms of historically developed logical forms, towards which developing writers strive to move with increasing competence. In other words, whereas the nature of written text in Britton's and Moffett's universes of discourse can be seen to be, in a sense, 'world creating', the nature of written text in Kinneavy's is more 'world maintaining'. This view of written text as 'world maintaining' is one which appears to prevail in many secondary and tertiary educational institutions, and which therefore must be considered in investigations of writing in educational contexts.

Assessment, for example, is almost inevitably 'world maintaining' rather than 'world creating', and since assessment, whether of writing, itself, or of the bodies of knowledge discrete to other disciplines, is carried out primarily by means of writing, it is not surprising to find that models of writing development designed to accommodate the needs of assessment will also be essentially 'world maintaining'. The University of Exeter's Crediton Project⁽³³⁾ is one of the more widely known models of writing development designed in response to the call for more comprehensive assessment of writing which characterized the late seventies and early eighties. Although it follows in the tradition of Britton's and Moffett's theories of language, in that its four major categories or 'models' - *cognitive, affective, moral, and stylistic* - indicate a similar view of the nature of written text as fundamentally cognitive, social, functional, and developmental, its influence as a theory of writing development has, for reasons which will emerge from the ensuing discussion, not been so far reaching. In addition, since the developmental stages within each of these four 'models' are referred to

as "norms", in relation to which the developing writer moves towards or deviates from, the model is founded on a view of language which is, like Kinneavy's, essentially 'world maintaining', rather than, like Britton's and Moffett's, 'world creating'.

If the Crediton Model offered by Andrew Wilkinson is considered as a theoretical model of writing development, there are several more critical differences between it and the theories of language offered by Britton and Moffett which would appear to make it incompatible with theirs. In the first instance, Britton and Moffett are both concerned with discourse as whole and integrated. Although the London Writing Research Group's model of writing development, based on Britton's theory of language, focuses, for example, on function and audience separately in order to gain specific information, their most significant insights and implications derive from their observations of the interrelationships between the two. The interdependent unity or integrity of the diverse elements of the whole text is constantly underscored. In the Crediton Model, the sequence of lists of features of development are not set out in a way which demonstrates any interrelatedness, and Wilkinson's statement that "We wish to be able to examine writing at the word/sentence level"⁽³⁴⁾ further implies a particle rather than a whole text approach to viewing writing.

The models themselves present additional difficulties if we interpret the Crediton Project to be offering a theoretical discussion of the development of writing. The categories of the 'cognitive model' are similar to the transactional axis of the London Writing Research Group's function categories, derived in turn from Moffett's levels of abstractive reasoning. The four major categories of the cognitive model - describing, interpreting, generalizing, and speculating - have several more subcategories than Britton or Moffett provide, but the value of these additional categories is at times questionable. If the system, based as it partly is on Bloom's taxonomy, is hierarchical with respect to the development of writing abilities, then the cognitive model suggests that children will "describe" (C-1) before they "speculate" (C-4), and will "evaluate" (C-3.3) and "reflect" (C-3.5) before they will (or

can?) construct an "irrelevant (even if beautiful) hypothesis" (C-4.1). What needs to be made clearer in a developmental model are answers to the following questions:

1. What are **necessary** cognitive preconditions for a child to progress from 1 to 4?
2. What are the **usual** cognitive preconditions for a child to progress from 1 to 4?
3. How **essential** to development are 2 and 3?

The 'affective model', adding awareness of the environment and of reality to a category otherwise similar to Britton's 'sense of audience' dimension and Moffett's 'I-YOU' axis, poses another kind of problem. John Dixon, also writing about assessment, asks his readers to consider this question: "...how strong will the evidence be that they [students] have appreciated, and had a genuine encounter with, the novel, play, or poem?"⁽³⁵⁾ An affective model of the development of writing abilities would appear to offer an ideal category in which to formulate a theoretical approach to considering students' levels of engagement, not just with the writing task *per se* (one of the London Writing Research Group's suggested but not developed dimensions⁽³⁶⁾), but also with the material being considered by the writer, whether it be literature, history, sociology or any other discipline. Wilkinson's "...responds to the environment in a way that shows it has been especially significant and stimulating" (A-4.3) is more suggestive of the nature of what might be appropriate to an affective model of writing than, for example, "...interprets reality literally but in terms of logical possibilities" (A-5.4), which would appear to find a more suitable home in the 'interpretive' section of the 'cognitive model'.

The 'moral model', concerned with development in relation to the impact of familial, cultural, and institutional influences as demonstrated or revealed in children's writing, offers further problems. For example, "judgement of self/others in terms of a personally developed value system" (M-7), posited as the highest level of 'moral development', fails to take into account the possibility that certain families, cultures, and/or institutions might discourage rather than encourage an individually determined value system.

With the 'stylistic model', embracing the areas of syntax, verbal competence, organization, cohesion, writer's awareness of reader, appropriateness, and effectiveness, one could quibble about the tremendous leap in narrative competence from SN-7.4:

A narrative which strives after particular effects rather than a unified vision. The writer experiments with a variety of literary devices and techniques, there is much 'second hand' writing and no sustained emotional or imaginative involvement⁽³⁷⁾

to SN-7.5:

A fully realized and imaginatively satisfying narrative⁽³⁸⁾

or about the placement of this or that sub-subdivision, but these sorts of observations are the result, not the cause, of the problem of considering this model as a theory of writing development. Britton begins his discussion of the development of writing abilities with the observation that "We classify at our peril"⁽³⁹⁾. One of those attendant perils is the temptation to over-classify, to concentrate on categories rather than on the assumptions which engendered the categories. What results is a list of features of written text, some traditional, some innovative, some questionable, many well-founded, but with no sense of their interrelationship, and therefore little sense of an underlying cogent theory of language development.

When Andrew Wilkinson spoke about the Crediton Project and the resulting model of writing development at the Canadian Council of English Teachers' annual conference in Montreal, May, 1983, he referred to it as a "goose among swans", intimating that it was perhaps out of step with the other methods of large-scale assessment being discussed.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Possibly it was, its overtones of liberal humanism clashing on the one hand with the political pragmatism of the reactionary Canadian east and west coast standardized assessment schemes presented respectively by Hayden Leaman and Iris McIntyre, and on the other hand with the revolutionary Australian stance, presented by Garth Boomer, of wanting to abolish the "rat psychology" of outside judgements. Wilkinson went on to say that the Project itself reflected a "sad sort of necessity", and that in many ways he "regretted the whole

thing", 'necessity' and 'thing' referring to external assessment of the development of writing abilities. The Crediton Model stands, not so much as a **theory** of writing development, but as one very comprehensively developed way of analyzing, for the purposes of assessment, development in children's writing.

Following in the applied educational theoretical tradition of Britton, Moffett, Kinneavy, and Wilkinson, Susan Miller offers a model of the writing event which not only combines and subsumes several features of the earlier models and theories I have discussed, but which also extends their versions of the relations between context and text to wider questions of cultural history and the contextualizing influences of intertextuality. In presenting her arguments for integrating intellectual considerations of the generation and reception of prose discourse, she underscores how the acts of writing and reading give entry to the world of textuality, which combines with the writer's or reader's socio-cultural world to influence current and subsequent acts of reading and writing. Consequently, her model provides a theoretical framework for raising a wider range of issues in attempting to answer the question, "What does it mean to be able to write?"⁽⁴¹⁾ Central among these issues are the following:

1. The nature of a *written text* - its capacity for analysis as both a product of a prior activity that may or may not fix a stable "meaning," and as the reflection of a human process.
2. The nature of a *writing event*, or act of writing, whether defined as an act of recording meaning, as an instance of "the composing process," or as a unique, individual, indeterminate event.
3. The relation of *the individual writer* to a particular text, to a particular writing event, and to the history and conventions he or she is aware of at the particular moment of writing...including the possibility or appropriateness of individual writers transcending, modifying, or ignoring intertextuality, the history of texts, and conventions of written discourse.

4. The relation of both individual texts and discrete writing events to "*intertextuality*,"...the history of texts and their conventions.⁽⁴²⁾

The first issue focuses on the uncertainty of written text, on its essential elusiveness which defies comprehensively finite analysis. She refers to

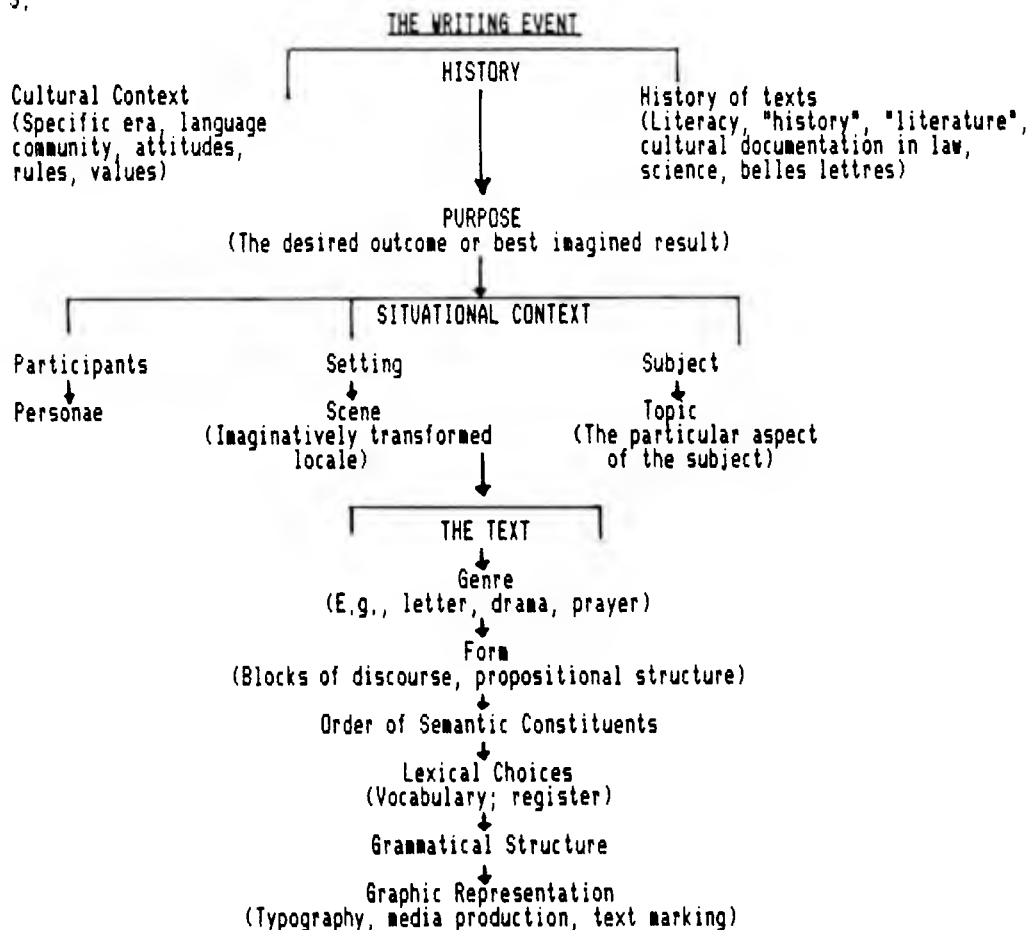
its capacity for analysis as both a product of a prior activity that may or may not fix a stable 'meaning' and as the reflection of a human process.⁽⁴³⁾

The first capacity suggests that the nature of written text is such that any analysis of it must consider the "activity" or processes which produced it. It further suggests that these prior activities or processes play a critical role in shaping the 'meaningfulness' of the text. The second capacity for analysis, expressed in the the Platonic metaphor of "reflection", cautions that written text is not a window through which we can directly view the processes which produced it. It is more like a mirror, which renders a two-dimensional representation of a multi-dimensional process, inevitably distorting or obscuring what it cannot reveal. These suggestions about the nature of written text illustrate how problematic assessment schemes, such as that offered by the Wilkinson model, or those imposed by the A-level examination system, are in terms of ascertaining the extent to which finished text represents the writer's knowledge or understanding of a concept or topic.

The second issue focuses on the nature of writing events, and questions what actually is occurring in the act of producing text. It is virtually inseparable from the third issue, the relation of the writer to the text she or he is composing. It raises questions about writers and writing in the educational context, such as whether, in the writing they are engaged in, students are recording meaning, creating meaning, finding meaning, and/or communicating meaning. She offers a schematized model of 'the writing event' particularly applicable to schooling, but applicable also to wider contexts. It takes into account not only processes of composing, but also the writer engaged in these processes. The model, she explains, is amenable to both static and dynamic readings. Read statically, it provides a representation of the various factors and

contextualizing influences of any writing event. Read dynamically, it is sensitive to multivariate interpretation, sensitive to the composing idiosyncracies of any particular writer during any particular writing event:

Figure 3,



Miller emphasizes the importance of shifting controlling loci in the model, not only from one writer to another, but also for the same writer in different situational contexts, acknowledging that differing features of context and task can significantly influence all other features of written discourse. Additionally, she suggests that an inability to cope with one aspect of the model will reverberate into other aspects, at levels both above and below (on the model) the area of difficulty, with the attendant pedagogical implication that the controlling locus is what requires focused attention. In other words, what is frequently described as "an inability to write is instead one or another of various situational inabilities".⁽⁴⁴⁾

The fourth major issue she introduces concerning writing is its integral intertextuality. It is as if each text is 'born' into a family of related texts dwelling in 'communities' (genres) which adhere to certain mores or traditions (conventions), many of which have changed or developed over the 'generations' (textual history). It follows that texts can relate to their 'families' in all of the usual ways: genetic similarities, occasional mutations, acquiescence to or rebellion against familial and societal norms, moving to different 'communities', and so on. In other words, written text is perceived as dynamic and changing within historical and cultural constraints, and the development of written literacy is perceived within textual and intertextual contexts as well as socio-cultural contexts.

The Miller model brings together several important features of the earlier models, such as the theoretical considerations of 'form' and 'genre' highlighted in Kinneavy's *Theory of Discourse*, and the importance of the whole text, and relations within the whole text, as well as the importance of situational contexts highlighted in the theories of Britton and Moffett. However, she emphasizes more explicitly the importance of intertextual and historically shaped socio-cultural contexts as significant influences in the development of written literacy, as well as the importance of situational contexts in the composing of particular texts. Implicit in the model is the suggestion that understanding writing involves a more comprehensive understanding of the processes whereby student writers take on board particular generic conventions, and manifest them in written text. Explicit in the model is the suggestion that situational and textual contexts are critical factors in the composing of written text. Theoretically, this model offers the most comprehensive paradigm of writing and contexts for writing that I have encountered in the literature. It opens the door to a range of needed empirical work to substantiate her views of the writing event, and to further our understanding of "what it means to be able to write".

This brief overview of some of the theories of discourse and models of writing which have proliferated in recent years represents a range of perspectives of the nature of written text and the nature of composing processes which makes increasingly explicit the importance of contextualizing influences on developing relationships between language use and cognition. The particular focus of each of the theories or models highlights one or more aspects of writing and, as the preceding discussion indicates, helps to inform and give direction to subsequent theoretical and empirical enquiries. My intention in this overview has not been to indicate one model as preferable but, rather, to indicate some common points of origin and some common themes. Despite their differences, there are some basic underlying assumptions, some general agreements about writing, which motivate most of the models and theories, although they are more strongly evident in those within the tradition of applied educational theory. **The importance of language variety** is one of these areas, implicit in Jakobson's focus on the importance of differing functions on all of the other factors of discourse, and explicit in the work of Britton, Kinneavy, Moffett, and Wilkinson. Each one elaborates, from differing perspectives, relationships between variations in language use and cognitive growth, but all of them agree that different kinds and functions of writing tasks provide differing catalysts for correspondingly different kinds of mental activity. **The significance of contextual influences** on language use and cognitive growth is another area of general agreement, although, again, each model emphasizes slightly different views of context. Van Dijk, for example, considers context from a textlinguistic perspective, whereas Britton, Moffett, and Wilkinson consider cultural, educational, and situational contexts. Miller offers the most comprehensive view of contextual influences, emphasizing that written text emerges from historically shaped socio-cultural and educational contexts, particular situational contexts, as well as culturally influenced, yet idiosyncratically experiential intertextual contexts. Within these views of the importance of context, the key role of schooling in the development of written literacy, and the suggestion that writing development has been envisioned too narrowly throughout the history of

schooling is a common theme. This siting of writing within its varied contexts, particularly the educational context, is one of the most critical features of recent and current theoretical and empirical investigations into the composing of written text, since it is within this network of contexts that the third major area of shared concern and attention among the models and theories of language discussed, **interrelationships among cognition, thought, and language**, are engendered, nurtured and developed. The remainder of the chapter will explore the intricate nature of context, and its influences on cognition, thought, and language, particularly within the educational context.

THE CONTEXTUALIZED NATURE OF LANGUAGE

It is the anthropologist, Malinowski, who first alerts us to the importance of considering language in its situational context. In order to understand more fully the finer shades of meaning in speech among the Tobriand Islanders, he felt he needed to "plunge into the lives of the natives".⁽⁴⁵⁾ He explained that understanding this wider meaning involves not just looking at the particular linguistic sequence of a particular utterance, but at the entire situation of which it is a part.⁽⁴⁶⁾ J. R. Firth extends Malinowski's concept of 'context of situation', which focuses primarily on the immediate concrete circumstances, to include "the personal history of the participants and the entire 'cultural setting' in which they interacted".⁽⁴⁷⁾ He writes:

We must take our facts from speech sequences, verbally complete within themselves and operating in contexts of situation which are typical, recurrent, and repeatedly observable. Such contexts of situation should themselves be placed in categories of some sort, sociological and linguistic, within the wider context of culture.⁽⁴⁸⁾

It is the phrase "contexts of situation which are typical, recurrent, and repeatedly observable" which is of particular significance to ensuing investigations of language use. In going beyond the individual speaker in a particular circumstance to typical speech situations, Firth is not only locating idiosyncratic utterances within a framework of culturally developed and imposed speech conventions, he is also arguing for the

need to investigate speech events more comprehensively with respect to the nature of the socio-cultural and linguistic contexts which shape and transmit these conventions.

Some years later, Dell Hymes extends Firth's consideration of recurring sets of social constraints into a comprehensive ethnography of speaking, wherein he goes beyond the socio-culturally imposed view of 'correctness' to the socio-culturally developed view of 'appropriateness'. This shift of attention from what is 'correct' to what is 'appropriate' is critical in looking at writing as emerging from a social context. 'Correct' implies an overarching, rigid standard of language externally imposed and regulated by some culturally acknowledged authority, whereas 'appropriate' implies an induction into mores of language use agreed upon by members of particular discourse communities, so that an utterance which is deemed 'correct' and 'appropriate' in one discourse community or situation might still be 'correct', yet 'inappropriate' in another discourse community or situation. This difference between 'correctness' and 'appropriateness' is elaborated in Dell Hymes' analysis of Chomsky's theories of language development and use. Hymes criticizes Chomsky's discussion of an innate 'language acquisition device' which, through transformational cognitive processes, enables children to produce an infinite number of grammatically correct utterances.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Acknowledging Chomsky's considerable contribution to our growing understanding of how children acquire and use language, to the extent that there was a need to establish a view that a grammatical system has a deep structure radically different from observed data and that abilities manifested in speech cannot be explained without reference to it,⁽⁵⁰⁾ he goes on to say that "now that battle has been won, one can attend to the relationship between rules of grammar and rules of use".⁽⁵¹⁾ Referring to Chomsky's children as having "theoretical communicative freedom" while being in "practical communicative disarray",⁽⁵²⁾ he suggests that

...a person who...is master only of fully grammatical sentences is at best a bit odd. Some occasions call for being appropriately ungrammatical. We have then to account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate.⁽⁵³⁾

The idea of utterances as being not only grammatical but also appropriate underlies Hymes' theory of communicative competence which, although developed in relation to oral language, can be applied to writing. In trying to transcend the competence : performance dichotomy presented in Chomsky's work by stressing the contextual factors which influence speech events, Hymes offers four questions which distinguish discrete areas of communicative competence:

1. Whether (and to what degree) something is formally *possible*
2. Whether (and to what degree) something is *feasible* in virtue of the means of implementation available
3. Whether (and to what degree) something is *appropriate* (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated
4. Whether (and to what degree) something is in fact done, actually *performed*, and what its doing entails.⁽⁵⁴⁾

He provides the following as a linguistic illustration: "a sentence may be grammatical, awkward, tactful, and rare", thereby indicating the significance of contextual influences in determining communicative competence. The above four questions locate verbal events in a complex, interpenetrating network of contextualizing influences, which have been addressed by the theories of discourse and models of writing discussed earlier. Three major ways of perceiving language in context are suggested in these theories and models, and are suggested in Hymes' view of communicative competence, if this notion is applied particularly to school writing: the social and cultural contexts of language; the educational contexts of language; and the textual/intertextual contexts of language.

Social and cultural contexts of language

Language and language literacy are social and cultural products. Sapir writes:

If a piece of language is to mean anything to us at all we have to somehow incorporate it into...ongoing purposes. In other words, we have to contextualize it....Language is a cultural or social product and must be understood as such.⁽⁵⁵⁾

Once we locate language in the context of "ongoing purposes", it becomes necessary to see how those purposes influence the use of language, by determining the mutually agreed upon conventions which are assumed in these purposes. Lyons addresses this necessity, maintaining that:

...the initial context for any utterance must be held to include all that has gone before. More 'abstractly', it must be held to comprehend all the conventions and presuppositions accepted in the society in which the participants live in so far as these are relevant to the understanding of the utterance.⁽⁵⁶⁾

Lyons' observation emphasizes that the social nature of context is not purely communicative, but also historical. What is occurring in language events is dependent always upon what has occurred, and upon what has come to be agreed upon as possible, conventional, and appropriate. At the same time, there is a danger in considering individuals in a community to be homogenous in their understanding of or willingness to conform to conventions. Hymes cautions us, when we consider "language as situated, as radically social and personal" to bear in mind that a community is not "a replication of uniformity" but an organization of diversity",⁽⁵⁷⁾ a discriminatory caution which is important to bear in mind when discussing the language behaviours of groups or communities. It points to one of the fundamental paradoxes of language in use: that it is at the same time conventional and idiosyncratic. In order to better understand both the conventional and idiosyncratic features of language use, Hymes adds a diachronic dimension to his discussion of context:

...the means available to persons do condition what they can verbally do, and these means are in important part historically shaped....such a view may not be derogative of differences; what can be done may be admirable.⁽⁵⁸⁾

What this implies is that investigations into the writing of particular groups or communities must consider the linguistic resources of individuals in relation to the writing they do and/or are required to do within the constraints of their socio-cultural and situational contexts. The literary critic and theorist, Terry Eagleton, captures the breadth of relations between language and society in the following excerpt, which attempts to reconcile the social-individual paradox by emphasizing the weight of history and society:

The meaning of language is a social matter: there is a real sense in which my language belongs to my society before it belongs to me⁽⁵⁹⁾ ...any body of theory concerned with human meaning, value, language, feeling, and experience will inevitably engage with broader, deeper beliefs about the nature of human individuals and societies, problems of power and sexuality, interpretations of past history, versions of the present and hopes for the future.⁽⁶⁰⁾

Because the school plays a key role in transmitting socio-cultural language values and conventions, particularly in the area of written language, helping students to integrate their idiosyncratic, personal construction of the world with the less personal, conventionalized academic discourse, educational context assumes an influential prominence in the development of written literacy.

Educational contexts of language

The process of inducting students into what their teachers perceive as the conventional mores of writing in different subject areas is a major feature of the educational context. A large part of a child's education is spent learning how to engage in writing with new bodies of knowledge according to discipline-specific conventions. It is therefore important to consider some of the ways in which the educational context has been found to be instrumentally supportive or inhibitive in students' developing awareness of and competence in these writing conventions. Describing some of the detrimental influences of schooling on children's development of written literacy, Robert de Beaugrande asserts that the classroom context determines not only whether students learn, but even whether they can demonstrate what they already know:

Whether human beings can enact what they know always depends on the context of the action....Therefore failure is not caused by "low intelligence", "laziness", "poor attitude", and other catch-phrase alibis that shift blame onto the child. Those deficiencies are EFFECTS not CAUSES of the fragmented context in which the child is placed to sink or swim in a sea of obscurely related activities.⁽⁶¹⁾

Three areas of study which have furthered our understanding of how educational contexts influence how children use language are the history of social registers in the classroom, the history of language across the

curriculum, and the history of writing tasks, and their potential for various kinds of cognitive engagement. Although these areas overlap and interpenetrate, they each contribute their own insights into particular features of teaching and learning writing.

(a) The social registers of language in classrooms

In the past fifteen years, sociologists and sociolinguists such as Labov⁽⁶²⁾, Cazden⁽⁶³⁾, Bernstein⁽⁶⁴⁾, and Stubbs⁽⁶⁵⁾ have been investigating relationships between language and the sociology of the school (and community). The work of Michael Stubbs on language, schools, and classrooms is indicative of recent empirical investigations of language use in schools, which locate their observations within a framework of general principles of language use in a social context.⁽⁶⁶⁾ Maintaining that learning is not purely cognitive or psychological, but also crucially dependent on student-teacher relationships, he emphasizes that these relationships are inevitably constrained by cultural rules, saying that

culture-bound assumptions of the roles of language in education [are]...revealed in the underlying discourse structure of classroom talk itself.⁽⁶⁷⁾

The language environment of the classroom, manifested in the interactions between students and teachers and in the language of the textbooks which convey bodies of knowledge to the students, is a critical influence on students' writing and learning. Much has been written in recent years about the language of secondary school classrooms and textbooks, particularly in relation to the erection of unnecessary barriers between students and their engagement with the evidence of the disciplines they are studying. Two areas of concern pervade these discussions: first, the language registers of teachers and textbooks in presenting unfamiliar information to the students;⁽⁶⁸⁾ and secondly, interpenetrating with the first, the social relations implicit in the language environment of the classroom.⁽⁶⁹⁾

Michael Halliday writes:

Productive teaching is designed not to alter patterns already acquired but to add to [the student's] resources; and to do so in such a way that he has the

greatest range of possibilities of the language available to him for appropriate use in all the varied situations in which he needs them.⁽⁷⁰⁾

But how do students come to master this "range of potentialities" in their writing? and how do they become sensitive to their "appropriate use"? These are two questions which confront students and teachers on a daily basis, and which have yet to be fully answered. One major area of influence on the emergence of written text which has been studied is the language of the textbooks in which the knowledge of their respective disciplines is presented. Writing about the nature of language in textbooks, Harold Rosen asserts:

All school subjects operate sub-languages which are encrusted with linguistic conventions, some of which still serve a useful purpose and some of which do not.⁽⁷¹⁾

What needs to be done is for these "linguistic conventions" to be looked at critically by teachers who use them to carry the burden of conceptualizing the evidence of their respective disciplines. Those which no longer serve a useful purpose, which have become "stultifying and irksome",⁽⁷²⁾ should be discarded and replaced; those which still do serve a useful purpose, which have "been perfected to embody rational thought, ultimately at its highest level",⁽⁷³⁾ should be made accessible to students in order that they may feel at ease in the registers which denote the intellectual-linguistic aspects of the discipline. Rosen goes on to say that school

offers the unique opportunity for access to new kinds of language. Here the pupil will be confronted with verbalized thought on a systematic and ordered basis. This will probably be his only chance, certainly his main chance, of acquiring the language and thought of impersonal observation and description, generalization and abstraction, theories, laws, the analysis of events remote in time or space, argument and speculation. The concepts which make all this possible are embodied in special languages and sub-languages. The more deeply a subject is penetrated and understood the further its language grows from the currency of everyday speech and from personal literature. In the effort to master it we lift our thinking towards it and as our thinking develops we use the language with greater confidence and purpose. Its potential is

enormous and there are discoveries and fulfilments to be met in our struggles to master it.⁽⁷⁴⁾

But how do we build the bridge between students' personal language and this very impersonal language of the classroom, particularly for those students for whom the linguistic registers and conventions are so alien that textbooks and teachers' lectures are mere 'noise'?

Much of the answer lies in talk - in the language teachers use to present the concepts of the discipline, in the talk between students and teachers, and in collaborative talk among students. The language registers and habits which comprise the classroom language environment can have a tremendous impact on the ease with which students can speak and write within the discourse registers of the disciplines they are studying. Yet much of the research into classroom talk foregrounds the distancing and maintaining of traditional hierarchies pervasive in teacher-student interchanges. Edwards describes the traditional classroom register as "rather impersonal, formal and standard speech normally expected in any subject, at least in secondary schools".⁽⁷⁵⁾ Students in these more traditionally-organized classrooms, according to Barnes,⁽⁷⁶⁾ Cooper,⁽⁷⁷⁾ Hammersley,⁽⁷⁸⁾ and Sinclair and Coulthard,⁽⁷⁹⁾ have access to a severely limited range of linguistic options. Much of the restriction, they maintain, is the result of classroom discourse being organized to maintain the traditional teacher-student hierarchy. Young writes:

...there is no way in which maintaining social control and transmitting knowledge can be strictly separated.⁽⁸⁰⁾

This view of the classroom as a place of knowledge-transmission correlates very strongly in the literature with language functioning to maintain traditional social relations. Hammersley,⁽⁸¹⁾ Barnes,⁽⁸²⁾ and Sinclair and Coulthard⁽⁸³⁾ look extensively and critically at the manner in which teachers control the taking of turns for talking in the classroom; Stubbs⁽⁸⁴⁾ monitors the nature of regulative utterances made by teachers during the course of their lessons. Making extensive use of actual transcripts of student-teacher talk, Rosen and Rosen⁽⁸⁵⁾ and

Martin *et al*⁽⁸⁶⁾ document the extent to which teacher talk serves as a control in the classroom. Three common themes run throughout the history of these empirical investigations into the language of classrooms: much of the language of teachers and textbooks constrains linguistic options available to students, creates unnecessary barriers to engaging with new bodies of knowledge, and maintains traditional teacher-student hierarchies, particularly at secondary levels. Dell Hymes weighs the significance of this feature of the educational context when he writes:

For children, their parents, and ultimately the society as a whole, what happens in the individual classroom is something that to a crucial extent emerges in the interactions that take place within it...the patterning of discourse is central.⁽⁸⁷⁾

Concerned about the nature and patterning of discourse in schools, specifically about the role of talk in the teaching of English, the London Association of Teachers of English addressed itself in the mid-sixties to these issues of the classroom language environment. Out of their engagement with these issues emerged an area of study within the educational context which has profoundly influenced our understanding of the roles of language in learning, and which has subsequently influenced curricular trends on an international scale. This area of study is generally termed 'language across the curriculum'.

(b) Language and learning across the curriculum

It is only relatively recently that writing 'instruction' or, more appropriately, engaging students in a wide variety of oral and written language encounters with discipline-specific evidence, has been considered the responsibility of all teachers. The major catalyst for this change has been growing awareness, deriving from the work of Vygotsky,⁽⁸⁸⁾ Britton,⁽⁸⁹⁾ and Moffett,⁽⁹⁰⁾ that writing about an idea helps one to learn it, to understand it, to integrate it with one's growing knowledge of the world, and to draw upon this knowledge in new and different circumstances.

Although the 'language across the curriculum' movement is just coming into its adolescence, it was a twinkle in the eye of the Board of Education in England more than sixty years ago. Instructed to consider and report upon the position of English in the education system of the country, members of the Board of Education produced in response the Newbolt Report, The Teaching of English in England (1921). This document is remarkable in that it envisions the study of language not as a discipline decontextualized from other bodies of knowledge, but as an integral means of cognitive engagement with the evidence of all subject areas:

As we considered the growing mass of evidence before us, it became more and more impossible to take a narrow view of the inquiry, to regard it as concerned only with one subordinate part of an already existing structure....The inadequate conception of the teaching of English in this country is not a separate defect which can be separately remedied. It is due to a more far-reaching failure - the failure to conceive the full meaning and possibilities of national education as a whole, and that failure again is due to a misunderstanding of the educational values to be found in the different regions of mental activity, and especially to an underestimate of the English language.⁽⁹¹⁾

Several pages later, we encounter a discussion of the relationship between language and thought which almost presages the seminal work of Vygotsky on what he terms 'inner speech':

Impressions may anticipate words, but unless expression seizes and recreates them they soon fade away, or remain but vague and indefinite to the mind which received them, and incommunicable to others.⁽⁹²⁾

But the conceptual seeds in these phrases, which indicate the awareness of the need for a radical rethinking of the roles of language in learning, did not immediately germinate and flourish. The concept of language learning across the curriculum, seemingly promised in the opening chapters of the Newbolt Report, lay dormant for over forty years until, in the mid-sixties, a variety of different research traditions in different disciplines converged at a time when political, economic, and educational circumstances offered a fertile environment for theoretical development.

Seldom can a movement so internationally widespread as 'language across the curriculum' be traced to a single event, and it would be oversimplifying the network of converging ideas and circumstances I refer to above to do so in this case, as well as appearing not to acknowledge the many discussions about language and learning which occurred prior to this event. Nonetheless, during a memorable weekend in the summer of 1966, a group of teachers from the London Association of Teachers of English met to consider the role of talk in learning English, in itself an area on the avant-garde fringe of educational research in the sixties.⁽⁹³⁾ The ensuing discussions expanded to include other subject areas, embracing concerns at the levels of theory, pedagogy, and policy:

...we found ourselves discussing the relationship between language and thought, how language represented experience, the functions of language in society, different kinds of language and how they were acquired, the difference between talking and writing, the nature of discussion and group dynamics.⁽⁹⁴⁾

During the course of the weekend, someone coined the phrase 'language across the curriculum', the act of signification seemingly giving birth to a view of language which had already been conceived by several of the participants in prior discussions, a view which was to grow and develop into an international educational movement:

...we found ourselves talking about 'language in education', or 'language and learning', and finally about language across the curriculum. We felt sure that language was a matter of concern for everyone, that if children were to make sense of their school experience, and in the process to become confident users of language, then we needed to engage in a much closer scrutiny of the way in which they encountered and used language throughout the school day.⁽⁹⁵⁾

Much of the resulting 'language across the curriculum' work and literature in England grows out of this "closer scrutiny" of the roles of language in learning across the disciplines, particularly the work of members of the London Writing Research Group in the late sixties and early seventies⁽⁹⁶⁾ and of the Bullock Committee.⁽⁹⁷⁾ The London Writing Research Group, particularly the more widely disseminated theoretical

work of James Britton, contributed much to heightening general awareness among educators of the importance of listening to the language that students bring to school, and the language they use in class as they talk through an experience of learning. His insistence that the starting place for research into children's learning through language should be children's own natural use of language when solving problems, deriving from the work of Vygotsky on concept formation,⁽⁹⁸⁾ and the language children use when talking about new ideas or information in relation to what they already know, deriving from the work of Polanyi on personal knowledge⁽⁹⁹⁾ and of George Kelly on personally constructed contrastive hierarchies,⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ offers a wealth of insight into creating classroom contexts which foster learning through talking, reading, and writing. These insights have contributed powerfully to subsequent investigations into language use and the development of written literacy within the educational context. Most of the American investigations into writing across the curriculum, for example, cite the work of Britton and the London Writing Research Group as being instrumental, not only in their empirical investigations of writing in several subject areas, such as the comprehensive Applebee study, which looks at writing in America's secondary schools,⁽¹⁰¹⁾ but also in their establishing writing across the curriculum policies and programs.⁽¹⁰²⁾

The findings on both sides of the Atlantic that transactional writing for an examining audience predominates at the highest levels of secondary schooling⁽¹⁰³⁾ have a number of implications for considering writing in its educational contexts. One of the most important is that this narrowing of function limits the ways in which students can engage cognitively in writing with the new bodies of information they are encountering, and consequently constrains modes of conceptualizing new knowledge. Particularly critical is what occurs when writing in school functions primarily to demonstrate what children already know, since that can potentially reduce their opportunities to have their writing function as a means of coming to know, and deny their writing much of its heuristic capacity to create meaning. In addition, writing primarily for an examining audience limits opportunities to explore a variety of language options and strategies, since the principle discourse

expectations remain in the realm of appropriately impersonal and authoritative academic discourse. Finally, this impersonal and authoritative language can inhibit the extent to which students can use writing to help them integrate new bodies of knowledge with their individual constructions of the world, and to articulate this integration in their own voice. A crucial factor in either exacerbating or reconciling these problems can be found in the nature of the writing tasks that students are assigned within these constraints of function and audience, which leads us to the third major area of study within the educational context, investigations into writing tasks.

(c) Relations among task, text, and context

Since writing in school occurs most frequently in response to assigned tasks, they are an essential component of the educational context which shapes written text. The literature on writing tasks concerns kinds of writing tasks, the demands they make and the possibilities they offer, and the ways in which the presentation of the tasks enables students to respond to them more effectively.

Responding to the findings of the Applebee study and the London Writing Research Group, George Newell investigated the three most common kinds of writing assigned in secondary classrooms - the formal essay in the transactional mode for an examining audience, short answer writing tasks, and notes on lectures and reading - to try to determine their effectiveness for learning new information. The conclusions he draws are that short answer exercises are effective for reviewing specific information, and thus facilitate learning from textbooks; that notetaking allows students to record a reworked, perhaps more deeply processed, version of the text in a form appropriate to the criterion task, and that students who organize their notes by topic do considerably better than those who list information sequentially; and that essay writing is better for producing an abstract set of associations for key concepts, and is particularly effective as an aid to learning concepts when students have little prior knowledge of them.⁽¹⁹⁴⁾ This last set of findings is of particular interest, since it begins to explore ways in which context and task interact to engage

students cognitively in written text with the new bodies of knowledge they are encountering in school.

Implicit in Newell's study is the assumption that the nature of the writing task offers possibilities for different levels or kinds of engagement with discipline-specific evidence. Britton offers this explanation of why essay writing is more effective for learning than other kinds of writing tasks:

Writers' solutions will be determined by how they frame their problems, the goals they set for themselves, and the means or plans they adopt for achieving those goals....In the objective test the teacher does most of the conceptual work, thinking through how best to create choices. When writing an essay, the student makes the choices and selects the words. To *compose* coordinates knowledge with both logic and rhetoric.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾

However, the essay as 'form' is a problematic textual concept, being variously perceived by both teachers and students as open and flexible or rigid and constraining, dependent, to a large extent, on the function of the piece of writing. Within this flexibility-rigidity continuum of perceptions about the essay as a form of written articulation is a wide range of both constraints upon and opportunities for conceptualizing new bodies of information. A major factor influencing the extent to which students realize the writing event as a set of opportunities or a set of constraints is the manner in which the task is formulated and presented. Polanyi suggests that the formal essay is not necessarily the best way in which to have students engage with new knowledge:

Asking them to write formally is - unbeknownst to most of us - asking them to have formal intentions.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾

While it is not unreasonable to expect students to have 'formal intentions' as part of their developing linguistic repertoire, exclusive reliance on formal writing, with its generic constraints, can limit opportunities for taking risks and exploring different avenues of thought on a topic. George Dillon discusses how increased formal demands can narrow the range of types of writing and thinking that students engage in, in addition to inhibiting the students' confidence in their personal voice:

Discourse types...are constituted by a set of conventions which govern our expectations and interpretations....the more detailed we describe the conventions...the narrower discourse types become ...What is truly difficult for the student is to adopt the implied magisterial self as his own 'speaking voice': the student does not feel judicious, informed, in command of material and audience.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

The difficulty Dillon mentions that students encounter in trying to find this confident personal speaking voice which at the same time achieves the 'magisterial perspective' required in formal tasks is symptomatic of a dilemma posed by many of the writing tasks assigned to students, particularly at secondary and tertiary levels. It is difficult to write as an authority when one is not, especially to an audience who is. Douglas Barnes expresses a related concern about the conventions of traditional writing tasks when he writes:

Arts (humanities) teachers teach as though tasks were more concerned with information than with thought...and that's what their students will learn.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾

John Dixon expands on Barnes' concern when he observes that formal writing tasks can severely restrict the kinds and depth of cognitive engagement that students have with the material they are considering:

The demand for a prescribed form like the 'essay' may well be obstructive; students need the opportunity to use their writing as a medium for reflection and discovery, for finding out what already exists to be developed and articulated.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

On a similar theme, Nancy Martin observes that many tasks in the secondary school ask students to assert or restate information already learned, and suggests that a variety of kinds of writing tasks should be assigned in order to elicit a variety of kinds of cognitive engagement with discipline-specific evidence:

The power of abstract, general knowledge is manifested in its capacity to generate information in new situations; in applying abstract knowledge to real situations, an inadequate grasp of the concept is frequently revealed....How can writing in the content areas allow opportunities to speculate, hypothesize, relate, and explore, not just assert?⁽¹¹⁰⁾

George Kelly offers a partial answer to Martin's question in an unpublished paper, "The Language of Hypothesis", wherein he describes an

attitude and a corresponding use of language which might help to bridge the gap between the known and the unknown:

...at moments of risk we would be greatly helped if we deliberately abandoned the indicative mood and operated in the invitational mood with its language form 'let us suppose'...this procedure suggests that things are open to a wide range of constructions and there is something in stating a new outlook in the form of a hypothesis that leaves the person himself intact and whole.⁽¹¹¹⁾

Addressing some of the specific constraints which writing tasks can impose on cognitive engagement, Gunther Kress observes that teachers' directions which accompany the tasks are strongly influential in shaping the students' written responses, leading, on occasion, to texts which are "mere lists of facts". He maintains that their directions frequently force children to solve textual rather than conceptual problems by suggesting content and making it focal, thereby minimizing both writer and reader.⁽¹¹²⁾ Implicit in Kress's comments is the corollary that writing tasks, and the directions which accompany these tasks, can, on the other hand, extend and deepen students' cognitive engagement with new bodies of information. However, Dan Donlan's 1976 survey of writing tasks in three different subject areas, mathematics, social studies, and science, concludes that although writing is frequently *assigned*, it is rarely *taught*,⁽¹¹³⁾ suggesting that very little guidance is given to students to help them translate the coded discourse of writing tasks into ways of conceptualizing material related to the topic.

If assigned writing is to function to help students to integrate new information and knowledge with their previous understanding and construction of discipline specific evidence, so that they can respond confidently and competently to a specific topic, then writing tasks must be formulated in such a way that urges this level of cognitive engagement. The following insights offered by David Bartholomae concerning the formulation of writing tasks raise several important issues about writing in its educational context:

If assignments invite students to enter into a discourse which is not their own, and if their

representations will only approximate that discourse, then assignments must lead students through successive approximations.⁽¹¹⁴⁾

Our assignments are often studded with such words [as] think, analyze, define, describe, argue. These words, however, are located in a very specialized discourse. Analysis, for example, is a very different activity - its textual forms, that is, vary greatly, in an English course, a history course, a sociology course or a chemistry course. When we use such words, we are asking students to invent our disciplines, to take on the burden of the mindset of our peculiar pocket of the academic community. This is not a bad thing to do, even though it is cause for dread as well as joy...To learn sociology - and to learn it as an activity, as something other than a set of names and canonical interpretations - is to learn to write like a sociologist, for better or for worse. Students cannot do this, however, without assistance, since the conventions that govern a rhetoric do not "naturally" belong to the mind, the heart, reason, or the soul.⁽¹¹⁵⁾

There are four main issues in the above excerpts from Bartholomae's article, "Writing Assignments: Where Writing Begins", which bring together the several observations about the nature of writing tasks in their educational context which have been introduced in this overview. The first involves the process of inducting students into the formal registers of the discourse of the different disciplines in order that their written text may accommodate these registers confidently and competently; the second concerns the problems involved in translating the code words of writing tasks, such as 'analyze' and 'discuss', into cognitive activities appropriate for responding to specific questions; the third involves the participant roles which some tasks invite students to assume, such as apprentice sociologist or apprentice geomorphologist, in addition to the more common classroom role of novice to expert, or the even more problematic, novice-masquerading-as-expert to expert. The fourth embraces the other three, in that it suggests that teachers' interactions with students, particularly the directions they give in relation to writing tasks, are critical in helping students to realize the cognitive requirements and opportunities suggested by particular writing tasks. Writing tasks are not merely a stimulus for

writing which exists outside the the context of "talk, writing and learning", as is suggested by Knoblauch and Brannon when they assert

it is not the stimulus that matters but the context of talk, writing, and learning, the intellectual attentiveness that sustains the motivation to explore.⁽¹¹⁶⁾

but rather an integral component of the language environment of the educational context which influences the composing of written text.

So far, then, I have considered the cultural and educational levels of the context for children's writing, and I have further analyzed the educational context in relation to some specific focuses of inquiry. We have seen, for example, that the social registers of language in classrooms - the talk which occurs between teachers and students, the language in which the concepts of the discipline are presented, and the language of text and reference books - have a critical influence on the ways in which students make use of language in their engagement with discipline-specific evidence. We have also seen that the language environments of classes in all subject areas, not just in English, can offer opportunities for a variety of modes of cognitive engagement in writing with new bodies of knowledge, most particularly by means of the kinds of writing tasks which are assigned to the students. I now turn to a further level of contextualizing influences, one which operates interdependently with these cultural and educational influences, the textual and intertextual contexts of language.

Textual and Intertextual Contexts of Language

There is a very real sense in which the evolving text creates its own context. Each utterance, spoken or written, influences what will follow, but in written text, where the focus of utterances is not usually developed or changed by the interventions of other speakers (although there are, of course, exceptions to this observation), and where what is written remains manifestly on the page or screen until it is changed or obliterated, what has already been formulated contributes to a monologal creation of a textual universe. Within this universe, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic features of text operate at the word,

phrase, sentence, paragraph, and whole text levels to fulfill particular textual functions. What occurs within the text, such as elements of cohesion, or macrostructures, or propositional content, contributes to the textual context which shapes ensuing text. The first major intellectual tradition that was introduced in the discussion on theories of discourse and models of writing, the structural linguistic perspective of language, generally addresses itself to this textual context, with theoretical explorations of textual elements such as cohesion,⁽¹¹⁷⁾ text production and discourse processes,⁽¹¹⁸⁾ and macrostructures,⁽¹¹⁹⁾ adding to our understanding of the interrelatedness between cognitive processing and deep and surface structures of text. Increasingly, linguists and textlinguists are locating their theoretical investigations of text, and textual context, within the social and historical and intertextual contexts which have influenced the conventions and development of features of textual context. Van Dijk, for example, explains the linguist's use of the metaphor of *frames* to organize elements of discourse in relation to recurrent or typical situations within social and cultural contexts:

...*frames* are complex conceptual structures of prototypical situations, backgrounds, environments, or contexts...these frames are culturally variable.⁽¹²⁰⁾

In a similar vein, emphasizing the importance of locating discourse analysis and text processing within its social and cultural contexts, de Beaugrande writes:

Written text is not language alone, but a communicative manifestation in a social and cultural context⁽¹²¹⁾....Cultural consensus promotes unified interpretation and elaboration in text processing; cultural conflicts promote disparities.⁽¹²²⁾

A tremendously significant socio-cultural factor influencing the evolving textual context of any piece of written text is its intertextuality. When children write, even their very earliest texts are layered with influences of other texts they have written and/or read, texts which might affirm, deny, subvert, or negate various aspects of the child's culture. Constructing text, through reading or writing, brings into play the totality of the writer's or reader's idiosyncratic

but socio-culturally shaped literary experiences, although no written utterance could ever manifest that totality. Current discussions of intertextuality derive from the structuralist and post-structuralist writings of language theorists such as Kristeva, who writes:

no 'text' can ever be completely 'free' of other texts. It will be involved in the intertextuality of all writing.⁽¹²³⁾

and Culler, who discusses intertextuality in relation to the textual context of texts:

Textual context encompasses both "history" or precedents, and "intertextuality", which is not the investigation of sources and influences as traditionally conceived; it casts its net wider to include anonymous discursive practices, codes whose origins are lost, that make possible the signifying practices of later texts.⁽¹²⁴⁾

This view of the textual and intertextual contexts from which writing emerges complicates and enriches enormously the picture of written text as a representation of socially imbued conventions. It takes writing beyond the fairly tidy and fairly predictable realm of cultural expectations into universes of discourse in which cultural influences encounter textual influences in diverse ways, with often unpredictable consequences. As Susan Miller suggests:

Writing depends on both the broad cultural setting and the textual setting in which it occurs. To say this is to say that writing is equally related to culture and to the textual frame of reference, or intertextuality...When textual context as well as cultural context is essential to describe writing, literacy also is necessarily a *textual* tool, the ability to act within a world of texts...the meaning or implication of writing - both the act and the text - is always larger than the boundaries of its originating purpose and situation...cultural and textual histories...are the broadest possible relevant considerations that provide motives to either writer or reader.⁽¹²⁵⁾

These views, from Miller's article, "What Does It Mean To Be Able To Write?", which discusses the interrelationships between writing and reading within the school curriculum, indicate the importance of intertextuality in developing written literacy. The influence of written

text on children's use of language, oral and written, is widely known and acknowledged. A current investigation by Henrietta Dombey into how reading affects children's spoken language uncovers and discusses precise changes which occur in young children's language as a direct result of the influences of intertextuality, showing that particular constructions previously unspoken are taken on board and used by children after they have encountered them in print.⁽¹²⁶⁾ By the time children have progressed through primary and secondary school, their vast exposure to a range of written text, through print and other media such as film, television, and video, has created an intricate network of textual awareness which is drawn upon whenever they read or compose text. A major pedagogical implication of these intertextual influences for writing in school involves the processes whereby students become inducted into discipline-specific discourse, and discipline-specific mores for perceiving and articulating the bodies of knowledge which comprise each discipline, since the more familiar they become with the different universes of discourse they are required to enter, the more they will be able to draw upon this familiarity in composing written text in their different subject areas. The potential for this intertextual nature of written text to enable students, when transforming discipline-specific information, knowledge, and understanding to written text which aspires to enter the particular textual world of a discipline is enormous, and therefore requires particular sensitivity and pedagogical attention to its shaping power. I mention earlier that written or printed text can affirm, deny, negate, or subvert a person's view of the world. These contradictory influences can be either confusing or potentially enriching, depending on the reader/writer's depth of awareness of the extent to which what she or he articulates has been shaped by what she or he has encountered through the various media. Intertextuality can therefore be one of the most powerful contextualizing influences in children's development of written literacy.

This discussion of context has tried to indicate that the relationships between text and context are not only much more complex than they might seem at first sight, but also one of the most critical factors in determining the nature of composing processes and the

nature of written text. To say that written text emerges from the network of contexts in which it is located is to say, first of all, that there are levels, or at least a range, of contexts capable of elaboration. What Malinowski began by describing as situational context has become diversified by theoretical discussions and empirical investigations during the ensuing decades into a consideration of historically shaped socio-cultural contexts such as the educational context in its broadest sense, particular classroom contexts which exert both conventional and idiosyncratic contextualizing influences, the contextualizing influences of the assumptions behind external examination systems, and the pervasive contextualizing influences of intertextuality. In a very important sense, these contextualizing influences combine to shape not only what is writable and sayable, but also, to the extent that language has the power to shape thought, what is thinkable. This brings us to the third major area of study which is central to understanding the developmental process of a child's induction into written literacy, the interrelations between thought and language.

Interrelations Between Thought and Language

The interrelationships between thought and language has been a major theme in the history of psychological studies. It has produced an immensely varied corpus of insight based on a wide variety of approaches to the problem of trying to determine how language influences cognition. Because writing is itself a cognitive act and bound into processes of cognition, teaching, and learning, all theories and models of writing, as we have seen in the first part of the discussion, incorporate a version of relationships between thought and language. Most explicitly, Britton and Moffett have drawn upon the work of psychological investigations into thought and language, most particularly those of Vygotsky and Piaget respectively, as part of the theoretical background they develop for their respective considerations of writing development. More recently, cognitive psychologists and language theorists, such as Flower and Hayes and Scardamalia and Bereiter, have worked together to explore interrelationships between language use and cognition. I will be drawing upon some of this work in order to try to determine what discussions of relationships among thought and language

might contribute to understanding learning, including learning to use written language within the levels of contextualizing influences mentioned above.

Also, having said that writing is a social act which emerges from a network of contexts, socio-cultural, educational, and textual, and which is thereby imbued with a wide range of conventions appropriate to the linguistic-conceptual needs of various discourse communities or situations, it becomes necessary to try to determine the processes of induction into these mores of language use. What is now frequently called 'traditional pedagogy' assumes a rather straightforward transmission of these conventions from teacher to learner, but the work of Piaget on cognitive stages of development,⁽¹²⁷⁾ of Vygotsky on concept formation,⁽¹²⁸⁾ and of Polanyi on the development of personal knowledge⁽¹²⁹⁾ has influenced current theorists to envision a much more complex process of induction into language as manifestation (and creation) of thought.

Piaget's and Vygotsky's work with young children locates the acquisition of language, and therefore of conventions of language, firmly within the social contexts first of family (usually the mother), then the playground, and then school. Although certain key features of their respective approaches to relations between thought and language differ, they both emphasize an interactively cumulative pattern of language development, rather than straightforward transmission. However, whereas Piaget envisions development from egocentric speech to socialized speech, essentially a movement from the individual to the social which Moffett later uses as a basic strand of his theory of language development, Vygotsky envisions development as progressing in two distinct directions, to serve two discrete functions. Language is acquired in the social context of hearing others use language; our first speech is therefore 'social speech'. Language, however, is functional as well as social: young children need to communicate their wants, needs, and observations to those around them; and young children need to talk their way through their experiences with the world around them. These

two functions develop quite differently. The former, the *communicative* function, becomes increasingly social as children learn to accommodate to a wider range of audience, and increasingly complex in articulation. The latter, *speech for oneself* or *egocentric speech*, becomes increasingly individuated, abbreviated, and internalized, until it becomes what Vygotsky calls 'inner speech', thoughts formulated in maximally compact 'language'. The dynamics of the relationship between speech, inner speech, and thought he describes as follows:

Inner speech is not the interior aspect of external speech - it is a function in itself. It still remains speech, i.e. thought connected with words. But while in external speech thought is embodied in words, in inner speech, words die as they bring forth thought. Inner speech is to a large extent thinking in pure meanings. It is a dynamic, shifting, unstable thing, fluttering between word and thought, the two more or less stable, more or less delineated components of verbal thought.⁽¹³⁰⁾

As children begin to experience the textual forms of books and other media, both of the above functions of language become imbued not only with social conventions of language, but also with textual conventions of language, initially with the conventions of narrative. By the time students reach their final years of secondary schooling, an intricate network of conventional textual and intertextual knowledge is available to be drawn upon when they respond to writing tasks. But the cognitive acts of drawing upon these different conventions while trying to transform maximally compact 'inner speech' into written articulation appropriate for an examining audience in response to a writing task related to recently encountered bodies of discipline-specific knowledge have yet to be explored and explained. Whereas the language development theories of Piaget and Vygotsky have done much to inform recent⁽¹³¹⁾ and current investigations of writing, there are some limitations which require mentioning. Both Piaget and Vygotsky pay more attention to cognitive development in relation to examining impersonal phenomena than in relation to examining feelings and values, a component of written articulation which is only beginning to be seen as essential in current

pedagogy. They both work with quite young children, and, what is perhaps the most important limitation in terms of investigations into writing, neither bases his discussion of cognitive ability on analyses of written text. Both are concerned with the relation between speech and cognitive development, Vygotsky in particular with the role played by inner speech, but neither untangles the complex interrelationship between inner speech and cognitive development, which would seem to be an essential component of determining cognitive development in writing.

Recent and current research of Scardamalia and Bereiter⁽¹³²⁾ and Flower and Hayes,⁽¹³³⁾ which combines cognitive psychology with theories of language use and development, is attempting to discern cognitive patterns and structures in the interrelationships between thought and written articulation through the use of oral protocols. While their work offers some exciting insights into patterns and hierarchies of decision making through the process of writing, the fact that their subjects are generally removed from the classroom context for these investigations, and are asked to verbalize their thoughts and decisions while actually composing, imposes limitations on their findings. If written text can be considered to emerge from the various contexts of its production, then it would seem that changing the context and modifying the process of composing would consequently change the entire nature of the written text.

Also investigating interrelationships between writing and cognition is Gunther Kress, who describes the developmental process in terms of stages of cognitive models which are distinctive in their character and which have an independence and validity of their own. Consequently students' written text is not viewed as deficient in terms of some adult ideal, but rather as "different but equal".⁽¹³⁴⁾ Four basic assumptions underlie Kress's theory of relationships between cognition and written utterance:

1. If linguistic utterances are amenable to descriptions which have certain structures, we can infer the existence of a cognitive mode of organization of linguistic material which bears some relation to the structures within the description.

2. If different utterances are amenable to qualitatively distinct description and analysis, then we can infer that cognitive modes differ likewise.

3. If the structures of children's utterances are described as increasingly more complex, we can infer that the corresponding cognitive organizations are also more complex.

4. If the structures show the same pattern and path to complexity among different children, we can infer a "structure of structures".⁽¹³⁵⁾

Kress envisions development in terms of increasingly complex structures of form in relation to meaning, assuming that this relationship is neither arbitrary or conventional.⁽¹³⁶⁾ While not disagreeing with the four assumptions listed above, my position concerning the relationship between form and meaning is somewhat different. If writing is a social act imbued with social and textual conventions, then the developmental process of increasing complexity of form in relation to meaning comes about as a result of interactive influences with text and context. In an environment which requires students to respond in writing to conceptual problems which cannot be solved without an increased complexity of cognitive engagement with the evidence of the discipline, concept formation - which is one way of defining 'learning' - will occur. The most effective learning, and articulation of that learning, occurs in what Vygotsky calls the "zone of proximal development", just beyond what is immediately cognitively accessible:

Memorizing words and connecting them with an object does not itself lead to concept formation; for the process to begin, a problem must arise that cannot be solved otherwise than through the formation of new concepts.⁽¹³⁷⁾

Echoing Vygotsky's assertion that we must reach beyond what students already know and can do, and challenge them with problems or conflicts which promote cognitive growth, Jerome Bruner offers a bridge from the work of Vygotsky with the speech of youngsters to the formal kinds of written competence expected of students at the highest levels of secondary schooling. He distinguishes between 'communicative competence', wherein the utterance is appropriate to the situation, and 'analytical competence', wherein students must confront co-existing and contradictory realities and see the need to reconcile them:

...analytical competence [is] the prolonged operation of thought processes exclusively on linguistic representations, on propositional structures, accompanied by strategies of thought and problem-solving appropriate not to direct experience with objects and events but with ensembles of propositions.⁽¹³⁸⁾

The investigations of the London Writing Research Group into the nature of writing done in England's secondary schools, and of Arthur Applebee into the nature of writing done in America's secondary schools, suggest that most of the writing assigned to students in their final years of secondary schooling requires 'analytical competence' as defined by Bruner. It therefore becomes important to try to determine the processes by which students develop and use 'analytical competence' in their composing of written text which draws upon information from "ensembles of propositions" rather than on direct experience.

Bruner further suggests that

when written language is working at its best, there is an elegant isomorphism between the structures of our minds and the structures of our writing.⁽¹³⁹⁾

One of the most challenging problems facing teachers and students in trying to achieve this "elegant isomorphism" between thought and language is tapping the network of resources of knowledge and intuition which has been formed within social, educational, and textual contexts. This 'tapping' involves integrating two kinds of 'internal' resources with the 'external' evidence of the discipline to which the specific writing task directs the students. The first of these internal resources is what Polanyi describes as "tacit knowledge", the things we are sure we know but cannot articulate, and the things we know but are not always consciously aware of in order to draw upon them.⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ The second of these internal resources, which interpenetrates with the first, is what Polanyi calls "personal knowing". To some extent it involves an act of faith in one's intuitions, based on one's experience with and knowledge of the world, but such a mystical view is less than helpful to students faced with writing about what portrays itself as an objective body of knowledge. Polanyi's insights into personal knowledge refute traditional views of the 'objective' nature of bodies of knowledge,

particularly scientific knowledge, and emphasize the subjective nature of knowing, combining experience of the world with personal appraisal:

...to the extent to which our intelligence falls short of the ideal of precise formulation, we act and see by the light of unspecifiable knowledge and must acknowledge that we accept the verdict of our personal appraisal, be it at first hand by relying on our own judgement, or at second hand by submitting to the authority of a personal example as a carrier of tradition....Connoisseurship, like skill, can be communicated only by example, not by precept....The large amount of time spent by students of chemistry, biology, and medicine in their practical courses shows how greatly these sciences depend on transmission of skills and connoisseurship from master to apprentice. It offers an impressive demonstration of the extent to which the art of knowing has remained unspecifiable at the very heart of science.⁽¹⁴¹⁾

Two complementary ways of conceptualizing discipline-specific evidence in written text have been posited by Bruner and Polanyi: Bruner's notion of 'analytical competence' focuses on the process of drawing upon propositional structures, upon the authorized views of discipline-specific bodies of knowledge presented in written/printed text; Polanyi's notion of personal knowledge focuses on the process of drawing upon one's experience and knowledge of the world, particularly upon direct experience with discipline-specific evidence. Ideally, the writing assigned in school should require students to engage in both of these cognitive activities in order for the students to integrate information received from textbooks and reference books with what they already know and understand, particularly through direct experience, about their respective subject areas. However, recent investigations into writing in secondary schools, such as those of the London Writing Research Group and Arthur Applebee already cited, suggest that the 'analytic competence' which involves reformulating propositional content overbalances opportunities to draw upon experiential or personal knowledge. Part of the reason lies in the role in which much of the assigned writing in schools places the students. If students are offered the opportunity to act and write as apprentices in their respective disciplines, for example, by formulating their own questions

or problems and working first-hand with the evidence of the discipline in order to solve or elaborate upon them, then students may develop confidence and competence in drawing upon their own knowledge in composing written text. If, however, students find themselves predominantly in the role of novice-to-expert, interpreting and/or reformulating "ensembles of propositions" for an examining audience, they are, at best, developing primarily their 'analytical competence'. But since, as Britton observes, "language and experience interpenetrate one another" and "available modes of expression influence the experience from the start",⁽¹⁴²⁾ it would appear that the opportunity to draw more upon one's experiential, personal knowledge would encourage a thought-language-experience dialectic which would further the development of written competence. It would therefore seem that Polany's view of personal knowing unites thought and language in ways which have important implications for written articulation in schools.

I would like to conclude this discussion of relations between thought and language with an extract from the writings of Gadamer which concerns the perfect imperfection of any speech act in terms of realizing or manifesting the wholeness of one's thoughts in words:

...every word, in its momentariness, carries with it the unsaid, to which it is related by responding and indicating. The occasionality of human speech is not a casual imperfection of its expressive power; it is, rather, the logical expression of the living virtuality of speech, that brings a totality of meaning into play, without being able to express it totally. All human speech is finite in such a way that there is within it an infinity of meaning to be elaborated and interpreted.⁽¹⁴³⁾

These words have profound implications for investigating written text in schools, and for looking at the efforts of teachers and students to produce written text which engages meaningfully with the evidence of different disciplines. Rather than emphasizing what is 'missing' or 'flawed' in students' texts, and in learning-teaching situations, as though there is some entity which could be considered an 'ideal' text within an 'ideal' pedagogical context, Gadamer turns our attention to what occurs, to what is happening in both text and context, encouraging

us to try to see what assumptions and what cognitive processes lie behind the perceived phenomenon, for, as Eagleton writes:

The text does not allow the reader to see how the facts it contains were selected, what was excluded, why the facts were organized in this particular way, what assumptions governed this process, what forms of work went into the making of this text, and how all this might have been different.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾

Looking at text alone, therefore, decontextualized from the various influences and circumstances of its creation, is not enough if we want to learn more about the nature of writing, the processes of composing, and the development of written competence in our schools. In order to try to determine what sorts of influences are critical in students' taking on board discipline-specific discourse conventions and manifesting them in written text in a voice of their own, it is necessary to explore as many contextualizing features as possible, bearing in mind always that

...there is something in writing itself which finally evades all systems and logics. There is a continual flickering, spilling, and defusing of meaning - what Derrida calls 'dissemination' - which cannot be easily contained within the categories of the text's structure.⁽¹⁴⁵⁾

FOCUS : STUDENT-TEACHER INTERACTIONS

Out of this discussion of theories of discourse and models of writing, contextualizing influences upon writing, and relationships between thought and language emerges a view of writing development within the educational context as a dialectic between processes of induction into the varied socio-historical discourse conventions and registers of students' different subject areas, and processes of developing and drawing upon idiosyncratic constructions of the world based on personal experience and resultant personal knowledge, articulated most readily in the students' own expressive voice. Writing as a taught process becomes, therefore, the site of these interpenetrating yet discrete processes integral to the development of written literacy. It therefore follows that the teaching-learning events which comprise writing as a taught process will be critical factors in

the development of written literacy, not only on an individual scale, but on a much larger societal scale. This observation is equally applicable at all stages of induction into the world of written literacy, whether as infants just beginning the process, as young adults preparing to enter university or a field of employment, or as mature adults composing dissertations on written language development. The literature which has been reviewed in this preliminary discussion has looked at writing development in a variety of ways, and has noted among both the theoretical and empirically-based discussions several areas of general agreement concerning the development of written literacy. Central among these is the view that writing development involves a broadening range of functions and audiences, and is largely dependent for this broadening on the nature of the writing and the reading which is assigned in the school context. What is needed are studies which look at writing as a taught process within the educational context, and explore the extent to which, and how, students are enabled to compose written text which enters discipline-specific universes of discourse and yet retains the integrity of their own voice. It follows that these studies of writing should be undertaken in classroom contexts, with full access to the history of emerging text, including access to the processes whereby students transform their engagement with discipline-specific bodies of knowledge into written text which responds to assigned writing tasks. This investigation of the writing of eighteen year olds in six A-level subject areas is an example of just such a study.

It locates its enquiry in the final year of secondary schooling, the upper sixth form, for a variety of reasons, the principle one being that since the sixth form represents the culmination of the development of literacy in state-supported schooling, it should offer a broad spectrum of the conventions and competencies which students have acquired throughout their educational careers. The sixth form also offers a very particular educational context in which to investigate writing as a taught process, in that the year is climaxed with written examinations set and marked by external examiners. What results is that writing becomes the site of a struggle to reconcile two potentially

conflicting functions of writing - as a means of **exploring** new bodies of knowledge and information, speculating, trying out ideas, trying to arrive at a deeper understanding of discipline-specific evidence, and as a means of **demonstrating** that knowledge to an examining audience - in addition to being the site of the integration of processes of induction into discipline-specific discourse conventions with processes of developing and drawing upon personal knowledge and understanding. A third reason for locating the study at this level is that its implications reach beyond school walls to the larger communities which these students will be entering upon their completion of the year: employment, university or other venues of further education, and the world of opportunity and struggle for which their educational careers have been preparing them.

The specific problem which this study addresses is how, within the examination-oriented sixth form context, students are enabled to transform information, knowledge, and understanding to written text which enters confidently and competently into discipline-specific universes of discourse. The literature concerning the history of social relations within the classroom suggests that the most critical factor in this process is the teacher, who formulates most of the writing tasks which can either limit or open up varieties of cognitive engagement with discipline-specific evidence, who influences the nature and amount of reading which shapes the textual and intertextual contexts for written text, and who structures the opportunities for composing, and talking about composing, within the classroom context. It is therefore on teachers, and their interactions with students in relation to writing, that this study focuses, particularly the strategies teachers employ to enable their students to transform information, knowledge, and understanding to written text, and the manner in which their students take these on board, interpret them, and manifest them in written text. The nature of the problem exacts certain demands of the investigation, such as access to classrooms in different disciplines on a continuous basis in order to observe these interactions, and their cumulative effects over a period of time, access to teachers' reflections about writing as a taught process in their respective disciplines, access to

students' reflections about writing as a learned and learning process in their respective disciplines, and access to written texts. This study bases its discussion of the writing of eighteen year olds at A-level on a full year of observation of six A-level classrooms in six different subject areas. Although many of the questions it asks and the strategies it explores have been addressed in previous theoretical and empirical investigations of writing, to my knowledge, they have not been asked with the degree of concentration and extensive observation undertaken by this study, and particularly not in the context of the A-level examination system.

The three extracts from students' texts which introduce this chapter illustrate some features of the writing students do in their final year of secondary schooling. Each of the extracts points to a different kind of cognitive engagement with discipline-specific evidence, the first showing Vernon in the role of 'apprentice geomorphologist', trying to sort out a problem related to a question he has formulated and is investigating first hand, the second showing Christine reflecting on the nature of contextualizing influences which shape an historian's stance, and the third showing Virginia taking up the role of Tom Joad in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* in order to come to a fuller understanding of his way of viewing his world. They are followed shortly after by the question, "How does this development in writing 'happen'?", a question which motivates not only the preceding discussion of theories of discourse and models of writing, the contextualizing influences upon writing, and the relationships between thought and language, but also the direction of the ethnographic and empirical investigation and analysis of writing which comprise this study.

CHAPTER TWO THE METHOD OF THE STUDY

WHY ETHNOGRAPHY?

When we consider the central focus of the study, the manner in which student-teacher interactions influence the nature of written text within the context of the A-level classroom, it seems almost imperative to choose ethnography as the most appropriate mode of inquiry. Whereas experimental studies frequently arrive at their conclusions by deliberately divorcing phenomena from their contexts, an ethnographic study is an empirical inquiry which

- *investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context when
- *boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which
- *multiple sources of evidence are used.⁽¹⁾

Since the purpose of the study is to explore the "contemporary phenomenon" of students' written articulation within the "real life context" of their educational setting, I needed to investigate as comprehensively as possible the richly-textured classroom contexts in which written text is composed. An ethnographic research design was the obvious starting point. But that is only the first of many decisions which had to be made at the outset, and which significantly influenced subsequent features of the study.

DESIGNING THE STUDY : INITIAL DECISIONS

A. Level of Student:

Choosing to investigate the writing of students at A-level had enormous implications for the rest of the study:

1. It meant that I would be observing students who had successfully completed O-level standard (or its equivalent) in the subject areas of my study, and so could be assumed to be working within a generally acknowledged level of competency in those disciplines.
2. It meant that I would be observing students within the context of their preparing for an external examination which would determine their university and/or employment opportunities.

3. It meant that I would be observing students who, for whatever reasons, and under whatever parental, societal, institutional, peer, and/or personal pressures, had elected to invest a further two years of their lives in intensive study of (usually) three A-level subjects of their own choosing.

4. It meant that I would be observing students who viewed their educational careers with at least some degree of satisfaction and confidence. School was a place where they had already been, and therefore would most likely continue to be, at least relatively successful.

5. It meant that I would be observing teachers who, in view of 1-4 (above), would expect a certain level of written competence from these students, who would interpret, to varying degrees, a large part of their instructional task as preparing them to perform well on their examinations, who would expect them to be interested and involved in the courses they had selected, and who would expect from them, to some extent, an attitude of dedication and confidence.

I had a number of reservations about limiting my study to this type of student. My initial fears were in the nature of "How typical will these students' instructional contexts for writing be of students' instructional contexts for writing in general?"; and "How generalizable to other students in other classroom contexts will my findings be?" As I became more acquainted with both the potentials and limitations of ethnographic research, I realized that these concerns were not really relevant to the validity of the study. In most instances, case studies are concerned at least as much with the idiosyncratic as with the typical. Since, as Adelman writes, following the Second Cambridge Conference on ethnographic research (1975), "One person's unacknowledged constant can be another person's most sensitive variable",⁽²⁾ my involvement with these students would be to explore, as thoroughly as possible, their particular instructional contexts, hoping that the richness of data might provoke a shock of recognition in me and in my readers, touching our tacit understanding of the general human situation of students in an educational setting. Regarding my second concern, Yin's observation that case studies are "generalizable to theoretical propositions, not to populations or universes",⁽³⁾ underscored the

necessity to focus on the richly differentiated texture of individual cases in order to develop generalizations of a theoretical nature which might then, in turn, provide a framework for considering pedagogical implications with respect to other students in other educational contexts.

On the other hand, the fact that these students were in their final year of state-supported secondary schooling adds a further dimension to the potential implications of this study. "What sorts of writing are these young adults, many of whom will be working members of society the following year, required to do in their last year at school?" is an interesting question to raise. Since development of writing abilities is presumed to be based on a widening scale of differentiated forms, functions, and audiences,⁽⁴⁾ one might anticipate that the final year of schooling would offer occasions for students not only to demonstrate competence in composing for a variety of purposes within the transactional mode which predominates in secondary classrooms,⁽⁵⁾ but also to use writing within its heuristic potential to promote learning. As the year progressed, I discovered a considerable variety among sixth form classrooms with respect to differentiated forms of writing.

B. The School:

Choice of school or schools in which to conduct the study required another sifting of research priorities early on in the designing of the inquiry. Whether to limit myself to one school for an in-depth, year-long immersion or to involve two or more schools with different instructional complexities for the purpose of comparison was the first major dilemma. The nature of ethnography as a mode of inquiry requiring comprehensive investigation concentrating on specific cases assisted in my decision to select just one school. In the first instance, I thought it important to have a thorough understanding of the classroom context in each subject area, particularly when the year would be capped with an external examination, in order to perceive the shape of the whole year of instruction with a particular teacher. As it turned out, at different times throughout the year, in some classes, the focus of the instructional context changed quite dramatically, influencing quite

strongly the language environments of the respective classrooms. Had I spent part of the year in one school and part in another, I would have missed this important feature of the upper sixth form classroom context. In addition, since all case studies are by definition idiosyncratic, although it might be tempting to draw comparisons between schools, and between teachers and students in different schools, any such comparisons, based on such limited numbers as would be possible in case studies conducted by a single researcher, would not be valid. Additional schools would, essentially, provide only additional case studies, yet take away from the comprehensiveness of a continuous year-long investigation of individual cases in one school.

Once the decision to limit myself to one school had been made, however, the selection of which school assumed major significance, since the nature of the school would strongly influence my findings. The following characteristics were important factors in the choice:

1. It should be an urban comprehensive school with a large sixth form, located in a community where it would be likely to draw upon a widely divergent population.
2. The makeup of its sixth form classes should be based on a philosophy of mixed ability grouping.
3. (Preferable but not essential) It should have expressed an interest in, be in the process of developing, or already working within a 'language across the curriculum' policy.

Tiara Glen School, situated in an attractive south London suburb on the north downs of Kent, fulfilled these qualifications. A large comprehensive school just within the southern boundary of the Inner London Education Authority, with a student population in the vicinity of 2500, it draws from neighbourhoods as varied as up-market Blackheath, a community enjoyed by writers, actors, and other professional workers, and the considerably bleaker Kidbrooke, dominated by huge, grey high-rise council estates. Although the school is racially mixed, it is predominantly white. It has a large sixth form of over 300 students, and offers them a wide variety of courses in Art, Business Studies, Classics, Design and Technology, English, Geography, History, Home

Economics, Mathematics, Modern Languages, Music, Religious Studies, Science, Sociology, Theatre Studies, and City and Guilds Pre-Vocational Studies. Its examination results are among the highest in ILEA, partly as a result of the kind of community in which it is situated, and partly as a result of administrators' and the teaching staff's efforts in this area.

C. The Subject Areas and Teachers:

The staff is large, over one hundred and fifty, with considerable variation in age, experience, and training, although only a small portion of this number is involved with teaching A-level students. Because my request to be granted permission to conduct my research in Tiara Glen School stipulated my desire to investigate the writing of sixth formers, Ms. Elliott, in her capacity as sixth form tutor, as well as soon to be acting head of the English Department, undertook to assist me in my selection of staff and students. Since she and several other sixth form teachers had been involved in discussions about writing in the different disciplines, there was already a core of teachers in the school interested in the general nature of my study. Not all of these, however, were equally interested in having a research student observing their classes for an entire year. Wanting representative subjects from both the sciences and the humanities, and taking into account subjects in which I had sufficient background to be able to understand the course content at A-level, I sent a brief description of my research intentions in the spring of 1984 to teachers in the following departments: Biology, English, French, Geography, History, History of Art, Home Economics, and Sociology. In four subject areas - English, French, History of Art, and Home Economics - the head or acting head of the department expressed an interest in participating in the study. In History and Geography, because of class consolidation, although my initial meetings were with teachers within the respective departments, it turned out that, starting in September, 1984, I would be observing the classes of the heads of those departments. In Biology and Sociology, two teachers who had expressed interest in student writing during staff discussions opened their A-level classroom doors to me. Because the teachers were basically self-selected and had already been involved in

talk with each other about problems in the written articulation of their students, my task as ethnographer was much easier than it might otherwise have been.

Unfortunately, it became necessary for me to drop two of these subject areas, French Literature and Home Economics, from my investigation. Since the Home Economics teacher would be on maternity leave from September, 1984 until January, 1985, it did not seem feasible to include that particular subject in my study. The case of French Literature was more complicated. In this class, the students read French Literature in the original French, but discussed it in English. They then wrote about it in French. The switching from French to English to French opened up enormously interesting areas for language investigation, but the characteristics of language use and the types of difficulties encountered by the students were so vastly different from those I was encountering in the other subject areas, I decided, after a month's observation, that it would better constitute a study on its own, and eliminated it from my study. That left me, in October, 1984, with the following six subjects taught by the following six teachers:⁽⁶⁾

BIOLOGY : MR. FOX

Neatness, punctuation, and correct spelling are required in order for students to get a job, so students need formal skills to begin with....Poor writing is often a question of laziness, so students who can't write well need to be pushed....A particular problem in biology is that they haven't got the vocabulary, the precise vocabulary, they need.

In science, communication is the most important thing; it's the whole thing. If you can't write, if you don't have the language, there's no science to do (from an audiotaped interview, June 18, 1984).

To write in science, you've got to be able to write accurately and concisely; you've got to be able to isolate the main points; you've got to be clear about what you're writing, and you've got to put forth a logical argument.

Examinations discriminate against people who don't value precision in language, and since working class kids find it more difficult to express themselves in writing accurately, they have to learn the elitist language of exams, and the elitist language of science, of biology, in order to get into the club. Unless you're a member of the club, you can effect no change. I was a working class kid...I joined the club, and now I'm part of the process of change...

...I look over my own education. How was I taught scientific language? I've no idea. It was developed by experience and example. You mimic the language of the teacher; you mimic the language of the books you read - and that's how you develop a scientific background (from an audiotaped interview, March 20, 1985).

ENGLISH LITERATURE : MS. ELLIOTT

By A-level, most students get the look of the thing right, but they have problems with their level of understanding of the content, of the ideas. An essay can be superficially correct, with good usage and good vocabulary, but the content might be absolute crap - full of sweeping generalizations...What they want to develop is a more complete grasp of ideas, and a voice of their own which they can employ - a personal style....They also need to develop a repertoire of strategies for writing...different tactics, different styles appropriate to different tasks....They need flexibility and the confidence to function within their own style...

...most teachers write very little. I sit and do the timed essays with them, but then they think, "I've got to do them like that"...

...what bothers me is the way they produce their essays. In the lower sixth, drafting is part of the process...in the upper sixth, it mostly seems to be a one off effort. And yet their writing can be very complex. Most of them are actually handling grammar in a quite sophisticated way because they've been asked to qualify and be speculative...they see what they've been asked to do, and address themselves to it...

...the attack - where an essay is going when it starts, and to have it actually continue to go there - is another difficulty...

...the essays in their folders are mostly 'end-of-the-process' essays...perhaps we don't give them enough time, give them the essay while they're still uncertain, while they're still working through their response...

Most of the essays genuinely want the student's opinion, but it does assume it will be a considered, thought-through opinion, formed from standing at the far side of the book and looking back over it...perhaps they should come in earlier, with a rough draft...

An essay's never going to be perfect. There comes a time when you have to say, "I've done my best and it will jolly well have to do", but some can't say that (from an audiotaped interview, March 27, 1985).

GEOGRAPHY : MR. MOORE

At this level, legible and accurate English and knowledge of content can be taken as read. I therefore place greater emphasis on how they structure the content.

The good candidate will be able to construct an argument that is relevant to the title, shows a logical development and is closely argued, contains an abundance of relevant examples as supporting evidence for the argument, and exhibits wider reading around the subject.

The good candidate will have an opening paragraph that has impact and captures the reader's attention. This may well be a relevant quote or a striking example....The examples will not always be the standard examples. The evidence of wider reading will emerge strongly. The style will be lucid and flowing and demonstrate an absence of padding and unnecessary phrases. Geographical terminology will be used.

The best way to learn how to use language economically but to fulfill a purpose is to see how other (good) writers have done it. Vocabulary will be enhanced.

I'm a great believer in 'maybe', 'possibly', and 'implies'. A lot of thinking about landforms is conjecture and hypothesis. There is always room for more research, alternative explanations, doubts, interpretations. Kids should be aware of that (from an audiotaped interview, March 26, 1985).⁽⁷⁾

BRITISH HISTORY : MISS AIRD

Written competence in history requires that students have an extensive vocabulary, that their writing is lucid, that they give supporting evidence for their statements. They must be 'literate'; their essays should make sense....Many have difficulty. They lack judgement in giving evidence. They don't know when to stop. They start writing narrative, and begin to tell a story instead of choosing to illustrate a point.

Clarity of argument makes an essay strong or weak. Some don't even have an argument, let alone a clear argument. Many don't even understand the question.

Some of their difficulties are due to their background. Some come from the traditional O-level...where they're just writing down straight facts....They know what's wrong, but not how to get better.

In history, the functions of writing are to argue and discuss, to show whether they have clear thoughts in their heads. Really, it's to pass the exam....Our main function is to get them through the exam....Unfortunately the system is exam-ridden....One board we're looking into...students have more opportunity to do research on their own, to write critical responses to original documents and stimulus questions. The O-level is far ahead of the A-level in that respect (from an audiotaped interview, March 20, 1985).

HISTORY OF ART : MR. CHRISTOPHER

The art history viewpoint is a filter through which the students view a picture....Their task is to convert a visual medium into language...How do

you put into words the dynamics of the relationship between a large black square and a tiny red square? The essential experience is much greater than language can convey (from an audiotaped interview, June 19, 1984).

They need to integrate philosophy with the actual work...they need the esoteric knowledge to know the artist's intention....A student reading of a picture could be naive or sophisticated, but they'll get a lower mark if it's out of line with the artist's expressed intention...

I feel what I'm doing develops individual perception, but I sometimes feel it's restrictive...but we're restricted by trying to get them to pass an examination.

The literature assumes a reader with more knowledge than they have. If you are trying to assume a particular body of knowledge superior to your own, it's difficult to write, to take chances.

Writing functions in art history to show their understanding of the ideas behind a work of art rather than a description of the art itself. Converting from the visual to the verbal is a tricky operation...a difficult process to learn...involves self-reflection, analysis, making manifest what happens in a glance, expanding experience into a description...there's a huge gulf between experience and presentation of ideas...

I like the language of art criticism. It's similar to literary criticism - notions are abstract and must be made manifest...vocabulary is central...there are particular specialist words which have critical meaning within the context and area of art history. Each movement has its own language...with esoteric definitions which are not part of commonplace language (from an audiotaped interview, March 26, 1985).

SOCIOLOGY : MR. GOODMAN

They have difficulty analyzing what a question asks....even if they know the material, they find it difficult to develop a theme throughout the answer...I try to get them to answer the question in a simple way in their heads....they find the terminology difficult; they need the language to discuss the concepts. The theory of sociology is hard-going, complex. It falls into place when applied, but it's still difficult to produce a well-written essay (from an audiotaped interview, June 22, 1984).

In sociology, it's a particular academic style of writing you're after. The student offers a particular view and supports that view, using alternative views for discussion. They need the ability to structure a theme, a sense of moving through an argument. To be honest, I don't know how to teach it.

Most of their writing is very close to the text. I want them to be able to read a chapter, interpret it in their own language, and have the

confidence to write it in their own language. I want them to pull out information from what are presented as disparate areas and draw it together into an argument for a different area. They tend to compartmentalize rather than seeing things as a whole system.

They need to develop the ability to arrange material so there is a coherent argument moving through it, and a critical analysis of the material...they must refer to sociological studies, and analyze them in view of the three basic perspectives of sociology: functionalism, Marxism, and symbolic interactionism...They must structure their answer so it is not a series of unconnected paragraphs.

The main function of writing in sociology is to develop the ability to mount an argument and use evidence to support a theoretical position. It's common for them to understand more than they demonstrate in their writing. They need to learn how to tap their tacit knowledge (from an audiotaped interview, March 28, 1985).

D. The Students:

Because of having selected a school which draws from a varied population and which follows a system of mixed-ability grouping, and because of having selected subjects which span the sciences and the arts, I anticipated that by identifying students who were registered in two or more of the classes I was observing, I would have a group of possible case studies with the following characteristics:

- a) divergent abilities
- b) divergent experiences with and attitudes towards writing
- c) divergent ranges in subject selection
- d) divergent educational motivations and expectations

As it turned out, the sorting-by-subject-selection process yielded a list of only twelve students, nine girls and three boys, who were enrolled in two or more of the eight subjects I had originally intended to observe. I talked with each one individually about the research: about the purpose of the study; about the nature and extent of their involvement; about the extra time it would require of them; and of the fact that I would require copies of all of their written work throughout the year. Each one responded positively and expressed a willingness to participate. In an attempt to reduce the number of individual case studies to a more manageable size, I tried various combinations of the twelve students, trying to equalize the male-female ratio while retaining

a spread of ability across the range of subjects, but because of the small size of the group to begin with, I could not achieve an appropriate balance. I decided, therefore, to include all of them in the study.

Other than listing the subjects each student studied in addition to the classes I was observing, I will have the students introduce themselves to you as they did to me during our first taped interviews in June, 1984, prior to any in-class observations:⁽⁸⁾

CORA : HISTORY; FRENCH; (ENGLISH)⁽⁹⁾

I keep a diary, and write in it quite regularly...I used to like writing, but I don't do much now...I prefer the kind of writing assignment where you imagine yourself to be a character in a play. It makes you more conscious of the language, more sensitive to the character...I put a lot more into imaginative writing, and so learn more....I'm just starting to plan my essays out beforehand. I never used to...I plan to read English at university. I want to be a journalist.

ELAINE : HISTORY; HOME ECONOMICS; Mathematics

I find dictated notes boring. It's better when you make your own notes, or at least when you stop and discuss in the midst of notetaking, not just solid dictating...I used to write stories and poetry...now I will start a story from time to time, but I don't finish it...I write a lot of letters. I have a pen pal in France - she writes to me in French and I write to her in English...

...I have to re-copy everything I write. When I make notes, if I make a mistake, I have to copy the page over again. It has to be neat - that's just me; that's the way I am...it takes a lot of time.

When I write, I sometimes make an outline, a full outline; sometimes just points...When I have a problem, I try to sort it out myself, and if I can't, I see the teacher...I've always written short sentences instead of long, complex sentences. The English teacher used to complain, but in history they like short, precise sentences...it's sometimes hard to know what's best for what...I've improved my writing a lot this year. I revise a lot, and I've learned to structure better, to use just relevant information.

SUSAN : ENGLISH; SOCIOLOGY; Mathematics; Music

I enjoy writing...time is not usually a factor in how well I write. Sometimes I spend a long time and get a low mark; sometimes I spend a short time and get a high mark...I find getting the essay together the most difficult - organizing it into a pattern - but I'm getting better...through practice...I find the teachers' comments helpful,

particularly about being repetitive....I use the same basic structure for English and sociology essays.

JULIA : ENGLISH; HISTORY OF ART; Art

I find writing enjoyable, especially creative writing....In English, sometimes we do "Imagine you are [someone in a play or novell]" type questions. I enjoy those. The creative ones help me to understand the characters inside a play or novel; the critical ones are outside the book. Also the critical ones demand more of a structure...I have problems with structure.

I used to write a lot on my own at home, but not now...not enough time.

When I write an essay, I normally start to write a rough draft, but then get so bored part way through I stop the whole thing and finish on my own.

It must be hard for English teachers to distinguish whether our opinions are valid - I don't know how they do it....teachers write extensive comments - they're meant to be helpful, but I find them soul destroying. I find it hard to apply them to the next essay I do...I don't seem able to apply them...that's why I'm not getting any better....I have to structure my essays better. They're a bit wooly. I can't seem to come to a conclusion. I can never really make up my mind, so I put in all sorts of wooly quotations. If I have a problem, a material problem, I'll ask for help, but if it's a slight problem, I try to solve it.

BARBARA : ENGLISH; BIOLOGY; (SOCIOLOGY)

In biology, I organize by making a plan first, then write out a first draft, then remember some points and stick them in, then re-write it. In experimental designs, the method is straightforward...I find the discussion and the conclusions the hardest - I can't really say why - I don't seem to have enough detail...it seems as though you can say it in a couple of sentences, but that's not enough.

I can organize English essays better - they flow better...I write a rough draft - just let it all come out. It usually comes out in the wrong order, so then I rewrite it in a better order....but I need to use more quotes, more support from the text for my ideas.

My writing has improved. My organization is better, I think because I write so many more essays.

JOHN : HISTORY; SOCIOLOGY; (ENGLISH)

I find essay writing a chore. Sociology questions are easier. You read the book, take down the facts, repeat them, and show what you understand....In history, you not only have to understand but interpret...and select the right details to support your interpretation. It's much harder. In history we have extensive notetaking - dictated - very boring and unstimulating. I rarely read over my notes except to revise....In sociology, we also have a lot of notes, some dictated, some

he writes on the blackboard, some you take as you go along in class discussion. It's better...I find it difficult to get all the important information in a short essay but I don't like writing long ones, so I just leave details out...In sociology, a lot of the learning experience for writing the essay comes from the required reading, so I understand better, because I've read it for myself. Also, we write fewer essays, so I remember them. In history, I learn while I'm doing them, but because we do so many and there are so many facts, you forget them once they're done.

LINDA : ENGLISH; BIOLOGY; FRENCH; Art

Starting to write is difficult. Once I get going it's okay. Planning is difficult, trying to understand the question - and how much depth is involved. Sometimes I go into too much depth...I try to go into as much depth as I need to understand it.

Writing helps me to explain things to myself...except technical and statistical essays. I really should do more on my own, especially in biology. I find biology essays the most difficult...Writing essays in English is interesting, but a lot of work. Planning and drafts are not required, but I have to do it. I need to - to find the right words and develop my ideas. I need to plan and write drafts.

I enjoy writing. I started writing my autobiography, and work on it whenever I have the time...I haven't decided yet what field I'm going into.

CHRISTINE : HISTORY; GEOGRAPHY; Mathematics

I've brought some of my essays to show you. See this one - it's very bad. It didn't have an argument because I didn't know how to structure it - to bring it from one place to another...but I couldn't structure an argument because I couldn't see both sides. I wrote this at the end because I was so frustrated:

It is hard to construct an essay here that is never critical of its own line of argument, because I can't think of any counterarguments, so it runs the danger of becoming a chronology of examples, each saying "Yes, he was, yes, yes, yes." Very boring.

In geography I write facts, but no controversy. I think that controversy exists - it must - but I don't know how to put it in. Most of the history questions elicit controversy, but not geography...Once we wrote an essay together in history. It worked well...I would like to collaborate on more essays...it's more helpful...we do it in geography for interpreting field data. It might be a good idea to allow time in class to work together on structuring an essay, because it's important.

VIRGINIA : ENGLISH; FRENCH; Politics

Structure! I think structure is very important in an essay. I studied in France for a few years before I came here for the sixth form. Essays have to be much more structured there...I feel my English essays

should be to a deeper level....When planning, I write character summaries, plot outlines, lists - then find relationships - expanding on items in the lists. I make charts showing the main ideas and their interrelationships. I make summaries of everything - it helps me plan. I like reading - mostly twentieth century stuff and Shakespeare....I like writing letters....I'm never really satisfied with what I've done....I intend to go to Cambridge, but I can't decide whether to read French or English.

STEVE : ENGLISH; SOCIOLOGY; Politics

My main problem is getting started. I just can't seem to get myself to do it, because once I get to writing it, I end up regurgitating what I already know, so why do it? ...when I prepare, when I plan, that's when I learn it. Writing it neatly, putting it in paragraphs - I suppose that's part of learning, but it's for the teachers more than for the learners....I hand in work late pretty consistently.

I make notes and lots and lots of drafts...I'm never really satisfied with what I've written....I quite enjoy writing, when I get into it, but mostly it's a chore. I used to do creative writing - I enjoyed that - but we don't do creative writing anymore....I hate rewriting....I'm probably just lazy....I plan to go to university, but I'm not sure what I'll read.

SIAH : BIOLOGY; SOCIOLOGY

You're not specifically taught how to write an essay - you just know. You've just learned through the years....sometimes when you get it together, it doesn't flow, and sometimes it does....The comments of the teachers can help you, but some comments just put you down - or a big cross, with no explanation - I don't find that very helpful - or ticks at the bottom - doesn't help you know which are the good bits and which are the bad bits....I never read other people's essays. I did once - Steve's - because I hadn't done the essay and wanted to see what it was about....when you just have your own, you only see one way of writing it, of thinking about it, but when you read others, you see other ways of writing it. But I've never had a class where we did it.

I find it hard to get started, to know what the title really means. I would like more help with my writing....Next year, I'm not going to university. I'm going to take a year off and travel.

VERNON : BIOLOGY; GEOGRAPHY; Chemistry

I'm fortunate at being quite good at English because I can generally enjoy most types of writing I have to do. Usually it's not the actual writing that is demanding but the structuring of the piece of work and deciding exactly what to write and where and how much.

In biology, writing is quite important, usually in the form of explanations of how organisms function, how they fit into their environment, how they grow and develop, and so on. Essays are rarely

set, but when they are set they often require great attention to detail....If a certain idea is rather vague, and I don't fully understand it, I try to leave it out rather than waffle around the subject in the essay and perhaps still not get the point of the idea.

Out of my A-level subjects, writing is undoubtedly the most important in geography...a good writing style is essential to produce good essays...I start with an introduction of about fifteen to twenty lines, which often includes a quote from a well-known writer. This is followed by a brief argument, although sometimes I leave this out and introduce a line of argument later in the essay at a point where it seems more relevant. The main body of the essay is essentially a discussion of a range of information related to the title. In the conclusion - about ten lines - I attempt to sum up what I have just stated in the body of the essay and say whether or not my line of argument was justified or not.

The main problem I find with essays is keeping them as short as possible. If I feel the topic has not been covered very well in lessons, or I do not understand it, or I haven't been listening as I should, then I find I have to work more to take everything in properly. However, to write a really good short essay I find very demanding, unless I'm under exam pressure, when I am forced to cut down on what I write.

E. Prior to Observation and Data Collection

The selection procedures described above, although highly significant in terms of the general focus and direction of the study, were nonetheless of a rather mechanical, administrative nature. Decisions more theoretical in nature were also required before I could observe these six classrooms in a meaningful way. In trying to determine the extent to which I should sharpen the focus through which I would filter my observations, and establish hypotheses which these observations would, ostensibly, validate or invalidate, I was forced to walk a razor's edge between specificity and open-mindedness. The classroom contexts for written composition are so vast and so intricately textured that I quite obviously needed definite guidelines to render the plethora of perceptions comprehensible. On the other hand, at this stage in the study, hypotheses too precise or specific in nature could direct and limit my observations and subsequent interpretation of them, and thereby prevent my perceiving relationships or phenomena which might enlarge my understanding of how written text emerges from classroom contexts. I decided that questions rather than hypotheses would best serve the study at this time. Therefore, in view of the preliminary talks I had with students and teachers, as well as concerns

about writing raised in recent and current research, I generated the following list of questions:

1. What differences and similarities in basic language components such as lexis, syntax, and organization of response do I perceive in student writing in the different disciplines?
2. What differences and similarities in the tacit traditions, root metaphors, and governing paradigms do I perceive in student writing in the different disciplines?
3. What differences and similarities do I perceive in the methods for acquiring and mores for assessing evidence in the different disciplines?
4. How do students learn to use these various language structures and to accommodate this competence to what is required?
5. In what ways do particular features of the classroom language environment influence the writing of students in that classroom?
6. To what extent and how do the various sorts of writing tasks in different subjects promote understanding of new concepts and information?
7. What are the uses of transactional writing that I perceive in the school setting, and how do these relate to its uses in society?

In addition to these questions, I also had in mind an implicit model of writing in an educational setting, a model which integrated Jakobson's ideas of shifting hierarchies of functions and factors of discourse⁽¹⁰⁾ with Britton's and Moffett's views of the importance of function and audience⁽¹¹⁾ and with Rosen's view of student writing as being located within a set of interrelated contemporary social practices.⁽¹²⁾ I mention the existence of this vague and shadowy (at that time) model because, although I had not yet formulated it into a diagrammatic or explicitly verbalized scheme for analyzing the empirical data I would be collecting, its gradually cohering presence had already influenced the genesis of the seven questions I had formulated (above) and would from this point on in the study serve as the filter through which I would sort out and organize my observations in the six classrooms. In turn, what I observed about the language environments in the classrooms would

influence the development of my model of writing in an educational setting, resulting in the model's becoming increasingly refined and defined as it integrated my theory-based anticipations with actual classroom events during the year of observation.

IN-CLASS OBSERVATION AND DATA COLLECTION

In Tiara Glen School, most sixth form subjects are taught by two teachers, and sometimes up to four if one considers both the lower and upper sixth. Of the six subjects I observed, history of art was the only one taught by just one teacher. In the other five classes, therefore, my investigation of the writing being done in these subjects is limited to the extent that it is based on observing the classes of just one of the two teachers assigned to each group of students. Four of the six teachers had two 75-minute periods a week with their students; one, history of art, had three 75-minute periods, and one, geography, had one 3-hour period per week. Because of the timetabling of the subjects, I could not fit all of these sessions into a timetable without conflicts, and so worked out the following compromise:

- a) in English, biology, and geography, I would observe all of the sessions
- b) in history of art, I would observe one of the three weekly sessions
- c) in sociology, I would observe one of the two weekly sessions
- d) in history, although I could have fitted both sessions into my timetable, at the teacher's request I observed only one of the two weekly sessions.

All teachers but one, Mr. Christopher in history of art, gave me permission to audiotape their class sessions.

Although the school term began the first week in September, and I would have liked to observe the initial classes each teacher had with her or his students (even though, with the exception of history and geography, the students had the same teachers in the upper sixth that they had had in the lower sixth), it was suggested that, because of the hectic nature of the start of the school year, it would be preferable for me to begin my observations the third week of September. My in-class research, therefore, extends from the third week of September, 1984 to

the second week of June, 1985. I had hoped that such an extensive time period would not only give me a much more comprehensive picture of the diachronic nature of classroom contexts than has so far been made available in current research, but would also accustom the teachers and students to my presence in the classroom. In some classes it seemed to work out that way, but in others, particularly towards the end of the year, as exams became increasingly imminent, comments made by some of the teachers indicated that they were not only very aware, but in some cases uncomfortably aware, of my presence. I cannot therefore write that my presence after the first few sessions had a negligible or nearly negligible influence on what occurred within the classrooms I observed. However, because I had the opportunity to talk with each teacher about their respective feelings of discomfort, together we were able to determine, to some extent, how their concern over my presence manifested itself in the sorts of things they said or did in their classrooms.

My role in all the classes except English was basically the same: I sat with the students, observed, using my seven questions (above) and implicit model of writing in an educational setting as guidelines to direct my observations, took fieldnotes of what I considered to be significant aspects of the classroom language environments, and, in all classes except history of art, audiotaped the lessons for future reference. Occasionally after a lesson, the teachers would talk with me about their intentions for the lesson, where they felt it had gone right or wrong, or they would talk with me about the writing assignment most recently completed by their students. From time to time throughout the year, at least twice for each teacher on a formal basis, but more frequently on an informal basis, I chatted with the teachers individually about writing in general, about writing in their respective disciplines, and about the teaching and learning of writing in their respective disciplines. Intervention from me with respect to kinds and functions of the writing done in these teachers' classrooms was neither sought nor offered. Fundamentally, I was a non-participant observer.

My role in the English classroom was somewhat different, most likely because of my thirteen years of experience teaching secondary

English. Because Ms. Elliott's instructional pattern included a considerable amount of group talk and group collaboration on lists, outlines, summaries, and charts, there was ample opportunity for me to move from group to group of students, talk with them, and, occasionally, work with them. In the English class, then, I was a participant observer almost as often as I was a non-participant observer.

In addition to soliciting the teachers' views about writing in their respective disciplines (See Appendix IB for written communications with teachers), I also sought the views of the twelve student participants in the study. I conferred with each of them, individually, at least twice throughout the year for an audiotaped discussion about their writing, giving them, before the second set of interviews, a list of the areas, such as perceived improvement in their writing, that I wanted to chat with them about (see Appendix IA for written communications with students). Some of them, who had difficulties with writing that they wanted to talk about, I saw more frequently. Also, as they became increasingly familiar with the nature of my research, they would talk to me about some aspect of their writing they thought I might be interested in. To further assist my study, I asked each of them to keep a journal wherein they were to write about their writing. Periodically (three to five times, depending on which subjects they were taking), I gave them a sheet of suggestions about what I would like them to write about in their journals (see Appendix IA). I found it gratifying that all twelve students co-operated throughout the year with respect to writing in their journals, attending their scheduled interviews, making all their written work available for me to photocopy, and, at the end of the year, participating in a whole group discussion of writing in the school.

My observations and perceptions of writing in this particular educational context are therefore triangulated through the perceptions of the teachers, the perceptions of the students, and the written texts themselves. This is not to imply that my data or perceptions are in any way objective or neutral. The researcher, and the researcher's biases, are inevitably going to present a reality somewhat different from the reality that another researcher in the same classroom would

perceive. Unlike experimental studies which can be replicated to test their validity, a study of this nature gains its validity partly by meticulously documenting different people's perceptions of the same phenomena and partly by the researcher's awareness of the distorting biases she or he must necessarily bring to bear on observations and interpretations. However, although no one can replicate this study by sitting in the same classroom with the same students and teachers, one can listen to the tapes of the class sessions and interviews, and examine photocopies of the journal entries and written texts in order to see whether the observations and data reported in the study are accurate, and partial texts and transcripts selected and presented with integrity.

PRESENTATION OF OBSERVATIONS AND DATA COLLECTION

Although my original seven questions and implicit model of writing in an educational setting served me well as 'filters' while I was observing the class sessions and gathering my material, they provided me with far too much information for me to present and analyze in one thesis. To provide a basis for selecting what I would present and analyze, I needed an additional filter. Honing into this very particular, very sharp focus required a thorough sifting through the data with an eye to discovering the most salient message they were trying to tell me. It is, I think, important to emphasize that this final narrowing was not an external imposition upon the data, but rather a central position within the data. **What ultimately emerged as most central from my observations was that student-teacher interactions within the intricate network of the classroom context most critically influence and shape the nature of written text in these six classes.** The subsequent chapters of this study present and analyze the data that I collected through that final filter or perspective.

Before proceeding to a tour of the six classrooms of the study, I would like now to explain why I had the teachers and students introduce themselves rather than my telling you about them. Once the biases or 'filters' of the researcher are known, it is important in a study of this nature that the reader have as much opportunity as possible to come to

his or her own conclusions about the information being presented. It is my intention to offer extracts from classroom events and interviews as I saw and heard them occur, selected and arranged according to the focus of this study, but otherwise in their 'raw' state. Then, when I present my interpretations and analysis of the material, the reader, who will have been interpreting and analyzing the material as she or he confronts it, as I did, will be able to decide whether she or he would have come to similar conclusions under similar circumstances. In this way, as the reader constructs this text, he or she will be undertaking, except for the selection factor, an ethnographic process somewhat similar to the process of the research itself. For that reason, I had the students and teachers introduce themselves to the reader in the same words and with similar (but selected) emphases that they introduced themselves to me.

In the next chapter, I will be presenting some classroom contexts for writing in each of the six subjects. I will avoid as much as possible commenting, other than in organizational meta-statements, on the material. Commentary, interpretation, and analysis will be the roles of the ensuing two chapters. I will then conclude by drawing together the implications of the analysis.

CHAPTER THREE CONTEXTUALIZED VIGNETTES OF SIX CLASSROOMS

A major advantage of spending a full year in each of six classrooms is that a variety of kinds of writing, and the contexts in which that writing occurs, can be observed, as well as the general shape of differing emphases in student-teacher interactions, and the strategies teachers employ to help their students transform information, knowledge, and understanding to written text as the year progresses. It is, at the same time, however, a disadvantage, in terms of limiting, organizing, and presenting such a huge corpus of information in a way that it will be effective and meaningful. Several factors influenced the shaping of the organizational framework which follows: first, the need to present as much of the classroom context as possible for the writing done throughout the year; secondly, the need to present typical or representative writing events in each subject, in order to arrive at a general understanding of the nature of writing, and of student-teacher interactions concerning writing, in each of the six subjects; thirdly, the need to present unusual or infrequent or atypical writing events, in order to understand why they occurred, and yet did not fill a more prominent place in the year's writing experiences; fourthly, the need to validate my selection of 'typical' or 'atypical' writing events through reference to the teachers' and students' perceptions of writing in each subject area; fifthly, my desire to have the teachers and students reveal as fully and directly as possible, with minimum intervention from me, their views about writing in their respective subject areas; and finally, the need to present all of the above material in such a way that it would provide a basis for analyzing how teachers employ specific strategies which enable students to draw upon and transform information, knowledge and understanding to written text which competently and confidently enters the universe of discourse of each subject area, and how their students take these strategies on board and interpret them, and manifest them in their written text.

The idea of 'contextualized vignettes' offered itself as a felicitous starting point, since they would allow me to present an informationally rich slice of the language environment of each classroom through the teachers' and students' own words, rather than through my interpretation of events. Based on my year of observations, I tried to select, for each subject, extracts from a lesson, or series of related lessons, which would have the potential to serve as springboards to the nature of writing done in each classroom, and the nature of student-teacher interactions related to that writing. For the reasons I mention at the end of the previous chapter, I wanted to avoid analytical intervention at this stage of the discussion, at the same time that I needed to draw from each vignette what it had to say about the nature of written text, the nature of composing processes, and the nature of student-teacher interactions related to the composing of the written texts in each subject area. I consequently decided to interrogate each of the vignettes with the same set of questions, questions which would allow the teachers and students, for the most part, to supply most of the information in their own words.

Every writing task contains within it, with varying degrees of explicitness, assumptions of the nature of the sources and resources of information, knowledge, and understanding which must be drawn upon in order to respond to it. Since these sources and resources provide the content for each piece of written text, and present a range of problems for students when they come to draw upon them, a consideration of them offers a meaningful way into investigating the nature of written articulation in each of the six disciplines. The following question, therefore, provides access to this information for the writing task(s) presented in each vignette:

1. What is the nature of the sources and resources of information, knowledge, and understanding required by this task?

Once students have gathered together the relevant information, and tapped their internal resources of knowledge and understanding in relation to a particular topic, they need to reconceptualize and reformulate this material in order to transform it to written text which

responds to the focus of the task. Frequently, students need to be enabled to perform effectively the very complex cognitive operations required to structure a written response in discipline-specific registers. It is here that student-teacher interactions play their most critical role in the formulation of written text, which leads us to the second question:

How are students enabled to transform this information, knowledge, and understanding to written text which responds to the specific task?

Since the purpose of each vignette is to serve as an introduction to the nature of writing as a taught process in each of the disciplines, it is important to know how the writing event it portrays relates to the writing generally done throughout the year in each classroom. Because I needed to go beyond the empirical evidence of the actual vignettes for this material, a range of questions was required which would draw upon the teachers' and students' perceptions of writing in their respective disciplines, and teachers' and students' perceptions of the nature of the universe of discourse in which the body of knowledge which comprises each discipline is articulated. The third question which interrogates each vignette is therefore:

How does this task relate to the writing generally assigned in this classroom?

a) the teacher's perceptions of writing in the discipline

b) the students' perceptions of writing in the discipline

c) the nature of the discourse of the discipline as it emerges from the above perceptions in relation to the assigned writing tasks

As you progress through the vignettes, you will notice that the three questions assume varying degrees of importance in each classroom, according to the nature of their respective language environments. Nonetheless, a general trend emerges, wherein the second question assumes increasing importance in relation to comments made by both teachers and students.

CONTEXTUALIZED VIGNETTE #1 ; HISTORY**(TEACHER : MISS AIRD)****(STUDENTS IN THE STUDY : ELAINE, CORA, CHRISTINE, JOHN)****A. THE SCENE:**

It's twelve o'clock on Tuesday, February 12, 1985, and Elaine, brow furrowed in concentration, is steadily but hurriedly bringing to closure her estimation of the contribution of Parnell to the cause of Irish nationalism. Her usually impeccable penmanship suffers three scratched-out words as the ringing pips force her to scramble to the end of her last sentence. The scene is not atypical in the sixth form: a timed essay under simulated conditions in preparation for the 'real thing' - the final examination. Elaine hands in her paper, and leaves. The text is in the teacher's hands, to be read and evaluated. Then it is in mine, to inform me, but in a way quite removed from the intentions of its author in composing it. So we three, student, teacher, and researcher, enact our diverse purposes in constructing this text according to our diverse roles, roles whose histories have already effected a variety of contextualizing influences on the scene I have just described. But to construct Elaine's text more fully, to understand how it has emerged from the classroom context, I need to know not just what is in that text, but also what stands behind it: where it is located in the institutionalized world of written competence in history; where it is located in the world of textuality, specifically historical textuality; and where it is located in Elaine's world of reference and experience. To determine how this text functions, then, I need to enter that system of interrelationships we generally refer to as the classroom context and try to untangle the particular network of influences predominating in the production of this particular text.

Since the task itself is the most immediate stimulus to Elaine's composing this text, it provides one of the major points of entry into the classroom context. The task Elaine is responding to - and by 'task' I am referring to both the topic and the set of conditions for responding to the topic - is a timed essay entitled, "Estimate the contribution of Parnell to the cause of Irish nationalism". The teacher,

Miss Aird, announced the topic, which had appeared on a previous final examination, to the class at the beginning of the session, and the students were given forty minutes to compose, without benefit of notes or textbooks, a "clearly thought out argument supported by evidence from your notes and background reading" approximately three to four sides of A4 in length. Miss Aird had briefed the students during the previous two classes to "be prepared to write on Parnell" (February 5, 1985), and had told them that the above topic was "the kind of question frequently asked about Parnell". Her advice to the class about how to respond to whatever topic they would be given on Parnell was, "avoid lengthy speculation without firm historical evidence".

The afternoon of February 12, Elaine came to see me for a regularly scheduled discussion of her writing. She was concerned that she had done "poorly" on the essay because she had run short of time, although she felt pleased that she had, until the end, followed her "plan of argument" and had not written "too much narrative". I asked her how she had responded to the word "Estimate" in the topic, and she replied, "It means the same as 'discuss'". I then asked her if she would have proceeded any differently had the topic been "Discuss the contribution of Parnell to the cause of Irish nationalism". She responded:

No. You state a position, a line of argument, and then you prove it, showing both sides of the argument, and coming to your own conclusion. That's what you do in history essays (February 12, 1985).

When I inquired about where she had learned "what you do in history essays", Elaine showed me her copy of "The Requirements of A-level History", a two page printed handout that Miss Aird, as head of the history department, had prepared, based on the published comments of the chief examiner for history of the London Examining Board. The following excerpts are echoed in Elaine's comments about writing in history:

...examiners would implore candidates to 'Argue Something'.
 An argument carefully built and supported with accurate information will gain credit...
 The candidate must construct an historical argument and display historical judgment.
 When questions contain words such as 'Discuss', the examiners expect candidates to show that they

appreciate the nature of the controversy involved, an awareness that 'much may be said on both sides' and a willingness to weigh up the issues and arrive at their own conclusions.

Although Miss Aird's usual follow-up procedure for written assignments is to hand them back marked, then talk to each student individually about the strengths and weaknesses of their respective papers, on February 26, when she hands back the marked Parnell essays, she deviates from her customary method and instead asks three students to read their essays aloud. The class is told to

listen to where the essay has gone wrong...to where the student might have lifted phrases from the textbook or background reading...or has gone into narrative, or is not answering the question...if it's not appropriate...if you can't follow the thread of the argument. Don't worry about being critical...it's not much help to say "That's good". Say what you like or don't like about it (February 26, 1985).

After the first reading, which is by Elaine, Miss Aird asks the students for their reactions:

What about the structure of the essay? Was it clear? Did you know where the essay was going? Did the introduction tell where the essay was going? What mark would you give it?

The students respond to Elaine's paper through the focus provided by Miss Aird, for example:

Alison: A quite clear line of argument. I could tell where it was going, except at the end, it became a bit muddled. I'd give it about a 9 or a 10 (out of 20).

Cora is asked to read next, after which the following dialogue occurs:

Miss Aird: Elaine, tell us, how does it compare with yours?

Elaine: It's better. It has a clearer introduction and conclusion than mine. There are more factual bits, but not just plain facts. They were all related to her line of argument. It wasn't narrative. You could tell what each paragraph was saying.

Miss Aird: I agree about the structure; I disagree about the facts. What do you think, John?

John: I found it hard to follow, having it read aloud. If I could read it for myself, I think I'd find it easier to follow.

Miss Aird: It is very clear; it has a good structure, is well started and ended, but there is not enough in it. There is no evidence of reading beyond my notes and the text. It's a sound essay, a competent essay, but it needs more.....Christine, let's hear yours....(Christine reads her essay)...Cora, how does it compare with yours? (Cora smiles, looks down, and shakes her head) It's better than yours because there's more in it.

Alison: She uses lots of quotes.

Miss Aird: Generally I'd rather you didn't overuse quotes, but Parnell and Palmerston are so quotable, it might be a good idea for you to learn just a few good ones.

Bradley: She has a very impressive style.

Miss Aird: It's true that Christine does know more words than most of you, because of the amount of background reading she has done.

Duncan: She kept referring to the title. She kept the question always in mind.

John: It was very impressive. So many quotes, so many facts. Showed a lot of background reading. Some of the things she mentioned I've never heard of...

At the end of the class, Miss Aird asked whether the students preferred listening to each others' essays or having individual conferences as they usually did. Of the fourteen students in the class, ten wanted both, all fourteen liked having their individual conferences, and two said that while they enjoyed hearing others read their essays, they would not want to read their own to the class. John reiterated that he would prefer the opportunity to read others' essays himself rather than listen to them. When I asked Elaine at our next session together about her reactions to reading her paper, she replied:

I liked it. It sounded much better read aloud than I thought it would. And it helped me to hear the others being read. It showed me different ways of answering the question (February 26, 1985).

B. THE TEXTS:

I want now to consider some features of the language of the three student texts composed in response to this timed essay task on Parnell, but with the understanding that these texts are more than

phenomenological manifestations of linguistic means brought to bear by three individual students on one task in one classroom in one school in south-east London one spring day in 1985. They are certainly that, but they are, in addition, representative of what Bakhtin calls the "authoritative discourse" which finds its "natural home in all institutions of formal learning",⁽¹⁾ and, as such, despite their respective idiosyncracies, reveal what happens to students' language, what linguistic means and strategies they employ, as they respond to this traditional (and prevalent) type of task within a traditional class environment. The following excerpts are the introductory paragraphs of the three texts:

Charles Stewart Parnell brought Irish nationalists and the call for Home Rule and Irish problems to the forefront of British politics from 1875 onwards. Ireland had been united with England in 1801 with the Act of Union but Westminster were no nearer solving Ireland's problems by 1870 when Parnell appeared on the scene. Tenants and Peasants were still being badly treated by English landlords and a call for nationalism and violence was being spread. Parnell throughout his political career was able to unite Irish nationalist feeling among the Irish peasantry, he made the English aware of Ireland's problems and made the Irish party at Westminster a national movement all converted to Home Rule (Elaine).

Parnell's major contributions to the cause of Irish nationalism were his unifying the Irish in their demand for home rule and his bringing the Irish problem to the forefront of British politics. Although home rule did not pass the commons during his lifetime, the fact that it was put forward at all as a serious consideration was a great achievement (Cora).

Parnell is one of the great figures in the history of Irish nationalism. It was he who made the Irish party a major force in the House of Commons throughout the 1870's and 1880's. Not only in Parliament, but also in Ireland itself, he managed to unite many causes of discontent and many shades of opinion into a coherent nationalist movement. His charm and forceful energy placed singlemindedly behind the cause brought attention and support to Irish nationalism. But firm belief can also be called dogma, and it was perhaps Parnell's belief in his own opinions during the scandalous divorce case of the 1890's that undid much of his good work. Parnell achieved more for the cause of Irish nationalism than remained after his death.

One of Parnell's greatest contributions to the cause of Irish nationalism was in bringing the issue to the forefront of British politics (Christine).

These texts are readily identifiable as 'classroom discourse', primarily because of their authoritative stance asserted in a predominantly indicative mood. Two main strands, expressed in semantically similar, sometimes lexically identical, phrasings are evident in all three responses:

1. Elaine: Charles Stewart Parnell brought Irish nationalists and the call for Home Rule and Irish problems to the forefront of British politics from 1875 onwards.

Cora: Parnell's major contributions to the cause of Irish nationalism were his unifying the Irish in their demand for home rule and his bringing the Irish problem to the forefront of British politics.

Christine: One of Parnell's greatest contributions to the cause of Irish nationalism was in bringing the issue to the forefront of British politics.

2. Elaine: Parnell throughout his political career was able to unite Irish nationalist feeling among the Irish peasantry...all converted to Home Rule.

Cora: Parnell's major contributions...were his unifying the Irish in their demand for home rule.

Christine: he managed to unite many causes of discontent and many shades of opinion into a cohesive nationalist movement.

It is immediately apparent, however, that despite knowing the immediate context for these texts, we still cannot say how these three excerpts, with their obvious similarities and equally evident differences, emerged from that context. And yet the setting of the vignette, which spans three class sessions and two student conferences, is replete with implicit and explicit information. It informs us about

- a) the task: the topic and the conditions for fulfilling it
- b) the teacher's formal expectations regarding the structure of the essay
- c) the influence of the teacher's expectations upon the student's understanding of what constitutes written competence in an essay written in history class
- d) the expectations of the examiners, and how they influence both the teacher's and students' expectations of historical discourse in an educational setting
- e) elements of the teacher's pedagogical style
- f) the teacher's assumptions of the relationship between thought and language
- g) the teacher's expectations concerning background reading
- h) a glimpse of the classroom language environment which, although a portion of the vignette was an

exception from Miss Aird's normal procedure, nonetheless provides a wealth of implicit and explicit information about some of the language values of both teacher and students

In order to understand more fully how these texts emerge from the classroom context and function within their educational setting, we need answers to the following questions:

1. What is the nature of the sources and resources of information, knowledge, and understanding required by this task?
2. How are the students enabled to transform this information, knowledge, and understanding to written text which responds to the specific task?
3. How does this task relate to the writing generally assigned in this classroom?

1. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE SOURCES AND RESOURCES OF INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDING REQUIRED BY THIS TASK?

The empirical base for answering the first question is readily accessible. By listening to the tapes of Miss Aird's lectures on Parnell, I can trace the source (from the student's perspective) of the phrase "to the forefront of British politics" and the source of the idea of Parnell's uniting Irish nationalist feeling to a lecture given to the class on February 5, 1985. By looking at the students' notes made on their background reading, I can point out, in Elaine's text for example, that such phrases as "he intended to use a much more vigorous policy", "Parnell...made the house unworkable", and "these were only easing the situation" came from the chapter, "The Appearance of Parnell", in a standard reference book for this topic, *Ireland, 1860-1914*. In other words, the surface structure of the texts, and in some cases the actual phrases, can be shown to restate what the teacher has said, or what the textbooks and reference materials have said. Much more difficult to determine are the internal resources which draw upon these lectures and readings and rearrange the information into the particular formulation which emerges as each student's written text.

2. HOW ARE STUDENTS ENABLED TO TRANSFORM THIS INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDING TO WRITTEN TEXT WHICH RESPONDS TO THIS TASK?

Attempting to answer the second question helps us to begin to determine some of those internal cognitive processes. I need to go beyond the vignette to other lessons, wherein Miss Aird offers the following advice about composing a history essay in response to a given topic:

Look carefully at the question....Structure your paragraphs...look at the first sentence. Does it state a topic? an idea? an issue? The next part is the supporting evidence....The final sentence of a paragraph is like the final sentence of an essay - it concludes...and also moves on to the next paragraph.

A few points on style...The worst way to start is to write a short biography of the person. That is the worst way to start. Don't start that way. Now I'm telling you, don't start that way. Don't let me see another essay starting that way....All of what you write is your own opinion unless you put it in quotation marks, so there is no need for you to write "I think...". Avoid using contemporary terms to discuss nineteenth century issues....It's possible to overdo quotations. If you do quote, it is important that you quote an authority - don't quote me (September 18, 1984).

Look at the key words in the question....Don't start "This essay will...". Some of you still have too much narrative...don't develop your ideas chronologically...put one point, one idea, one issue per paragraph. It might be that later on you will have the confidence and the ability to have a different type of position, but for now only one argument per paragraph....In your introductions, it is appropriate to make a statement of your argument before proceeding step-by-step, but it is not a good idea to make a dogmatic statement in your opening paragraph because it leaves the examiner the impression that the discussion is a waste of time, that there's nothing to discuss....you need to give evidence of sufficient knowledge about the topic (October 23, 1984).

Avoid lengthy speculation without firm historical evidence (February 5, 1985).

Do more background reading...summarize your notes - reduce them to headings and dates (March 19, 1985).

...grammar and spelling...presentation...these things really do matter (May 8, 1985).

Miss Aird's advice falls into two major categories which she refers to as "style" and "structure" or "developing a clear line of argument"

(September 18, 1984). Although her instructions about composing in history do not explicitly answer the second question, we can infer from Miss Aird's comments that in her class, transforming information into written text is presented as a process which involves setting up an appropriate structure or line of argument and, within this structure, expressing content in an appropriate style. When I asked Miss Aird what happened when students encountered difficulty producing written text with an appropriate structure and style, she replied:

They fail. They often just can't do it. Many have difficulty....They lack judgement in giving evidence. They don't know where to stop. They start writing narrative, begin to tell a story instead of choosing to illustrate a point....They need to learn to choose specific details from a variety of alternatives - to choose the best one....The clarity of their argument makes their essay strong or weak. Some don't even have an argument, let alone a clear argument. Many don't even understand the question....Some of their difficulties are due to their backgrounds - some have come from a traditional O-level background where they write down straight facts. They don't know how to interpret....All we can do is practice and talk about it in class, but it's very difficult. They know what's wrong, but not how to get better (March 20, 1985).

3. HOW DOES THIS TASK RELATE TO THE WRITING GENERALLY ASSIGNED IN THIS CLASSROOM?

A. The Teacher's Perceptions of Writing in the Discipline

Miss Aird perceives the functions of writing in A-level history to be

to argue and discuss; to show whether they have clear thoughts in their head and can develop them into a clear line of argument. Really, it's to pass the exam (March 20, 1985).

In response to my next query about whether she considered any functions or uses of writing to be peculiar to the discipline, history, she answered:

I don't think writing history essays is all that different from writing English essays,

and referred to the document Elaine had shown me, "The Requirements of A-level History", which she used as authorization for the kinds and style of writing she expected of her students. Such phrases as

The examiners are looking for a great deal more than knowledge and literacy....They will...be influenced...by evidence of careful selection of relevant matter used in the construction of a pointed argument...an analysis of reasons, a synthesis of results, an assessment of motives or the measurement of success....critical awareness - awareness of the meaning of words, the limits of evidence and the uselessness of woolly and unexplained generalizations...an appreciation of the nature of the controversy involved...that history is a live subject of active debate....The candidate must construct an historical argument and display historical judgment. Clear thinking is essential to both of these tasks and such clear thinking plays a major part in determining the Grade which the candidate receives in the examination [Miss Aird's emphasis].

indicate a source for much of the advice Miss Aird gives her students about writing history essays. It would seem, then, that the major function of writing in A-level history, as perceived by Miss Aird and authorized by the examiners, is for students to demonstrate their competence in constructing a pointed argument clearly supported by relevant details appropriately analyzed, synthesized, and evaluated, in appropriate style - a function which requires a tremendous amount of various kinds of cognitive engagement with the evidence of the discipline.

B. The Students' Perceptions of Writing in the Discipline

Comments made by students in their journals reveal the extent to which they have taken on board this 'authorized function' of writing in history:

Elaine: My main writing subject is History where essays are written regularly either at home or in the classroom with a specific time limit and exam conditions. I find it difficult to express myself when I sit down, I usually know the facts but I don't know how to relate these to a particular question or how to write a sentence which is always relevant. This seems to be my main downfall as well as being too narrative in my style....For History writing is very important, in the first exam you write only essays so you have to get it right (September 23, 1984).

Cora: I find expressing myself in writing fairly easy, though I did find the jump from writing an O'level essay to an A'level essay a big one, especially in history. From my most recent history essay I think I have improved in the last year. I have learnt that even when you are asked for someone progression [sic], the essay should not be written chronologically but picking on 4 or 5 major points....writing is very

important because it is through writing that the subject is examined, and you must reveal not only language and understanding in this, but also show ability to express yourself and form a persuasive argument (September 18, 1984).

The timed essays in history are quite difficult - I tend not to bother planning them, but only reading and taking notes before, so that although I have lots of ideas I cannot get them down in a coherent argument, but just a jumble of relevant facts. However, they are good practice for the exam when we will have to form a basic argument in a very short time (October 16, 1984).

John: As far as possible I try to adapt my style of writing to the requirements demanded by each individual subject. English, History, and Sociology each demand the application of a slightly different style. This is necessary because the first thought on my mind is to get the highest possible score for each piece of writing....History requires a very carefully structured and planned essay: Intro, line of argument, main body and conclusion. Facts have to be sifted, collected, and put down in a precise, orderly way. My lack of planning often loses me marks. Interpretation of the question is a crucial factor in history essays, the relevant information has to be solid throughout the whole essay. Any irrelevant information is glaringly marked and loses me marks. I can't write as I'd like to because any flowery, English literature or descriptive type writing detracts from the factual essay (October 16, 1984).

Christine: Got back my Gladstone essay from Miss Aird today. Felt quite dispirited, because it was not well reviewed! She said that on first reading it, she thought it was "appalling", but when she read it again, she didn't think it was "quite so bad".

I think I hit the wrong note by over-emphasizing one strand of the essay, leaving out the other. At least I'll know what to emphasize next time.

Probably tried too intricate an essay plan, aiming it "journalese" rather than good exam technique....

I would like to be a very good writer. I do try to tailor paragraphs etc., but it doesn't always come off. Also, in trying to do that, I get rather lost in the facts, and so I lose my way. I can't seem to write to time as I could at O'level anymore....(September 18, 1984).

Feel triumphant! I've just finished a marathon essay which I'm taking to my (history) university interview tomorrow. I'm very proud of it - I think that the structure is really quite good. But it remains to be seen if it does me any good (2 AM, October 7, 1984).

Quite pleased with my Disraeli essay, but feel I've reached my limit. Got 65%, not an A, and I don't see how much further I can go. Same for my Weimar Germany essays - Doing an Oxford entrance exam soon - essay style is all important. Can't see how I'll possibly pass it unless my essays improve - fast! (October 24, 1984).

Spent ½ term trying to improve my exam essay technique. Certainly my history essays have improved, but not enough (November 7, 1984).

...my writing may actually have regressed in the last couple of months or so, as I've put less intensive work into structuring my essays. On the other hand, I'm regularly getting 11/12/13 out of 20 for my history essays, which is an improvement....I've been reading a lot out of school recently....I think that this reading can have no harm on my essay style. But it won't help me pass my A'levels.

I aspire to being an intellectual, and I'm eager to take in other people's ideas, so I like history, but I hate learning facts...

Incidentally, I think timed essays, as we have in history, are a great idea; they ought all to be like that. They have shown me my two greatest weaknesses:

1) I don't always cover all aspects of a question, especially when writing to time. I must learn to put the right amount of emphasis onto each part of my argument

2) I can't produce a rounded essay in the right time. In other words, I have a tendency to waffle, which I never had at O'level when I could always fit X facts for X marks into Y minutes. Possibly I'm fussing too much about trying to adopt an interesting style, when at this stage I should just have a structure and try to stick all the facts into it as quickly and as neatly as I can (February 18, 1985).

In these journal entries, although each student mentions different facets of writing, all four students foreground the need to demonstrate to their teacher or other examining audience, frequently within a time limit, that they can clearly structure an argument expressed in an appropriate style as the prime function of writing in history. Their concerns effectively mirror their teacher's concerns; they all want the examination passed with good grades. During their conferences with me, the same concerns were articulated, together with other concerns related to forms and functions of writing:

Elaine: In the fourth and fifth year we got lots of notes on how to structure an essay - how to do an introduction, but we weren't worried about putting in an argument until the sixth form. The questions now are more aimed at what you think, so argument is more important. I didn't really know how to put an argument in, but the teacher went through it, what should go in it - so I knew what was going to go in it, but not how it was to be written. I can look at the facts now and say "Right - that's my point of view", because I can analyze the facts. I can remember in fifth year thinking about some king - "he was horrible" - or something like that, but I wouldn't write it down - it's not a fact. In sixth year you're supposed to make statements revealing your own opinion...but you can't make judgements. You must put down the other point of view....as long as you can back your argument you can come down

on one side...Miss Aird gives us various historians' points of view and tells us whether they're extreme or middle of the road...

Mr. Grant [lower sixth history teacher] wanted background knowledge at the beginning, but Miss Aird wants us to get into the question straightaway. It was a bit of a shock. Miss Aird gives us a lot more detailed notes so my essays are deeper factually...I have notes from class and notes from the textbook...I also make notes on general books on the topic, then, if I need more, I make notes on specialist books....I'm getting better at my history essays. I follow my plan, and have much less narrative....**The function of writing in history? To analyze the facts** (March 19, 1985).

Cora: I enjoy Miss Aird's style. Rather than straight dictation, as we had last year, you can take notes while she lectures...you cover more. She gives us more details, more information....I've improved a lot in my writing. I focus more on what the question is asking, and I write better introductions and conclusions.

I know we're under the constraints of preparing for an exam, but I would prefer to have a greater variety of writing in history....History essays are quite different from English. Instead of your own reactions to a text, you are forming an opinion on the basis of what other people have written - on the opinions of two or three historians....In history, I write poor conclusions but good introductions. I like to start with a quote....I make sure I have one point per paragraph and sum it up at the end. Before, I would just put things down and expect the reader to know what I'm saying...I could never really get my argument separate from my introduction...

In English, it's thinking through your own ideas. In history, it's all other people's ideas - the facts are already tightly structured....I could have brought more in [to the Parnell essay] but it wouldn't have been much good because it is, at the moment, doing work for the exam, and that's it. We're not working at things you're especially interested in. We're working on questions that are likely to come up. If we have a special interest in something that isn't likely to come up, what's the point in using time on it? ...it's an intermediate phase...to get good results for a job or university. It's not something to enjoy, but working towards an exam (February 26, 1985).

John: I find timed essays are easier [than essays assigned for homework]. All you have to do is revise, then sit down in class and write them....I learned Mr. Grant's four-point structure [in the lower sixth]: introduction and background information, argument, development, and then conclusion. In history, structure is all important...the teachers keep telling us, "How you structure your essay is important"....In history I've changed a lot. I used to just skim the surface in history essays, just give a few facts and relate a few events, but the teacher said, "If you don't change, you'll fail". Her comments in class...and comments on my papers were helpful....In history it's all just for the exam. I think she'd like us to be interested - she's the best teacher, really, to get you through the exam, but not to inspire you to enjoy history.

...when it's something you enjoy doing, you do a good job....I should really take pride in my work, then I wouldn't like handing in an essay not properly done, but I don't...because it's not for me. It's just a chore. The teacher marks it and that's it (March 14, 1985).

Christine: In my history essays, I'm trying for a different style - I'm trying to make it interesting...by using long and short sentences...I structure my paragraphs more, and put the main idea at the beginning rather than rambling....Miss Aird advises me that I need a plainer, more economical style, with more emphasis on content, and fewer diverting details....Constructing an interesting argument in good style is more important than lots of facts....Miss Aird advises us to go for "quality of thought", but I find it difficult to separate quality of thought from style.

At O'level, it was all facts. At A'level we need to develop an argument. We still need lots of facts, but we need to choose them discriminately. It's more a shift in emphasis than a change.

...I like to go for a punchy beginning - to write the first sentence in seven words or less - I got that idea from A. J. P. Taylor's The Origins of the Second World War - but then some get into metaphorical, flowery stuff. Also, sometimes a punchy beginning can distort the argument. There's danger of dogmatism...I don't always agree with Miss Aird's comments about style. I prefer to develop my own style. Quality of content is more important than style in any case, but I do respect her experience with preparing for an exam.

...my writing in history has changed incredibly since the start of the course. I didn't like Mr. Grant's four point plan. I didn't use it. I did once or twice but didn't like it. I don't like to start with background facts then state an argument. I prefer a bit of argument, then support...more distributed throughout the essay than chunked at the start...This year's advice is more in line with what I feel comfortable with (March 20, 1985).

Although demonstrating that they can structure a clearly thought out argument and express it in an appropriate style is the overarching function of writing in history perceived by these students, they each bring to the fore differing emphases related to this use of writing. Elaine highlights "analyzing the facts" in order to determine her point of view which she then incorporates into the argument of her essay as being the greatest difference in writing between the fifth and sixth forms. She also mentions notetaking - of class lectures, textbooks, and background reading - its functional aspect implied in the phrase, "if I need more [information], I make notes on specialist books". Cora also refers to notetaking as a functional form of writing in school, in addition to her insightful comment that the arguments she constructs in

history are really a synthesis of other people's ideas on a topic, not her own reactions. She further underscores the major function of writing in history as working towards the final examination. Continuing in this vein, John contends that since, in a pragmatic sense, the function of all his writing is to hand it in to be marked, it is, for him, a "chore" in which he takes "no pride" because "it's not for me". Christine envisions writing in a rather different way from the other three. While working, as they are, at structuring a clear line of argument by sifting "discriminately" through the evidence of the discipline, she is, at the same time, using her writing as an opportunity to develop her own style and voice.

C. The Nature of the Discourse of the Discipline as It Emerges From the Above Perceptions in Relation to Assigned Writing Tasks.

A third way into considering what constitutes written discourse in history is to investigate the nature of the writing tasks assigned to the students. Writing tasks are both contextualized and contextualizing, in that they arise out of the context of an authorized view of history and of what constitutes historical evidence and discourse in an educational setting, and, in turn, authorize for the students certain modes and mores for defining or interpreting historical evidence. They therefore play an important role in helping to determine how written text emerges from the classroom (and wider) contexts.

Writing tasks are structured in two major ways in this class, influenced by the structure of the British History exam set by the London Examining Board: statements, quotations, or questions requiring essay length responses; and 'context questions', wherein extracts from historical documents are presented with a list of related questions requiring primarily factual, occasionally inferential, responses, usually just a few sentences in length. First the former:

Upper Sixth Essay Assignments

1. September, 1984: Account for Gladstone's rise to the leadership of the Liberal Party.
2. October, 1984: To what did extent did Castlereagh and Canning disagree about the conduct of foreign policy? TIMED

3. October, 1984: What were the aims of Palmerston's foreign policy? How successfully did he achieve them? *TIMED*
4. November, 1984: Did Disraeli have any consistent political principles? *TIMED*
5. January, 1985: How radical was the Reform Act of 1832? *TIMED*
6. February, 1985: How can you account for Palmerston's enormous popularity? *TIMED*
7. February, 1985: Estimate the contribution of Parnell to the cause of Irish nationalism. *TIMED*
8. April, 1985: To what extent is it appropriate to describe Lord Salisbury's foreign policy as one of "Splendid Isolation"?

Upper Sixth Context Question

1. March, 1985: Disraeli and the Suez Canal Shares *TIMED*

Upper Sixth Mock Exam : December, 1984, TIMED

1. 'The difference between the foreign policies of Castlereagh and Canning was merely a difference of emphasis'. Discuss.
2. To what extent were the Whig Reforms of the 1830's dictated by the interests of the Middle Classes?
3. To what extent has Palmerston lost his grip on foreign affairs by the time of his final term in office from 1859-1865?
4. Why was there a demand for further parliamentary reform in the 1860's although the 1832 Act was intended to be final?
5. Distinguish and illustrate the main features of Gladstonian Liberalism.
6. How important was foreign policy in deciding the outcome of the 1880 General Election?

Mock Exam : Context Questions

1. Peel and the Corn Laws
2. The Problem of the Poor Rate in the Nineteenth Century

The six timed essay assignments, all taken from previous examinations, were written in simulated examination conditions - no notes or textbooks or preliminary discussion, although Miss Aird always informed the students of the general area of the topic or of the person to be written about at least a week prior to the actual writing. The mock exam was written in a three hour time slot in conditions virtually identical to those the students would be encountering while writing

their final examinations. Since these writing tasks all assume knowledge of the material and the ability to organize it into a coherent response, the major function of the required writing is the demonstration for the teacher-as-examiner of the extent of the students' competence in a performance situation. Having said that, however, I also need to point out that these writing situations engaged the students in a variety of cognitive activities with historical evidence. Both teacher and students point out that factual knowledge and basic writing competence are only starting points for the writing that is expected at A-level. All of the timed writing tasks required that the students sift and sort historical data, analyze it, select only salient and relevant details, and use these details in support of a line of argument established by the student.

The two essays assigned for homework, the first and last writing tasks of the year, required similar sorts of cognitive engagement with the evidence of the discipline, while also serving to function as demonstrations of competence. Since Miss Aird had not taught half of the class in the lower sixth (government cutbacks necessitated the combining of several sixth form classes), the first task served the additional function of a diagnostic tool whereby she assessed the writing competence of the group of students new to her class. Upon handing back this first marked assignment, Miss Aird tried to help her students to see where they had gone astray in performing the cognitive activities required of the writing task, using the concepts of 'content', 'structure' and 'style' as her frames of reference for her general comments to the class:

Look carefully at the question - at what it asks you to do. The question asks you to account for Gladstone's rise to power in the Liberal Party....You people started in a variety of ways...the worst way to start is to write a short biography of the person. That is the worst way to start. Don't start that way...

Any essay that doesn't look at the strangeness of Gladstone entering parliament as a Tory yet becoming leader of the Liberals is missing the point...you need to discuss how and why Gladstone moved from being a Tory MP to lead the Liberal Party...

It took some of you a side of writing to get down to answering the question...but on the exam you're going to be desperately short of time...some of you are not able to write under time constraints...

Now, a few points on style. Since all of what you write is your own opinion, unless you put it in quotation marks, there is no need to

use "I think"...Beware of using contemporary terms...it isn't appropriate to talk of "leftist tendencies" in the nineteenth century...(September 18, 1984).

To exemplify her ensuing comments about structure, she distributed copies of two essays on the same topic written by students in a former year. She talked about the style, content, and structure of each of them, pointing out their respective strengths and weaknesses, prefacing her remarks by saying, "These are not 'model' essays, but there are certain things you can learn from them'. After her general comments to the whole class, Miss Aird then spoke with each student individually about the strengths and weaknesses of his or her particular essay, and tried to answer any questions or problems the students had concerning the task, her evaluation, or her comments to the class, a procedure she followed for all subsequent assignments except the Parnell one, which I've already mentioned, and the final task, on Lord Salisbury. The follow-up session for that task was similar to the one on Parnell, with students reading their essays to the class, and the class invited to respond, except that since this was the last writing task of the year, Miss Aird used the strengths and weaknesses of these essays as springboards to advise students how to cope with examination questions. In addition to her usual frames of reference - 'content', 'style' and 'structure' - because of a recent letter from the chief examiner concerning a rereading of a student's paper, she also addressed the issue of 'presentation':

We don't normally receive direct feedback from the examiner on specific papers, but in this one case we did, because the presentation of the paper influenced its mark - downward....the presentation - grammar, spelling, appearance...these things really do matter (May 8, 1985).

Only once during the year, other than the 'mock exam', were the students assigned a 'context question'. Taken from a previous exam, the assignment, entitled "Disraeli and the Suez Canal Shares", contained two extracts, one from a letter Disraeli had written to Lady Bradford on November 25, 1875, and one from a speech given by Sir William Harcourt at Oxford on December 30, 1875, which set the 'context' for the seven

questions which followed. The function of this type of task can be readily inferred from Miss Aird's advice on how to answer context questions:

It's more important to look at the questions than to carefully read the context....Don't embroider; just put the facts. Don't be wordy, don't write too much - it's not a mini-essay. With a context question, either you know it or you don't (May 22, 1985).

In a pragmatic sense, there is only one function of all of the above writing tasks: to demonstrate to the teacher-as-examiner (and in two instances to their peers-as-examiners) an ability to sift through 'facts' acquired through intermediary sources in order to structure a coherent argument which is clearly and appropriately expressed. However, in the interactions which occur between Miss Aird and her students, there is a considerable amount of learning about writing in history which is taking place.

The form of historical discourse authorized by the teacher and by the examiners is 'argument', developed by selecting relevant material already sifted and analyzed by one or more historians, analyzing it, synthesizing it, integrating it with tacit knowledge of what constitutes competent academic discourse, and applying it in response to a specific question. The texts composed in response to the question, "Estimate the contribution of Parnell to the cause of Irish nationalism", since they employed the above discourse strategies in constructing the appropriate discourse form, an 'argument', are therefore representative of the nature of historical discourse authorized in this classroom context. The word 'estimate' in this task warrants a brief scrutiny, in that it invites the respondent to enter a universe of speculative discourse. Opportunity for "active debate" and for "appreciating the nature of the controversy involved" (The Requirements of A'Level History), authorized as appropriate and desirable functions of historical discourse by Miss Aird and by the examiners, is suggested in that word 'estimate'. The language of the excerpts from the three texts, however, indicative in mood and assertive in propositional content, would appear to indicate that these texts are more characteristic of the "authoritative discourse of the classroom"⁽²⁾ than of the historical discourse authorized by the

examiner. Certainly Elaine's understanding of the word 'estimate' as merely another task code word for 'discuss' would support this interpretation. On the other hand, Christine's perception of history tasks as opportunities to explore controversial issues suggests that some students do perceive the nature of historical discourse to function as real argument rather than as purely formal argument. The written text which emerges from this particular classroom context would therefore appear to be significantly shaped by the students' varied perceptions of the teacher's expectations of historical discourse in the light of what has been authorized by the chief examiner.

VIGNETTE #2 : GEOGRAPHY

(TEACHER : MR. MOORE)

(STUDENTS IN THE STUDY : CHRISTINE and VERNON)

A. 1:30 PM, APRIL 22, 1985

...I'm giving you back the essays you did last time...there are, by and large, two encouraging things. First off, a lot of you are using the terminology - and that's important. There might be gaps in your knowledge, but you're using the words in the right way. The other encouraging thing is that there are lots of diagrams in the essays. I've mentioned before that credit will be given [on the exam] for maps and diagrams, so, you know, even if you got 12/13/14, and many of you got more than that, there are some encouraging signs.

As far as the essay is concerned, one important thing is that within the essay you have the bulk of things that relate to the theme, that relate to the title...Now as far as the 'Slopes' one was concerned...you have the points that need to be included. Now the rest of it is - as I've been saying all along - is the kind of flesh that goes on the skeleton - the examples you give to support what you say, the evidence that you give that you bring or that somebody else has written about, all those things that are going to pick up the extra marks. The crucial thing - and you'll see it from some of the examples I've given you - is the overall concept - the overall use of the important ideas, uh, points that go in it, so for instance - let me just explain myself a bit more clearly - that last one on slopes - yes, it's important to talk about the different kinds of slope processes, whether it's landslides, land slips, rotational shears, soil creep, solifluction - they're obviously important. The other aspects of it are the fact that slopes may be modified by periglacial action; the other points are acknowledging that slopes perhaps do undergo some degree of evolution; they undergo some kind of change. The other main point is something about the geological controls - the slope in a chalk area will differ from the slope in a limestone area - and perhaps then going on to suggest that there might be climate controls - and then embellishing that with ideas about slope development - your Davies, your King, and so on - bringing it up to date with people acknowledging those kinds of overall ideas, those kinds of cyclical ideas. They aren't necessarily what geomorphologists these days are concerned with - they're more concerned with the processes which go on, how fast they go, how exactly do they occur...

B. 1:55 PM, APRIL 22, 1985

The problem is not just in knowing what points to include, but what kind of points to bring in. I want us this afternoon to have a little bit more practice at this. I've put in front of you a sheet of acetate and a couple of pens and I want you to get in groups and have a little bit of a brainstorming session. I don't want you to write anything on the acetate yet. I'll give you a topic and a quarter of an hour or so,

just to, you know, perhaps individually in your groups, jot down all the things that you think ought to go into an essay bearing that title. Then try to come to some kind of agreement as to how that essay might be arranged, how that essay might be sorted out, what the logical development of that essay might be. And at the same time, perhaps, think about what examples you might give. Now that's why I've given you two pens. In the darker of the colors - the blue or the black - you might be as well simply to put down the theme of each paragraph in the essay, each section in the essay, and the other color - the red or the green - perhaps to give a few examples, perhaps to suggest - don't draw them now - but perhaps to suggest what diagrams you might like to include, and so on...the pieces of white paper are simply to write down whatever occurs to you, whatever comes into your head, and then to later on...to put that down in some kind of order on the acetate. Then we'll put that up here and we'll let all the groups discuss it, and see if we think there's anything we could add or anything we think that's irrelevant and perhaps any better examples we might think of...See what you can do without using the textbooks first of all, and then, if necessary, go to the books. It's really a brainstorming session I want. Do what you normally do - pick out the key words and then write down everything that occurs to you. Do that perhaps separately first, and then combine your ideas.

C. 2:10 PM, APRIL 22, 1985

One Group of Three Girls Working on the Topic: "Why do rates of marine erosion vary from time to time and from place to place?"

Would you start with...

Have we considered...

What do you think about...

Next, I think we should bring in...

Do you think we ought to mention...

Would we give a whole paragraph to...or would we just...

Let's see - we have to show whether it's a destructive or a constructive force...

Yes, we did that...

Now, the question is: how does it vary from time to time and from place to place...

Is it just the direction, or do we need to include...

How do we bring in...

We should put about the beaches...

Did we mention...

What's it called when...

It's a bit like a [unintelligible], isn't it? the coastline?...

The coastline - yeah...

Don't you put in these bits?...

It's the transportation, the deposition, how it varies...

Did you do any rate measurement?...How it varies...

We'll rough out the...

Yes, put that in...

Would you conclude that with...

D. 2:45, APRIL 22, 1985

The Outline on Acetate

Why do rates of marine erosion vary from time to time and from place to place?

INTRO Define marine erosion. Processes: hydraulic, abrasion, corrosion, and some chemical action, varies from time to time and from place to place because of variation in wave strength and form and coastline

TIME TO TIME Waves vary with

1. seasonal (tides)
2. weather system
3. duration and strength and direction of wind (fetch)

Land varies with:

1. previous denudational history
2. eustatic and isobatic change
3. season eg. stormbeach
(protection and cliff fall)

PLACE TO PLACE Waves vary with

1. Fetch
2. Natural and man-made obstacles
3. Direction and strength of waves

Land varies with

1. Lithography and structures and joints
2. previous erosional history
3. alignment of geology
4. protection of cliff base
(5. bays and headlands)

CONCLUSION

CASE STUDIES: Seaford - seasonal change

Graver - eustatic and isobatic change

place to place - differential erosion

(Entries in parentheses are those added by Mr. Moore during class discussion of the outline)

E. 3:15, APRIL 22, 1985

Map Exercise:

Whenever you are given a map, you should ask yourself, "Where is it?"; "What do I already know about it?"; "What can I use of my background knowledge to help me interpret it?"...

Use words like 'possibly' and 'likely that'...

It's not easy unless you have some generalizations to refer to. Always ask yourself, "What do I know about this topic or this area?"...Let the examiner know when decisions are hard to make...

I have selected this April 22 class session as a springboard into Mr. Moore's geography classroom because it exemplifies much of what occurred throughout the year. The A-level geography course these students are following is divided into two main areas: human geography and physical geography, which is in turn divided in the upper sixth into geomorphology, mapwork, meteorology, and statistics. Since Mr. Moore teaches the physical geography part of the course, his students are required not only to compose essays, but also to do mapwork, diagrams, statistical analysis, and data-response questions. It is not unusual, therefore, that the class session this vignette is extracted from is involved with a number of written texts, and a number of forms and functions of writing. There is, first of all, the marked essay which Mr. Moore hands back to the students, "What processes have shaped valley-side slopes in humid-temperate areas?", a timed essay written the previous class (March 25, prior to half-term) under exam conditions; next there are the written outlines produced collaboratively by each of four groups, and then discussed by the whole class; finally, there are the data-response texts, answering the map questions. By subjecting these texts to the same questions I raised concerning the Parnell texts, it should be possible to construct a clearer picture of how these texts emerge from the classroom context and function within their educational setting.

1. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE SOURCES AND RESOURCES OF INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDING REQUIRED BY THIS TASK?

This first question can be answered without needing to go beyond information given in the vignette. In the preparation for the collaboration session (Part B) and the mapwork session (Part E), Mr. Moore urges the students to draw upon their recallable knowledge and their broader tacit knowledge:

*See what you can do without using that textbook first of all, and then, if necessary, go to the textbook (Part B).
...ask yourself..."What do I already know about it? What can I use of my background knowledge to help me? (Part E).*

By suggesting that they use "fieldwork examples" as a further source of

of reference (Part A), Mr. Moore is encouraging his students to draw upon their experiential knowledge of the subject area. When talking about their "Slopes" essays (Part A), he also mentions their using the writings of geomorphologists, "your Davies, your King, and so on", to "embellish" their answers. In summary, then, the sources of information for these tasks are, in addition to the teacher's lectures, handouts, and their textbooks, their own tacit knowledge, their fieldwork experience, and their reading of specialists in the field.

2. HOW ARE STUDENTS ENABLED TO TRANSFORM THIS INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDING TO WRITTEN TEXT WHICH RESPONDS TO THIS TASK?

This second question is also answerable through reference to the vignette, although to answer it more comprehensively, I need to refer to other lessons. Each of the four sections of the vignette features a different enabling strategy employed by Mr. Moore to assist his students in transforming what they know into written text.

In the first part, wherein Mr. Moore talks about their completed and marked "Slopes" essays, he points out that a major difficulty in transforming known information into written text is in realizing not so much what information to include, but what **kinds** of information to include. In earlier lessons during the year, he emphasized the "wholeness" of phenomena, telling his students that geography, as a humanly conceived discipline, was only one of several systematized ways of perceiving the world, and that geomorphology, meteorology, and statistics were arbitrary sub-systems, all interconnected, all looking at similar, sometimes the same, phenomena, but from differing points of view. Responding to a question, therefore, on soil erosion, for example, might require the students to draw upon their knowledge of a variety of these geographical sub-systems, rather than limiting themselves to their localized knowledge of the specific topic, "Soils" (February 25, 1985: lesson on soil erosion). Mr. Moore points out in a subsequent lesson (April 29, 1985) two problems related to their drawing upon this broader area of their tacit knowledge: the first is "how to get in touch with the full extent of what you know"; the second is, since there is "no way of including all you know", how do you decide what to include and what

to leave out? As one strategy to assist with the former area of difficulty, he not only suggests that they underline the key words in the question or topic and then write down everything they can think of that seems relevant, but also, several times throughout the year, takes class time to have them do it, sometimes individually, sometimes in groups, sometimes in whole-class sessions while he writes down their suggestions on the chalkboard. Once they begin to sort out the hierarchies and relationships among what they've written, he iterates throughout the year, as is exemplified in the vignette, "the crucial thing - and you'll see it in some of the examples I've given you - is the overall concept..."(Part A). This "overall concept" is what should guide their pruning procedure when they decide what to include and what to leave out. He recommends that they ask themselves:

...if you were a geomorphologist rather than a student, and you are protogeomorphologists, what would you think it important to say about the topic?... remember, the important concepts to bear in mind are development, processes, and land formation (March 18, 1985).

He also emphasizes, however, that knowing what sorts of things to write is only a first step in transforming knowledge into written text:

It's not so much a question of knowledge, but a question of style, of how you put it down (December 10, 1984).
It's a question of the building up of the essay - of style as well as knowledge (March 11, 1985).

For many of the follow-up sessions after the students have composed an essay, Mr. Moore provides 'model' answers which he uses as a basis from which to point out elements of structure and style, at the same time emphasizing that "this is only one of many ways it could be done" and "the way you write an essay will depend on what you know and what your style is, and that's as valid as anything" (March 25, 1985). The stylistic advice which follows is taken from the class session during which the students wrote the "Slopes" essay referred to in the vignette:

There are shorthand ways of getting the examiner to know what you know without convoluted sentences and extra phrases....back up what you say with lots of examples, names of places, and so on...don't

waffle....construct an argument, develop a case....your opening paragraph must have impact....use subordinate clauses and parentheses to bring in extra information....learn how to use brevity so you can write at length. There are two major ways: the first is to use precise vocabulary - the words the authorities use - that can save you often five or more words when you have the right, the precise geographical term; the second is to use sketches and diagrams, not to say again what you've already said, but to replace a lengthy explanation where it would be simpler to do so....then you have the time to write what needs to be written...

Keep a piece of paper beside you and jot down all the things that come to mind while you're writing your answer...

Avoid the use of the first person...

The average candidate will include diagrams of processes...the better candidate will flesh it out with real world examples, will mention contentions about processes from readings...

Synthesizing your knowledge is an important technique...(March 25, 1985).

I asked Mr. Moore what he would identify as the teaching strategies he employed to enable students to synthesize the information they gather and transform it to written text. He listed four:

1. an encouragement of wider reading in the subject, but also in other areas. The best way to learn how to use language economically but to fulfill a purpose is to see how other (good) writers have done it. Vocabulary will also be enhanced
2. essay marking will include comments on not only content and conceptual understanding but also style and points of English
3. the use of "so-called" 'model' answers to demonstrate points of style as well as of relevant content
4. the joint planning and constructing of essays (from jottings written by Mr. Moore in preparation for our interview, March 26, 1985).

Throughout the year, I was not aware of very much encouragement to read in areas other than geography (although encouragement of this nature might have been given in private sessions with the students). However, for every major topic, Mr. Moore mentioned a variety (usually three or four) of books or chapters in books that the students should read, frequently offering differing or controversial views on the topic.

Subsequent class discussions indicated that most of the students followed his recommendations, and had read some or all of the references. With respect to his second point, essay marking, the vignette (Part A) illustrates the sorts of comments Mr. Moore would make concerning "content", "conceptual understanding" and "style". The class session of March 25 (mentioned above), which demonstrates briefly Mr. Moore's use of 'model' answers, was one of nine sessions throughout the year during which 'model' answers were used as a springboard for a discussion about style and structure. The final enabling strategy mentioned by Mr. Moore, the "joint planning and constructing of essays" illustrated in the vignette, occurred, with variations, in three other class sessions.

3. HOW DOES THIS TASK RELATE TO THE WRITING GENERALLY ASSIGNED IN THIS PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY CLASSROOM?

A. The Teacher's Perceptions of Writing in Physical Geography

Mr. Moore expressed his perceptions of the functions and kinds of writing in A-level geography as follows:

The Functions of Writing

1. as a **written record** of subject matter - from lectures, discourse, dictation, note-taking
2. as an **exhibition** of understanding from reading
3. as a **demonstration** of research and learning (the homework essay)
4. as a **demonstration** of learning (in the sense of recall) and understanding (the timed essay) (from jottings in preparation for March 26).

The Kinds of Writing

- a) as deduced from the functions above
 - abbreviated notes
 - lengthy notes from reading
 - the long essay
 - the individual study
 - the data-response answer (statistics, diagrams)
 - the fieldwork account and fieldwork notes
 - the timed essay from an examination
- b) presumably these could also be subdivided into
 - the factual account
 - the synthesis from sources
 - the "argument" (shows contention and favors one side)

the "discussion" (shows contention but gives equal attention to both sides) (from jottings for March 26 interview).

Whereas he lists the functions of writing as "a record", "an exhibition", and "a demonstration of learning and understanding", comments which Mr. Moore makes in class imply additional functions:

When you write your essays, remember, I would like to know what you know (March 18, 1985).

Your essays contain the bulk of points you will need for the exam (April 22, 1985).

The first statement, "I would like to know what you know", occurred in the context of his giving back the students' marked essays, written in examination conditions the previous week. Concerned with the impending final exam, he wanted to ascertain the extent of their knowledge, as well as their ability to communicate that knowledge, for two reasons: first, so that he would know to what extent he had to reteach or otherwise assist their revision of the topic; secondly, so that the students would know where they had insufficient "content knowledge" and could take appropriate steps. In addition to the timed essay functioning as a "demonstration of learning and understanding", then, it also functions, in a pragmatic sense, as a pedagogical tool to assist Mr. Moore in his planning of future lessons as well as a study tool to assist the students in their revision planning. The second comment, "your essays contain the bulk of points you will need for your exam", again indicates a function of these essays as a study tool, but in a slightly different sense. In addition to showing where the students' knowledge of content might be scanty, they also have functioned, while they were being composed, to force the students to synthesize the breadth of information and knowledge they already do have related to the topic, so that they will have it as a reference in a differently ordered format.

Based on what both teacher and students have expressed about writing and the functions of writing in physical geography, they could be listed as follows:

- a) as demonstrations of knowledge, and of how to structure that knowledge in appropriate style for an examining audience

b) as syntheses of content knowledge to serve as a study tool for the students

c) as indications of content knowledge and competence in communicating that knowledge to serve as a pedagogical tool for teachers

d) as opportunities for exploring controversies and/or speculating on the formation of physical phenomena.

B. The Students' Perceptions of Writing in Physical Geography

Although Christine and Vernon, the only two of the twelve students participating in the study who took physical geography, did not explicitly state their perceptions of the functions of writing in geography, their implicit understanding of writing as a **demonstration** of their knowledge can be inferred from these comments extracted from their journals:

Out of my A-level subjects writing is undoubtedly the most important in Geography...a good writing style is essential to produce good essays....My research for each essay involves reading from between 5 and 8 different books....The main body of the essay is essentially a discussion of a range of information relating to the title....Because of the controversy surrounding many geomorphological features and their formation it is difficult to write about these features without going into detail....The main problem I have with essays is trying to keep them as short as possible (Vernon, October 10, 1984).

I think that in Geography...essay style is vital...Have finished an essay for my physical geography teacher...I think it's more like an O'level essay than an A'level one - it certainly has very little structure. I had left it half way through because I couldn't do it at 1 AM the other day. Don't expect I'll do well with it - or if I do, the marking won't be up to standard (Christine, September 18, 1984).

During their interviews, however, both Christine and Vernon imply an awareness of different functions of writing:

It makes it more interesting if there are opportunities to bring in controversies in developing your arguments, but the questions don't always give you the opportunity...but I do find that writing in geography helps you to argue things better...there's no certainty about anything in geomorphology, so you

can't really be wrong. There's lots of opportunity to speculate...there's not much opportunity for original speculation because such a great variety has already been written, but say, if you wanted to do a description of the formation of a particular part of a coastline, you could put in some original speculation if no one has written about that particular bit...the best part of writing in geography is writing about your own fieldwork....it's your own analysis...you set the whole thing up yourself...you're left more to think for yourself.... Geography is absolutely massive in scope. You can always carry your ideas further on (Vernon, March 21, 1985).

In geography, I write facts but no controversy. I think that controversy exists, but I don't know how to put it in (Christine, June, 1984).

I'm not comfortable with the content of physical geography...it seems to be mostly factual recall...I'm just applying the facts, I'm not really applying knowledge...I'm not very happy with my writing in geography...Mr. Moore offers a fairly standard model of good academic writing and I'm happy to learn within that (Christine, March 20, 1985).

The excerpt from Vernon's interview shows that, in addition to functioning as a demonstration of competence in communicating knowledge to a teacher or examiner, writing can function in a more personal manner. Referring several times to writing as an "opportunity", he emphasizes how much more "interesting" it is when it functions as an opportunity for speculation, particularly when the speculation is based on personal experience, such as his own fieldwork, rather than on other people's writings. Christine's excerpt reveals an ambivalence about the functions of writing in geography. On the one hand she acknowledges her satisfaction with working within a "fairly standard model of good academic writing", but in her "need to certify [her] own work" (Interview, March 20), she expresses the desire to have her writing function beyond "applying the facts" to what she calls "applying knowledge". The underlying contradictions in this respect between her perceptions and Vernon's of the opportunities for learning provided in writing in geography are most interesting, and echo the differences between Elaine's and Christine's perceptions of writing in history,

except in that instance, Christine was the student who perceived more opportunities for controversy and speculation.

C. The Nature of the Discourse of Physical Geography as it Emerges from the above Perceptions in Relation to Assigned Writing Tasks

Another way of determining the nature and function of the written texts which emerge from this classroom context is to consider the language of the texts. Because of space limitation, I have selected just one of the texts from the vignette, the "Slopes" essay, to introduce this part of the discussion. Vernon's text begins as follows:

Bowen has defined a slope as any geometric element of the earth's surface that may be formed by erosion, transportation, and depositional processes. The role of transportation as a process in shaping valley-side slopes is perhaps the most important, for it actually changes the valley profile through moving accumulations of regolith. As shown by the diagram below if it was only water that was responsible for cutting and shaping valleys, all streams would flow in steep-sided gorges. It is clear from this diagram that slope processes play a very important part in the modelling of valley slopes while the downcutting action of rivers is rather restricted and the role of streams is probably more closely related to the removal of material carried downslope by processes acting on the valley sides themselves.

Christine's text begins:

In humid, temperate areas, valley-side slopes are typically convexo-concave. They are formed by a variety of sub-aerial processes, some the result of climatic conditions, some the result of rock type structures. The form of a slope is the result of a series of earth movements moving weathered material, some fast, some slow, some dry, and some lubricated.

Part of the discourse of geography involves terminology, and Mr. Moore stresses several times in the course of the year the importance of using geographical terminology for precision, for brevity, and for marks:

...'denudation processes' - in your essays you should be able to use words like that (March 18, 1985).

...learn how to use brevity so you can write at length...use precise vocabulary - the words the authorities use - that can often save you five or more words...(March 25, 1985).

The excerpts from Christine's and Vernon's texts reveal differing degrees of competence in the use of geographical terminology, the terms forming an integral part of the discourse in Vernon's text, but vying, in Christine's text, with non-geographical terminology also carrying important geographical concepts (i.e. "series of earth movements moving"). Another feature of the discourse of geography involves the root metaphors or governing paradigms of the discipline. In geomorphology, the study of landforms, Mr. Moore identifies the idea of "processes" as the governing paradigm, and "scale" and "change" as the key concepts, or what might be considered the root metaphors (Interview, March 26). The title of the assigned essay, "What processes have shaped valley-side slopes in humid-temperate areas?" places students within the governing paradigm at the outset. The excerpts from Christine's and Vernon's texts both show a consideration of "processes" within the concept of "change". A third feature of the discourse of geomorphology, according to Mr. Moore, involves acknowledging the conjectural nature of assessments of geomorphological evidence:

A lot of thinking about landforms is conjecture and hypothesis...there is always room for more research, alternative explanations, doubts, interpretations...kids should be aware of that...I'm a great believer in "maybe" and "possibly" and "implies"...their discursive essays should not be simply as assemblage of facts...there should be some realization of controversy and disagreement. Even if concrete research has been quoted, one might look for words and phrases like "however", "perhaps", "maybe", "recent research suggests", "some would argue that", "on the other hand", "possibly" - these are just a few off the top of my head, but there are obviously many more (March 26, 1985).

This view is illustrated in classroom exchanges such as the following:

Christine (asking about denudation processes): How do they [the geomorphologists] know?

Mr. Moore: They don't, for absolute certainty. It's primarily hypothetical, an hypothesis which fits observed phenomena" (March 18, 1985).

Vernon's and Christine's texts reveal the extent to which they have internalized this feature of geographical discourse as perceived and presented by Mr. Moore. Qualifying modifiers play an important role in Vernon's setting up his line of argument. He uses the following words

and phrases - "perhaps", "if it was only water", "rather restricted", and "probably more closely related" - to show that although his line of argument is a considered one, it is nonetheless interpretive of evidence, conjectural rather than straightforwardly assertive. Throughout his text are further indications that his reasoning is speculative and open to discussion:

...not entirely correct to attribute,....Just as there is evidence to suggest that...many have been..., it might well be expected..., usually..., rarely experienced..., recent measurements have suggested..., typically..., may be important..., are being increasingly recognized..., it is now thought that..., may be broadly classified under..., however, it is doubtful how important..., probably..., arguably..., generally thought..., in my experience...

Christine sets up her argument that slopes are shaped as a result of earth movements caused by "a variety of sub-aerial processes", and presents two lists: causes of the processes; and features of the moving weathered material. Her tone is more assertive than suggestive:

*...valley side slopes are typically convexo-concave
They are formed by...
The form of a slope is...*

As she begins to develop her line of argument, however, she uses more modal verbs and qualifying phrases and adverbs: "may occur", "most liable to occur", "often occurring", "often found", "may be observed", "may result", "reasonably rare", "rarely", "would tend", "likely to be", and "may hold the key". She also introduces, about half way through her paper, conflicting views important to the development of her topic:

For example, the low rounded hills of the South Downs in SE England might have been regarded by W. H. Davies as adjustment to past drainage conditions, tending towards 'old age' equilibrium'. Clearly slopes will tend to degrade sharp features of major faulting, glacial activity, and other climatic regimes.

But equally, valley slopes may be seen as a dynamic system (see diagram), from watershed to river, in which the drainage pattern, vegetation cover, availability of weathered material, weathering and erosional activities and man's activities are active processes shaping the valley slopes. It would be foolish to ignore past processes which have had a

vital impact on the shape of valley-slopes in humid-temperate climates...but present processes are an important influence too, and may hold the key to past developments.

Although she is not happy with either the style or the content of this essay - she writes at the end of it:

This is still very bitty, I'm not sure that I've got in all the relevant facts enough about the shape of valley-sides in humid-temperate areas to show the effects of the processes, or ordered what I have got in very well. Not enough slope evaluation either, and the conclusion isn't very conclusive or incisive

- it is nonetheless evident that it involves a deeper cognitive engagement with the evidence of the discipline than the pure "factual recall" she described her geography essays as manifesting.

It is, however, in the individual study that the students have the opportunity, not just to enter into the universe of geographical discourse but, in a very real sense, to take upon themselves the role of protogeomorphologists or apprentice geographers. Accounting for twenty-five per cent of the final grade, the individual study, ranging in length from 3500 to 5000 words, represents a major component of the writing done in upper sixth geography. Students select their topic, organize and carry out their own fieldwork, and write up their findings in a form appropriate to the nature of their study. Although they have guidance when and if they need it from members of the geography department, their teachers sign a declaration that the burden of topic selection, organization of fieldwork, and writing up the data has been carried out by the student. Completed studies are then sent to the chief examiner of geography for the Cambridge University Board in order to be evaluated. As part of the evaluation, the examiner visits the school and talks to each student about his or her study.

Because Christine had been so busy in the early part of her year in the upper sixth preparing for her Oxford entrance interviews and examinations, she neglected to do some of her regular school work, most notably in physical geography, wherein she completed only one essay during the entire first term. To use her time effectively, she therefore

decided to re-do a project she had done two years earlier at O-level. Because so much had occurred in relation to her topic in the intervening two years, she was given permission. Unfortunately, I do not have a copy of the older text with which to make comparisons, but, according to both Christine and Mr. Moore, the content of the A-level paper is much more current and detailed than the O-level paper, reflecting a considerable amount of rewriting.

Her chosen topic indicates her interest in human over physical geography: "What has been the Impact of Dockland Regeneration Policies and Enterprise Zone Status on the Isle of Dogs?" In the Abstract she states that:

The aim of the study is to identify and explain changes in the industry, employment, housing, environment and population on the Isle of Dogs since the formation of the London Dockland Development Corporation in 1981, and to predict the future effects of Enterprise Zone and Development Zone Status.

What strikes me about her wording of this aim is her use of the institutional "identify and explain", more appropriate, it would seem, to a positivistic or experimental study than to an investigation of change in an urban area involving people's lives and occupations. "Identify and explain" predicts assertion, and in the entire first major section, "Area Background", not one supposition or question is ventured. The following excerpt is a typical representation of the tone of this first section:

The Isle of Dogs was once part of London's flourishing international port. Docking, and heavy industries traditionally associated with it, like lumber-merchandising and warehousing constituted a solid industrial base. They provided unskilled and skilled manual employment for the close-knit working class community. It was here in the mid-1850's that Brunel's paddle steamer, the 'Great Eastern' was built.

But in the second half of the twentieth century, the Isle of Dogs has faced industrial decline. This is partly because the Island's staple heavy industry has become less important to the British economy as a whole, and to London in particular. But it is chiefly because the scale of freight movement has increased...

Her next major section, "Hypothetical and Theoretical Background", would seem to warrant a more conjectural or speculative posture, but even here I could find only one example of supposition:

...perception of the living and working environment may be one of the most important factors in the location decision.

However, she uses verb tenses in an uncharacteristic (for her) fashion throughout this section, using the present tense for macrostructural statements or general principles, and the future tense for examples which have required interpretation or logical deduction on her part:

When a firm re-locates, it has various considerations to take into account. It will be interested in transport links. For a manufacturing firm, this will be for access to new materials and distribution of products. But all industries, especially light manufacturing, technological and office-based firms which are potentially the most mobile, will want to be accessible to their clients and workforce from a wide area.

Once she begins writing about her actual fieldwork, however, her tone changes again, and although still predominantly in the indicative mood, it reveals more about Christine as a researcher, speculating, trying different approaches, and making decisions:

But in assessing the impact of Enterprise Zone and Development Zone Status on the Isle of Dogs, I found that landuse changes alone could be misleading - at first glance it appears that...

It became clear that a material survey alone would not show the whole picture: perceptual impact is as important as spatial changes.

So additionally, and more fruitfully, I tried more subjective methods...

In part, this was a function of landuse, which I felt must play some part in my decisions...

Although an industrial survey and a survey of Islanders' opinions about the Enterprise Zone experiment would have been interesting, I met problems with both. I had difficulties in getting to talk to new firms on the Isle of Dogs, largely, I think, because they were on skeleton-staffs to begin with, and because I carried out my interviews in the summer holiday period...

Perhaps those I spoke to really 'didn't know'; perhaps they didn't want to know about yet another survey...

I decided that it was legitimate to use this [printed data], provided I took into account possible bias in this 'propaganda war' assessed from my own research.

Interpreting her fieldwork results also leads Christine into employing some tentative, modal phrases, as well as into acknowledging the existence of questions which, while they may be 'identified', are not necessarily readily 'explained':

By July, 1984, the Island's industry seemed to have been transformed.

Though they pre-dated the London Docklands Development Corporation, they did seem to have benefitted by Enterprise Zone Status.

...with other small business premises...this is important because it raises questions about how successful the Enterprise Zone will be in attracting small business in the long term when the Enterprise Zone itself has gone...

But if it (a STOL port) is approved...then the city of London seems likely to spread Eastward...

However, the transport links do seem to be those most likely to boost economic activity...

Possibly the most startling visual change...

So while leisure and environmental improvements can be seen as the first stage of a cumulative upward spiral, they can also be interpreted as sops from a development corporation which is powerless to reverse underlying social and economic trends. It will take time to establish which is the correct hypothesis.

This transformation from assertion to informed speculation is confirmed in Christine's conclusion. In working through and writing about her study, she has come to realize that human-urban phenomena are not manifestations to be merely "identified and explained" - her goal at the outset. She has not been able to reach that goal of finite explanation, but, in the attempt, has gone beyond it to perceive within a larger temporal perspective alternative possibilities concerning the impact of the changes she has identified. The final paragraph of her

study, set beside the first two extracts I quoted from the early sections of her text, reveal this progression, even though its mood is still predominantly indicative:

The physical regeneration of the Isle of Dogs is not in doubt. But whether the economic effects are merely going to be a bonanza for the developers, as local activists claim, or a shot in the arm to the local and national economies as the LDDC believe, is still a matter of political faith. It will be some years before researchers can draw satisfactory objective conclusions, though the first tentative steps taken in that direction by the Roger Tyms report suggest that the Enterprise Zone will not be spectacularly successful as an economic generator. It will take more time to gauge the full impact of Enterprise Zone status and dockland regeneration policies on the Isle of Dogs. And whether they will leave the same Island with the same Islanders is another open question.

Vernon's individual study is similar to his "What processes have shaped valley-side slopes?" text in that, while giving evidence of a depth of understanding based on extensive background reading, it reveals that Vernon uses this reading to raise his own questions. Where the study differs dramatically from the "slopes" text is that his questions arise out of problems in his own investigations, in his own experience, and so his writing is concerned with first-hand engagement with geographical phenomena. What I find surprising in Vernon's study is that despite this first hand experience, and despite the evident excitement and enthusiasm he displayed when talking to me about this study, the resultant text has submerged his strong personal engagement with the question he was investigating, and is expressed in the 'agentless' prose of what Mr. Moore calls "good, objective, academic writing" (February 25, 1985):

This study aims to investigate the properties of a straight channel including the nature of water flow, the occurrence of riffles and pools, the bedload etc. and to compare these with those of meandering channels. The findings will be presented diagrammatically and compared with those of researchers such as Leopold and Langbein (1966). It should then be possible to account for the occurrence of straight channels in nature.

There are two exceptions, wherein Vernon allows the usually suppressed 'I' to enter his text, the first in the "Methods and problems encountered" section:

The worst problem came when using the data to plot a depth and velocity map of the reach. The most detailed plan available (by courtesy of the GLC) was a scale of 1:1250, and this plan was obviously too small to be used for showing the measurements. Eventually I decided to scale this map up until it was sufficiently large to use to show channel depth and velocity.

It may have been better to do a compass traverse survey of the river and plot the channel using the bearings but this would have taken too long. I decided that in any case, the scale at which a compass survey map could practically be drawn would soon iron out any minor irregularities identified, so that to all intents and purposes it would be little improvement on the enlarged version. Field measurements were made sufficiently detailed so that errors in the outline map could be corrected. Particular features of the channel such as undercutting, obstacles and deposition banks were also noted and measured for inclusion on the maps.

I find this example interesting because it shows Vernon, the researcher, trying to sort out a problem and having to settle on a less than satisfactory solution. Once he describes and rationalizes his decision to the point where he, in actually working through the decision-making process, felt comfortable that it was an acceptable solution to his problem, he reverts immediately to the agentless passive: "Field measurements were made..."; "Particular features of the channel...were noted".

The second exception occurs in the "Conclusions and Discussion" section, wherein a part of his original hypothesis is not supported by his data in quite the way he anticipated. In searching for an explanation, he worked through the data to a moment of insight; in describing this moment of insight, he puts himself, syntactically, into his text:

In this study it was originally thought that angular pebbles would assist in the accumulation of material by trapping and interlocking with rounder particles and thus promote the development of shallowing

associated with riffles. These would therefore be likely to contain a higher proportion of angular particles and fewer well rounded pebbles compared with the bedload of pools.

What emerged from the overall statistics was surprising, riffles did contain, on average, more angular particles and less well rounded particles, but at the same time pools contained much fewer 'rounded' pebbles and more 'sub-angular' pebbles while the proportion of sub-rounded particles was relatively similar. It could be that the effect of the 'sub-rounded' pebbles in a pool is equivalent to that of the 'angular' pebbles or the less 'rounded' pebbles in a riffle.

I then realized however, that if angular particles lead to greater stability of the bed then it would actually be destructive to the river's established pattern of energy loss if there was a difference in stability between riffles and pools. If the bedload of pools, for example, was less stable they might 'migrate' downstream more readily and encroach on the following riffle, thus distorting the balance in energy loss conferred by the alternating sequence. It seems imperative therefore that one form should be no more or less stable than the other. The reason for the observed differences in roundness of the bedload samples then becomes clear.

A moment of decision and a moment of realization, both reflected syntactically in the text, both aberrations from Vernon's customary objective prose style; three two-word phrases in 4150 words: "I decided" - "I decided" - "I realized". Because of their 'exceptional' nature, they seem important; they seem to signal learning of a different nature occurring. The situation is more than the customary application of facts or synthesis of information. Vernon has chosen a question to investigate, a question which leads out of not only the research of other geographers, but also his own interest in a brook which cuts behind his own back garden, and in attempting to answer that question through his own investigative fieldwork, has taken up the role of geographer. This is a vastly different role from his usual student-in-the-classroom role, in which he primarily writes about the theories or discoveries or investigative procedures of others. I wonder whether, when composing this paper, Vernon was reliving the difficulty that he,

in the role of geographer, had in making a decision which seemed to him to be less than satisfactory, and was reliving the excitement that he, again in the role of geographer, experienced when, through his own mental effort, a natural phenomenon which had puzzled him became clear. I wonder, is it because these two cognitive acts, "I decided" and "I realized", were acts of Vernon the geographer rather than Vernon the student that he grants them this 'exceptional' subjective status in his paper?

Christine's individual study uses 'I' as well, although limited almost exclusively to the "Data Collection: Methods and Problems" section, but her use of the subjective pronoun is substantially different from Vernon's. It relates primarily to her fieldwork activities: "I found", "I tried", "I met", "I had difficulties", "I began", "I gave up", "I knew", "I spoke", "I accumulated", "I decided", "I took", "I obtained", "I could not use", "I built", "I got", "I could fit", "I had overcome", "I corresponded", "I visited", in effect providing the 'plot structure' of the narrative of her fieldwork. Because her "I decided" is in the midst of so many other activities similarly structured syntactically, it seems qualitatively different from Vernon's use of the phrase, referring to one of many fieldwork events rather than to a particularly important, for the researcher, moment in the fieldwork. Christine also uses subjective pronouns a few times in the "Results" section of her study: "I considered" and "I decided" as procedural statements at the beginning of the section, and other subjective phrases with reference to her fieldwork activities later in the discussion. As I mention earlier, her use of first person in this individual study reveals more of Christine as an active seeker of information than do her wholly objective texts, or even the objective sections of this text.

It is as though the task of carrying out and writing up a project based on first hand problem-solving with the evidence of the discipline enables students to assume the role of an 'apprentice' in that discipline, and therefore to authorize their activities, decisions, and realizations in ways they can not do when synthesizing secondary and tertiary source material. To this extent, the nature of the task has

exerted a contextualizing influence sufficiently strong in both students to overcome their customary avoidance of subjective pronouns in their academic writing. None other of either Vernon's or Christine's geography texts makes use of 'I'. It would seem, then, that its use in these particular texts indicates a significant contextualizing influence of the nature of the task on the language of the text. The significance, however, does not lie in the use of first person with respect merely to the surface structure or syntax of the text; its significance lies rather in the relationship of the learner to the discipline-specific evidence he or she is writing about. For both Vernon and Christine, the individual study in physical geography functions to put them into a first hand engagement with geographical issues and evidence, and therefore with the discourse of geography rather than with academic discourse about geography.

VIGNETTE #3 : BIOLOGY

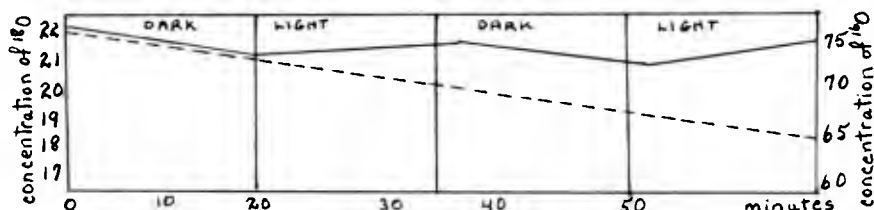
(TEACHER : MR. FOX)

(STUDENTS IN THE STUDY : SIAN, VERNON, LINDA, BARBARA)

March 1, 1985:

7.7 THE ABSORPTION AND EVOLUTION OF OXYGEN BY CHLORELLA

The graph in figure 4.2 shows the absorption and evolution of oxygen by a suspension of the Alga, Chlorella, in water. The experimenter supplied it with air containing a mixture of the heavy isotope of oxygen, ^{18}O , and ordinary oxygen, ^{16}O . They then discontinued the supply and measured the concentration of the two oxygen isotopes in the water. They did this for periods in which they alternately kept the plant in the dark and then the light.



- What is the point of using ^{18}O in this experiment?
- Why did the concentration of unlabelled oxygen rise?
- Why did the concentration of unlabelled oxygen fall?
- Why did the concentration of labelled oxygen fall?
- Give two possible sources of the unlabelled oxygen.
- What would you expect to happen if the experiment had been carried out with a suspension consisting only of chloroplasts?

(Nuffield Study Guide, 93-4)

Mr. Fox: When you're doing something in science, you have got to read everything - you've even got to read the small print...in biology or in any science, if you don't read the small print, you can end up getting it all wrong. You must read it all carefully...you must read it slowly, and you must learn to pick out the important bits of it. Now, I don't know how I'm supposed to teach you how to pick out the important bits because to me it seems to be intuition. You read through it, you understand what it says, and therefore the important bits are obvious...

You got the answer wrong not because you couldn't work it out...it isn't that you don't know the biology - it's that you don't read the information. It's as simple as that...

Now in this question...the answers are all in the graph. Look at the graph and start asking questions. What can you deduce? What questions should you be asking?...This is what Nuffield Science is all about - figuring things out for yourselves, learning to ask the right questions rather than just memorizing answers. (Directs question to Sian)

Sian: ...is falling at a constant rate.

Mr. Fox: How do you know it's at a constant rate?

Sian: Because it's going down steadily.

Mr. Fox: You have to be more accurate, more precise in your language, in your English than that. How do you know without any calculation, simply by looking at it, that it's constant?

Sian: Because it's going down in a straight line.

Mr. Fox: In a straight line. Yes. Good...

Mr. Fox: ...now the question doesn't tell you that bit about the dark. It leaves it for you to add in. So when you read a question, you've got to ask, "How much is it telling me and how much have I got to give?" Now that question tells you nothing. It just tells you it falls. It doesn't tell you when it falls, the conditions, or anything - you've got to read the graph. The question's about you reading the graph and saying, "Yes, it does fall, but only when it's dark. Why is it falling when it's dark?"...

...there are two answers there, because you're talking about two things all the time. You're talking about the labelled and the unlabelled oxygen. In other words, when you do a question like this, you've really got to think things out...like if you can't imagine everything, as some of you can't - I can't - I've told you this hundreds of times before - the thing I find most difficult is to keep a lot of ideas in my head, so what I often do is scribble little things down...so I know what's coming from where. Now some of you may have the ability to picture that in your mind - I find it easier to put it on a piece of paper, so it's actually in front of me...it's a process...you've got to work it out...

Next, I want to take up 7.8 - just part (a), because many of you wrote poor answers.

7.8 Sunflower Seeds and Seedlings

Photosynthesis occurs in a plant as soon as the first leaves containing chlorophyll appear. Until the plant reaches this stage its growth must depend on other physiological processes. What is the nature of these processes and how do they enable the plant to function without photosynthesis? In an attempt to answer this question, investigators compared the composition of a sample of sunflower seeds with that of seedlings grown from a comparable sample of seeds. The results are shown in Table 4.

		Seeds	Seedlings
Table 4. An analysis of sunflower seeds and seedlings. The weight of the seeds was converted to a scale based on 100 arbitrary units.		Total dry weight	100,00 88,98
		Simple proteins	24,06 13,34
		Complex proteins*	0,96 4,05
		Fats	55,32 21,81
		Sugars	3,78 13,12
		Cellulose	2,54 10,25
		*(from the cell nuclei and membranes)	

(a) Is it reasonable to assume that the sample of seeds which were grown to the seedling stage had the same chemical composition as the seeds in the sample that was analysed? Explain your answer.

Sian's Answer:

The sample of seeds which are grown to the seedling stage do not have the same chemical composition as the seeds in the sample that were analysed. The seedlings differ in that they have more complex proteins (from the cell nuclei and membranes), more sugar and cellulose and less fats compared to the seeds. (Teacher's comment: You have misinterpreted the question.)

Vernon's Answer:

It is reasonable to assume that the sample of seeds which were grown to the seedling stage had the same chemical composition as the seeds in the sample that was analysed (providing that samples were of equal sizes) so long as all the seeds were from plants grown under exactly the same conditions and at the same time and that all the seeds were gathered at the same time. (Teacher's comment: Size of sample?)

Barbara's Answer:

It would not be correct to assume that the seedlings had the exact same chemical composition as the seeds, unless they had been examined before they became seedlings. This would have proved difficult, so it would be reasonable to assume that the seedlings had the same chemical composition as the seeds, providing they had come from the same flower, and were identical in size and weight (at the seed stage). (Teacher's comment: You have misinterpreted the question.)

Linda's Answer:

Yes it is reasonable to assume that the sample of seeds were the same as those analysed. This is because uphill growth, external factors such as light and CO_2 have no effect on the seeds. The chemical content of each seed has not changed because none of the seeds will have been able to start to photosynthesize. The important factors are that the seeds have been kept in the same conditions of humidity and have the same age. (Teacher's comment: Size of sample?)

Mr. Fox: ...so, if you've got a large sample of 'B' and a large sample of 'A', the larger both samples get, the more likely they are to be the same, because individual variation will be eliminated, yes?

Sian: But - if they were talking about the chemical composition of the seedlings compared to the seeds which were -

Mr. Fox: - seeds grown to the seedling stage - no - it says here...it is written here that the seeds - which were grown to the seedling stage had the same composition as the - it's these seeds that they're talking about, not the seeds once they're grown. They're saying that these seeds will be grown - at the start were they the same? Can you read that? Can you see where it says that? It doesn't say, "Is it reasonable to assume that the seedlings have the same chemical composition as the seeds at the start?" It's the seeds of the seedlings - and the seeds that weren't grown. The seeds is the actual...the subject of the sentence, right?...A lot of you made that misinterpretation. You just didn't read the sentence, and it's quite clear. It's easy to see that the seeds - the seeds which were grown to seedlings - the seeds were the same as the seeds that weren't grown...the fault is not with the question but with the misinterpretation of you people. That actually says that the seeds are the subject...just because it's open to misinterpretation, the question is not wrong...The question is grammatically correct and is therefore not wrong.

Sian: But if - if we did - if we wrote an answer which was correct but they could interpret it wrongly, we would get nought.

Mr. Fox: You would get nought, yes, because the question is correct, see-

Sian: Yes, but if we were given a question which was, you know, alright, but the answer we gave they could have interpreted in another way, we would be given nought for that answer.

Mr. Fox: Only if your answer could be interpreted another way, but this question can't be interpreted another way. It says one thing and one thing only.

Sian: No, but it-

Mr. Fox: Your interpretation is wrong...sometimes what you write down can be interpreted correctly in two ways - if what you wrote is not clear - but this says one thing and one thing only. It's a correct question. Now if you interpret it incorrectly you are wrong-

Alan: A lot of the questions, though, are either hard to read or-

Mr. Fox: The problem that's happening here is that - it's important you can read something that is written down and understand it...and it's absolutely crucial in science...In science you must make sure that what's written down you follow, you actually understand what it says - and likewise, when you write things down, that you write things down that are clearly saying one thing. That's the ideal we are aiming at.

Alan: I agree with what you're saying, but in some cases people find not so much the question itself hard but the way it's worded, and I think more effort could be made to -

Mr. Fox: No, no - because that's what science is like....Science works in this way. Now if we start writing in simple language, then I won't train you as scientists because when you leave school and you go to university...you're going to have to read the scientific text and it's not going to mean the foggiest to you. You won't be a scientist, because I do the work for you, translating the language down. A scientist has got to be able to understand scientific jargon, the scientific language...

Alan: I agree, but it's not the jargon, it's the way-

Mr. Fox: Now you might ask.."Why do scientists write in a certain way?" and I've already explained that to you...in terms of professionalization. Now if you want to professionalize something, what do you do? You make it elite...because if everybody was good at science, would science be a valued thing? No!...now science is an elitist thing...I'm teaching you this because if you can't speak and write scientific language, not one of you will ever become a scientist, because it's exclusive to that language-

Sian: But the question's not about scientific jargon, that's not the problem. It's the English - the way it's worded-

Mr. Fox: No, it's English written in the scientific way of writing-

Sian: Well, I didn't misinterpret the scientific jargon, I misinterpreted the English-

Mr. Fox: That's just plain English - formal English - which is what scientists tend to write in...all this stuff - the graphs, the questions - it's all...it's all a language, and without understanding the language, you can't take part in the game.

1. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE SOURCES AND RESOURCES OF INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDING REQUIRED BY THIS TASK?

This vignette is from a class session devoted to going over answers written in response to questions from the students' *Study Guide*, the kind of writing most frequently assigned in this biology class. As the vignette illustrates, these students need to call upon a variety of sources for their information: the texts, diagrams and/or graphs which accompany the questions, their related knowledge of biological concepts and details, and their broader tacit knowledge of the discourse of science and, more specifically, the discourse of biology. Mr. Fox refers early on in the vignette to the requirements of the Nuffield Foundation Syllabus, wherein there is

much more emphasis than in traditional science courses on understanding what to do with scientific facts and

much less emphasis on remembering facts. Also, individual practical work plays a more important part and is more closely integrated with the overall development of such courses.⁽³⁾

Implicit in this description is the assumption that the writing students do in biology will require them to perform a variety of cognitive operations, using their resources and understanding of biological data, to compose a competent response. Since their ability to draw upon these resources of biological data is an essential component of the process of transforming information, knowledge, and understanding to written text, students need to develop competence in determining what specific information from these resources is required by any particular question. That many students experience difficulty with this part of the composing process is illustrated not only in the vignette, but also in the following journal extracts, which, in addition, show the students' perceptions of the relationship of this difficulty to their formulating accurate answers:

In biology the words have to be so precise otherwise what you have written tends to be wrong. Particularly doing study guide work when maybe one simple word left out makes the whole sentence wrong...If a specific "scientific" word is missed out e.g. 'negative' in geotropism, the whole answer is wrong even though you have written geotropism. This is what I find hard in Biology - getting the wording right to the degree of accuracy required. Another difficulty with Biology is trying to understand exactly what the question is asking (Sian, December 13, 1984).

Actual writing is needed relatively little in Biology. Much of the work is with experiments and discussion. In the exam, one essay is needed, this uses specific biological terms and is more like a list of biological facts crammed onto the page. Other writing in the exam is the short answer and the ticking of the multiple choice.

However, we do, in Biology, have to be careful in how we write. It is not so much the answering of the question that is important, but the understanding of what the question wants you to write. Many of the questions need to be rearranged and deciphered before they can be answered. In the reply, the exact terminology is needed. For example, if we were asked

why plants live in a certain environment, we could not answer that they preferred this environment, as plants can't really prefer anything!

When I write Biology answers, I find it difficult to keep them specific and right. I tend to write longer answers as I'm afraid to cut any information out of them. I have great problems in understanding questions and tend to bark up completely the wrong tree.

Writing does play quite a large part in our Biology because of the preciseness of the language that we have to use. However, it is the actual knowledge which is more important (Linda, September, 1984).

I found [the mock exams] rather frightening, especially the Biology ones!...I was quite surprised to find the wording in English very easy to understand and clear. This was a great help and somehow gave me more confidence in writing the essays. I found particularly helpful when the examiner gave a list of things to look for and help you go about tackling the question.

Biology, however, was a different matter entirely!...the wording of the questions was very difficult to understand, especially under the time limit and exam conditions. I found that I would have to read some of the questions at least three times before I could make any sense out of them, and of course this took up a lot of time and therefore made me more rushed (Barbara, December 12, 1984).

Vernon's journal entries make no reference to difficulties with comprehending scientific discourse in order to understand which particular sources of information and biological concepts he is to draw upon in answering questions in biology, but in this extract he further underscores the complementary problem the others mention about transforming known biological concepts into the precise language required in written responses:

Above all, in Biology essays it is essential to be specific in the terms used - apart from often reducing the number of words, these can mean something completely different from an [unscientific] explanation of a term. For instance it is no use saying "The particles pass through the holes in the membrane";

you have to say, "the molecules diffuse across the semi-permeable cell wall (Vernon, October, 3, 1984).

Mr. Fox expresses his concern over the difficulties his students experience in transforming known information and understanding into written text, not only in the vignette, but also during our interviews:

In science, communication is the most important thing; it's the whole thing. If you can't write, there's no science to do...the person who doesn't write well needs to be pushed...they need formal skills to start with, and they're not being given the skills...they haven't got the vocabulary...when they're writing, they don't appreciate accuracy. They must be precise (Interview, June 18, 1984).

To write in science, you've got to be able to write accurately, concisely, isolate the main points, be clear about what you're writing, and put forth a logical argument...you've got to be clear in your head about what you're writing...unless you write exactly what you mean, the person reading it can only interpret it according to the light of his own experience. You must be precise in the language you use (Interview, March 20, 1985).

2. HOW ARE THE STUDENTS ENABLED TO TRANSFORM INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDING TO WRITTEN TEXT?

When I asked Mr. Fox what strategies he employed to enable his students to transform what they know into "accurate", "concise" written text, he replied:

I teach it by going over their written work and pointing out their inaccuracies...I try to give them the opportunity to write it through in their mind as an intermediate step...they have to learn through experience...it must become part of the work they're doing...they learn from their failures (March 20, 1985).

During the course of the year, while "going through their written work and pointing out their inaccuracies", Mr. Fox's remarks indicate four major areas of difficulty his students experience in the process of formulating competent written responses in biology:

1. understanding what the question is asking
2. determining how to go about formulating a response
 - how to decide what needs to be included
3. using the precise scientific terminology

4. finding their individual "scientific voice" within the discourse of science

In trying to help his students understand what the question is asking, Mr. Fox emphasizes, as the vignette illustrates, that reading scientific discourse requires certain reading strategies. His advice frequently draws upon techniques he employs himself:

...reading in science - it's not - you can't just read along quickly as you might do for a novel. You have to take it in sections - read a bit, stop, reflect, and try to write it in your own words. That's what I do... (September 26, 1984).

Remember, what's written down often tells you something that's not written down. You need to read between the lines. If it tells you that $a=b$ and $b=c$, then you know that $a=c$Now, how do you turn complicated formulae into something you can get the gist of, so you can understand them?...you need to ask questions of it. You muddle it through with questions... (January 11, 1985).

Scientific writing can be hard to read. You can't just read it through quickly. Shut your eyes while I read this, and try to picture what's going on, what's happening...it's stuff you haven't encountered before...there are two processes you need to use to understand it...the deductive process - you need to deduce from what's there; and the inductive process, which is what you apply from your background knowledge...(February 6, 1984).

"In 1952, R. D. Preston performed experiments in which tree trunks were cut on opposite sides at different levels so that any continuous vertical water column linking the roots to the leaves would be severed. It was [unintelligible] that these trees showed any ill effect from this treatment" (Mr. Fox, reading from Nuffield Study Guide, 347).

Mr. Fox: Okay, now picture it. Some people can read that and know immediately what it's about. Other people, like me - I have to stop, almost shut my eyes, sometimes I do shut my eyes, and I go, "Right! there's the tree. He's done that; he's done that." You know, picture it in your mind. Let's take a minute where we actually picture what's going on here...

...Assuming Dixon and Joly's findings [work done before 1952 on root pressure cohesion and transpiration] to be accurate, what would you have expected to happen? Linda?

Linda: I would expect it to cause the tree's death.

Mr. Fox: You said that with great feeling, Linda, but it's not quite enough detail to answer the question. Can you tell us why it would cause the tree's death?

Linda: Well, without water, the tree - the leaves - wouldn't be able to photosynthesize - wouldn't produce what it needs for respiration. The leaves would crumple up and drop off and the tree would die.

Mr. Fox: An interesting thing about your answer, Linda. As soon as I reworded the question, you gave me the right answer...What often happens is that - the reason you get the answers wrong - is that when you get a question, you don't answer it to the full extent of your knowledge - because the form of the question as it is misleads you. Often it's very important to actually reword the question in your own mind...there are two stages of logical thought here, two steps you've got to take to answer the question....First you've got to say, "What does cutting do?" ...Does that answer the question? No! So - but the answer must have something to do with that, mustn't it? Yes? So what is the connection between the water not going up and the death? - and the answer is "water is used in photosynthesis which makes the food it needs for respiration" - and there's your answer, but unless you make that second logical step, you've not answered the question...so often the question involves you asking another question...always ask "so what?"...until the question is answered (February 13, 1985).

This extract from the February 13 class session shows the close link between comprehending what the question is asking and determining what sources of information to draw upon in order to formulate a complete answer to the question. The following excerpts from class sessions illustrate further advice and strategies which Mr. Fox intends as enabling techniques for transforming known information to written text:

...when you had to explain the difference between 'active transport' and 'diffusion'...guess what most of you did. You wrote about what 'active transport' was and what 'diffusion' was. The question didn't ask that...the question said, "Compare the difference between diffusion and active transport". All you had to write about were the differences. Some of you didn't do that...what you did was: 'Active transport' [snaps fingers] - switch on the old computer and spin out the old stuff again like a parrot. You didn't stop to think, "Well active transport's this; diffusion's that - how do they compare?"...all you wanted to do was to regurgitate the stuff out...it's a problem easily cured provided you're willing to look at what you're actually doing and realize that there are mistakes there...(December 12, 1984).

It's not good enough to say "it's controlled" without saying how it's controlled. It's not good enough to say "It's calibrated" without saying how you've calibrated it. You've got to give details. In experimental design, you can't say "Always make sure they are kept in the same conditions" - what conditions? why? (December 12, 1984).

When you write about science, it's got to be in order. Otherwise you may well say the wrong thing...you might write out of order and be correct, but then you're making a simple job more difficult. It was interesting in your experimental designs that some of you actually wrote step-by-step instructions...and it really paid off (December 12, 1984).

When you're writing your 'Results' and 'Conclusions', usually what you have written is correct, but not the whole truth. You need to show it in relation to the whole process, to the biological principle it's demonstrating...(January 16, 1985).

On your answer papers, your answers were terrible. The information was correct, the knowledge was there, but you didn't answer the question...the problem is - ...how do you figure the key point of the question so you can answer it? You must ask yourselves, "What is the key issue? What is the question after?"...before you write anything, think. Think before you put pen to paper...don't go immediately into detail. First sort out what's the problem (March 22, 1985).

Show the connections between what you write down. Don't put "This happens, then that happens". If 'B' happens because of 'A', say so. Assume the examiner doesn't know the connection unless it's written down...isolate the important factors from the details...watch your use of language. You wrote "put back in". What you should have written is "pumped back in from the blood by active transport into the tubule" (March 29, 1985).

Mr. Fox's reminder to "watch your use of language" in the above excerpt is a major theme in his advice to students on how to transform information to written text:

How you write it down - the language you use - it must be the proper, the scientific terminology. For example, "How do houseflies ingest food?" Now many of you began your answer with "They spit on it". No! They don't "spit" on it. You must use the correct terminology. They secrete salivary amylase by muscle contraction which partially digests it externally. Then they ingest it as a liquid (November 9, 1984).

You must use precise scientific terminology, or you won't be a member of the club...it's a shorter, neater way to say it. It reduces the need for lengthy description - it helps you describe biological concepts and ideas...you mustn't waffle - say things clearly and precisely (November 29, 1984).

Make sure what you write is what you mean. Say it accurately - so it says one thing and one thing only (March 27, 1985).

You must learn to differentiate between words. A 'reaction' is different from a 'response'...your line of thought can be correct, but you'll be penalized if you use the wrong word. For example, you don't kill an animal for an experiment, you destroy it (May 1, 1985).

Frequently this advice invokes a tension between the students' own ways of expressing a concept and the way authorized by the teacher, by scientific text, and by the examining board. The first of the following two extracts is representative of the kind of advice Mr. Fox gives his students with respect to using their own scientific voice when transforming information to written text; the second comment is indicative of the students' frustration when they fail at the attempt:

If you scribble down what I say, you may have my words, but still think the same, and will think that way on the exam...you must try to express the idea, rephrase it in your own words...you must take risks when you answer questions, and if it's wrong, we'll sort out why it's wrong and help you to get it right (October 17, 1984),

Mr. Fox: You must use the proper terminology. That's what the examining committee wants.

Sian: They encourage you to think for yourself, and when you do they mark it wrong (February 7, 1985).

Vernon, one of the students in the class who intends to read biology at university, described for me during an interview the extent of difficulties that he, an 'A' student nearing the end of his upper sixth year, was still experiencing in transforming knowledge to written text in biology class:

You must be very, very specific about what you write. You can write around the answer, but they might be looking for just one word. They can't interpret that you know the concept unless you write that word...it seems a bit unfair, but everybody's up against the same system...the top mark might be 60%, and that would be grade 'A'...when I write, I don't think of the examiner - I don't really think of a reader, except that I hear Mr. Fox saying "use the proper terminology"; "I want more detail"...but sometimes I think I've already put in the detail. It's difficult not to waffle, but you begin to understand the style the questions are worded in and can figure out what they want - sometimes you have to pull the question to pieces. I find it difficult...because when you write, before you introduce the idea, you have to write about what it relates to and how you came to think of it, but in the style of scientific writing we have to do for the exam, that's not the way to get marks in biology. You have to stick to the point (March 21, 1985).

3. HOW DOES THIS TASK RELATE TO THE WRITING GENERALLY ASSIGNED IN THIS BIOLOGY CLASSROOM?

A. The Teacher's Perceptions of Writing in Biology

To assess how representative the writing described in the vignette is of the written text generally composed in this classroom, the teacher's and students' perceptions of forms and functions of writing in biology offer a starting point. During one of our interviews, Mr. Fox listed the **kinds** of writing done in his biology class as follows:

formal write-ups of experiments
major project (approximately 3000 words)
formal exam (and mock exam)
notes in class
revision notes

When asked what he considered the **functions** of writing in biology, he replied:

...you write to pass on information and to record information. That is in the real world of science...in school, really, the writing they do - it's to test their understanding, so I know what they know, and they know what they know - or don't know (March 20, 1985).

B. The Students' Perceptions of Writing in Biology

Although each student approaches what he or she perceives as the nature of writing somewhat differently in their journals, the following extracts reveal a high degree of similarity among their perceptions:

Barbara: The most common form of written work in Biology is experimental design. This is when we have to write about an experiment we carried out in the lesson. I find this writing quite easy, because we always have to construct our writing in the same way...Occasionally we have to write essays in Biology. However, these are totally different from the essays we do in English, because they are mostly factual, not expressive (September 12, 1984).

With Biology, it's not really a question of writing what you feel or mean, only what you know eg. facts and conclusions, etc...I can always use books to help me. I have something, other than myself, to fall back on...in Biology there is a lot more to remember [than in English] and so many facts. My Biology notes were useful for revision, but in some cases I would just

look at the hurried jumble of notes I'd made six months ago and not understand a word of it.

Sian: The writing we do in the Biology lessons involves writing up experiments, work from the study and laboratory guide books, and projects. There are two projects, a field trip to Rippledown (an ecological study) and an individual project. The write-up of the Rippledown work required introduction, method, results, conclusions, and discussions of each different habitat we visited. The individual project is a topic chosen by the individual who carries out experiments to try and prove or disprove their hypothesis. It also includes plenty of background reading of similar case studies carried out by others etc. It must also be planned so that you are able to carry out some sort of statistics on the results (December 13, 1984).

Linda: Actual writing is needed relatively little in Biology...In the exam one essay is needed, this uses specific biological terms and is more like a list of biological facts crammed onto the page (September 18, 1984).

I think the purpose of writing up experiments to hand in for evaluation is not simply for our own use. It also helps the teacher to see if we understand the point of the experiment. If our write-up is bad it shows the teacher that we don't really understand what is going on. The writeups are also useful for our own revision and practising for the actual exam (October 23, 1984).

When trying to get across what I mean and feel whilst involved with a piece of work, I find the skills vary from subject to subject. In the case of Biology this task is not too difficult, this is perhaps because everything you write has to be a fact. **The facts are known and so cannot be misjudged....**In the case of Biology in general, the exams are not testing what we know but how we use what we know (November, 1984).

Vernon: In Biology, writing is quite important - usually in the form of explanations of how organisms function, how they fit into their environment, how they grow and develop, etc. Essays are rarely set...The other main area of writing in Biology is experimental designs and writing up experiments we have done in class. In doing these it is necessary to use a consistent layout...(October 3, 1984).

The different forms of writing mentioned by one or more of the students are as follows:

experimental write-ups and experimental design
 essays (factual) (rarely)
 notes
 study and laboratory guide short answers
 projects - ecological study requiring statistical
 analysis
 experimental study

The functions of writing they mention or imply are:

- a) to demonstrate what you know and whether you can apply what you know
- b) to assist in revision (notes, experimental write-ups)
- c) as a pedagogical tool for the teacher

In view of the above responses, it might seem that the texts discussed in the vignette, short answer responses from the study guide, are not very representative of the kinds of written work these students are most frequently engaged in. Only one student, Sian, especially mentioned study guide work, and Mr. Fox didn't mention it at all, and yet, during the year of my in-class observations, it was the kind of writing task most frequently assigned. The students carried out and wrote up three experiments:

1. An analysis of amino acid content of different visceral organs of a mouse, in relation to protein digestion (September 19, 1984)
2. An investigation into the digestion of starch in the gut (September 25, 1984).
 An experiment to test an enzyme-controlled synthesis (November, 1984)

and one essay:

"Water, water everywhere nor any drop to drink".
 Discuss the biological significance of this statement (April, 1985).

Although experimental design was a frequent oral task, not one was assigned as a writing task during my period of observation except on the mock exam. The Rippledown study was, unfortunately, completed prior to my period of observation, and, equally unfortunately (from my perspective), no class time was devoted to the individual experimental

projects. Consequently, other than the notes students took while Mr. Fox was lecturing, their principle writing activity involved composing responses to questions in their study guides.

If we look at this study guide work in relation to the students' and teacher's perceptions of writing in A-level biology:

to demonstrate knowledge and the ability to apply this
knowledge
to assist in revision
as a pedagogical tool

we can see the potential for a close match. The cognitive operations involved in comprehending what the questions are asking, sifting through different sources of information, selecting, synthesizing, and integrating it with their own tacit knowledge, and then transforming that information into written text, can serve all the above functions in addition to replicating many of the kinds of cognitive operations in the parts of the examination not dependent upon pure recall. In a pragmatic sense, however, as the vignette illustrates, this potential is being only partially realized. Consider the first function, "to demonstrate knowledge and the ability to apply this knowledge" in relation to Mr. Fox's comment early in the vignette:

You got the answer wrong not because you couldn't work it out...it isn't that you don't know the biology...it's that you don't read the information.

An intermediate step between 'knowing the biology' and being able to 'demonstrate and apply what you know', identified by Mr. Fox as 'not reading the information', prevents the students' written texts, in several instances, from fulfilling this function, in that quite often the students know more than their written texts indicate. The section discussing how students are enabled to transform information, knowledge, and understanding into written text presents many of Mr. Fox's strategies for trying to overcome this problem. But the problem itself warrants further attention, which it receives in chapter five of this study, since this function of writing to demonstrate and apply knowledge plays such a major role in academic writing. With reference to the second function, "to assist in revision", not one student mentioned, either in the journals or during the interviews, study guide work as an

aid for revision. Although this lack does not indicate that it does not function in this manner, it might be interpreted as indicating that a potential function of study guide work as an aid to revision is not in the forefront of their consciousness. The third function of writing, according to the teacher's and students' perceptions, "as a pedagogical tool for the teacher", is realized extensively in the study guide work represented in the vignette, particularly in relation to Mr. Fox's concern about their written work not being able to realize the first function, "demonstrating knowledge and the ability to apply it", as well as it might do. In going over the desired content of the answers, Mr. Fox emphasizes not so much what information to include, but first, how to determine what information to include and second, how to phrase it in terminology authorized as important for writing in biology.

Although neither the teacher nor the students mentions or implies it, the cognitive operations required to respond to study guide questions are, as I commented above, quite similar to the cognitive operations required in at least two sections of the Nuffield examination papers: the short written answer section, worth 25% of the final grade, and the comprehension section, worth 10% of the final grade. Even though recall is an important additional factor in the former section, both sections require students to read portions of biological discourse, including graphs, charts, and diagrams, as sources of information to integrate with their knowledge of biology and tacit knowledge of biological and academic discourse in order to respond to the question. And both sections require the students to be able to 'interpret' the question in order to comprehend specifically what areas of knowledge and information need to be drawn upon for a precise, accurate answer. Since these language skills are also the focus of Mr. Fox's comments as he takes up the study guide work, in a pragmatic sense, this writing provides practice for the kind of writing required in over one third of the examination, while at the same time engaging the students with the evidence of the discipline in a manner which requires them to perform a variety of cognitive operations when composing their responses.

The remainder of the Nuffield biology examination is comprised of the following:

multiple choice	20%
experimental design	10%
essay	10%
individual project	25%

Although the individual project accounts for a large percentage of the final grade, and also accounts for an extensive amount of writing (approximately 3000-5000 words), since it was written entirely during the students' own time and co-ordinated by the biology department as a unit rather than by the classroom teachers, it did not enter into the language environment of this classroom other than in terms of task completion. Consequently, it would seem that although the activities involved in carrying out the project would most likely function as learning activities, and the process of analyzing and discussing in written text their own investigations and findings would most likely function as a learning process, within the classroom context, the finished text functioned primarily as a demonstration of that learning. Yet the importance of such writing tasks, which put students into the role of 'apprentice' biologists, cannot be overlooked in terms of the overall writing experiences of sixth formers, and will be considered in more detail in chapter five.

C. The Nature of the 'Discourse of Biology' as it Emerges from the above Perceptions in Relation to Assigned Writing Tasks

It is evident from the vignette as well as in the extracts from journals, interviews, and classroom dialogue, that the 'discourse of biology' is a problematic issue in this classroom. From Mr. Fox's comments, it is possible to deduce certain characteristics of what is authorized as appropriate use of language. Precise biological and scientific terminology plays a key role. The problems lie not so much in knowing and using the correct technical terms, the use of which relies primarily on straight recall. The problems lie more with words which can be used a variety of ways in everyday speech, but which have been imbued with a particular denotation in biological discourse, for example, the distinctions between 'reaction' and 'response', 'destroy' and 'kill', 'filter' and 'diffuse', and with words from the students' tacit

knowledge of 'scientific discourse', wherein one of a pair of semantically similar words or phrases has a higher degree of specificity. This area of difficulty can be demonstrated when I juxtapose a comment made by Mr. Fox during an interview with an extract from Vernon's journal:

Mr. Fox:

...unless you write exactly what you mean, the person reading it can only interpret it according to the light of his own experience (March 20, 1985).

Vernon:

...it is no use saying "The particles pass through the holes in the membrane"; you have to say "the molecules diffuse across the semi-permeable cell wall". The first sentence is too vague and apparently open to misinterpretation even though I personally would understand exactly what I was trying to say (October 3, 1984).

The word "apparently" tells us that the authorization of the second phrase in preference to the first is externally imposed, and, in Vernon's opinion, perhaps unnecessarily. As far as he is concerned, when he writes, "the particles pass through the holes in the membrane", he is writing exactly what he means, and knows exactly what he is trying to say. The concept of 'audience' therefore, becomes the crucial factor, since shared understanding of terminology at a high level of specificity between writer and reader is important in science, particularly with respect to replicating experimental studies. Experimental studies, however, are usually replicated by fellow scientists or by other students of science, neither of which comprise an audience for the written texts of students in this A-level biology class. Their audiences consist of themselves (in the writing they do to assist revision, i.e. notetaking), their teacher, who enacts the role of examiner (study guide work, experimental write-ups, the essay, the mock exam), and an unknown examiner (individual project, final examination). The difficulty of transforming known information into language which this unknown examiner will find acceptable as biological discourse is exemplified in this snippet taken from a lesson on the concentration gradients of salt and water in the transport systems of saltwater fish. Barbara, in response to a question, begins her answer:

Barbara: The fish diffuses salt into

Mr. Fox: No! No! No! A fish cannot diffuse salt into itself. Rather "salt diffuses...". Your statement is biologically wrong. The way I worded it expresses a physical principle: "salt diffuses...". You get your answers wrong not because you don't understand the concept but because you get the language wrong. Is your understanding different depending on whether you use your phrase or mine? The examiner will think so. If you say "the fish diffuses salt", he will assume that you do not understand the process of diffusion...You must use scientific terms, such as 'limiting factor', which is a general principle, rather than "slows down", which is a particular type or description of a limiting factor...you must be able to predict what the examiner wants, and you don't just name the term, but describe and explain how the term functions, to show your understanding (October 10, 1984).

Although this snippet of classroom dialogue illustrates the problem manifested in speech rather than in written text, its value lies in its underlying assumptions about relationships between thought and language. The students are in a traditional 'lecture' situation, in which Mr. Fox is introducing some new concepts and checking, through questions, the extent of their ability to recall previously learned information related to the new concepts. He expects ready answers; if the students do not respond within a few seconds, he frequently redirects the question to someone else. The response must begin accurately, or it will be, as in the snippet, interrupted and corrected. What this assumes is that knowledge and understanding are readily and immediately accessible in terms of recall and application, and can be phrased at the outset in correct and appropriate language. Language then becomes the vehicle by which 'knowledge' is expressed rather than a vehicle with which to sort through details and evidence in order to work through to an understanding.

And yet he acknowledges Barbara's probable understanding of the concept: "you get your answers wrong not because you don't understand the concept but because you get the language wrong". The question which follows this observation is a critical one: "Is your understanding

different depending on whether you use your statement or mine?" Mr. Fox's former remark suggests 'no'; the language, not the understanding, is what is 'wrong'. On the other hand, he speculates that the examiner will think 'yes', that the language is an indicator, and the only indicator available to the examiner, of the student's understanding of biological concepts and processes.

Since the comments Mr. Fox makes throughout the year regarding the characteristics of scientific discourse in general and the discourse of biology in particular are primarily concerned with "precise, accurate terminology" and "clearly thought-out responses" (March 20, 1985), it is possible to infer that in this classroom the 'discourse of biology' relates to a stable body of knowledge, the understanding of which can be asserted in unequivocal language. Mr. Fox reveals his awareness of the problematic nature of this view of scientific discourse when he says:

The scientific approach we teach - for every hypothesis an appropriate method, and so on...that's the way it portrays itself...Now in actual fact we know it doesn't happen that way, but that's how it's taught...there's a big difference between real science and with science taught in schools. For example, we teach Newtonian physics though we know its assumptions are, strictly speaking, inaccurate...but Einsteinian physics is too confusing....I try to make them aware of these different theories, so they can see science not as right or wrong but as accurate or inaccurate. That is why I can tell them to use accurate language, to say exactly what they mean...(March 20, 1985).

The function of biological discourse in an educational setting - to state clearly and precisely one's understanding of biological concepts within a stable, authorized body of knowledge - is, as Mr. Fox states, at variance with the function of biological discourse in "real science". Some implications of this discourse dilemma will be considered in chapter five.

VIGNETTE #4 : HISTORY OF ART

(TEACHER : MR. CHRISTOPHER)
(STUDENT IN THE STUDY : JULIA)

MARCH 22, 1985

A. *The Catalytic Referential:*

"The Gift" by Man Ray
(1921)

B. *The Task:*

I want you to write down your response to the image in this slide...the quality of the iron in "The Gift" is not related to its weight, or its function, or its chromium plating...what qualities does it take on? How does it become "something else"? I don't want a description of its formal attributes, but how it is being used as a symbol...there is no right way or wrong way of determining what the object says to you. To me, it says 'violence'...

Now you write what it says to you. I want you to consider what is the difference between thinking about it and writing about it. The object triggers off referential paths that have to do with your own experiences. I want you to trace those referential paths (Mr. Christopher, March 22, 1985).

C. (ten minutes later); *The Text:*

The Iron

Once upon a time there lived an iron.

The Gift could be a gift given to someone to hurt them but there seems to be no relevance here.

Perhaps the artist has made the Gift a decorative item (like a painted road cone) to give to the public, thereby confusing them, making statements about the receiving of his work, etc.

The symbol that 'iron' gives is a useful one. Iron - Ironing - housework?? = housewife??? equals non-creature consumer goods = functionalism.

Metaphorical ironing?? taking the creases out of things but contradicting by putting nails in it. Perhaps this is how the artist sees the public (Julia).

D. *The follow-up*

Mr. Christopher: Alright now, who will read theirs?
(no response).

Mr. Christopher: Come on, I see you've all written something. Who would like to read what they've written?
(still no response).

Eventually, Mr. Christopher reads what he wrote, I read what I wrote, and one student reads what she wrote. Julia makes the following notes below her own text:

Mr. Christopher thought the iron hurt friends,
 also passion
 meaningless gift - presentation of a smoothe
 exterior

The texts are not handed in to Mr. Christopher.

E. The final two minutes of the class:

Upper sixth, here is your essay topic: "The General Background to Dada". I want you to put it into context - where it happened, the people, and the philosophies - don't go into the philosophies to a great extent, alright? Are you alright on that?

F. The end of class:

Sharon: Julia, may I have the writing you did on "The Gift" to photocopy?

Julia: Sure, but it's just a few scribbles. Why do you want it?

Sharon: Well, I'd like to see - I'm interested in trying to see those "referential paths" Mr. Christopher was talking about in your writing.

Julia: But actually, what I wrote - it isn't what I was thinking - at least not my first thoughts.

Sharon: What were your first thoughts?

Julia: Well, I first thought 'iron' - and the shape and the word 'iron' made me think of horseshoes, and then horses, which came round to 'don't look a gift horse in the mouth' - and then the nails - to shoe the horse - but well - it didn't - I couldn't seem to go anywhere from there, so I began again.

Sharon: Why didn't you write that bit down?

Julia: It wasn't - it didn't seem - well, it really isn't sophisticated enough for this class - not at the right level - too basic. I didn't think it would do...

Sharon: Why didn't you read what you did write when Mr. Christopher asked the class?

Julia: Well, again, it just didn't seem at the right level - the language, the ideas, the overall concept - it just didn't seem to fit - you know - the level of conceptualization in the class.

1. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE SOURCES AND RESOURCES OF INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDING REQUIRED BY THIS TASK?

The two tasks in the vignette draw upon quite different sources and resources of information, knowledge, and understanding. The in-class written response to the visual stimulus of Man Ray's "The Gift" is drawing upon a variety of the students' internal and internalized sources of information and knowledge, most predominantly their idiosyncratic experiential backgrounds which, as Mr. Christopher points out, will influence the directions of their "referential paths", their tacit knowledge of symbolism — how symbols can be used as visual as well as linguistic catalysts for evoking responses, and their specific art history knowledge of the philosophical ideas behind dadaism. Examples of all these sources of information are evident in Julia's text. Whereas inferring experiential background from written text, because of the complex layering of psychological influences, is a dodgy enterprise which would inevitably end in reductionism, it nonetheless seems reasonable to consider the narrative form of the beginning and the syntacto-semantic relationship of "housewife" with "non-creature consumer goods" as examples of referential paths experientially (and culturally) triggered. In bringing to bear on composing her text her tacit understanding of how symbolism works, Julia incorporates an interesting distinction between symbol functioning as icon or sign ("iron - ironing - housework") and symbol functioning as metaphor ("ironing?? taking the creases out of things"). Her references to the relationship between the artist and his public come directly from Mr. Christopher's preceding lecture on dadaism.

The second task, the assigned-for-homework essay on "The General Background to Dada", while it also draws upon knowledge gained from lectures, and on tacit knowledge, particularly of the nature of academic discourse in general and the discourse of art history in particular, requires the students to seek out and synthesize external sources of information, primarily specialist books related to a particular area of art history.

In the in-class assignment on "The Gift", wherein the sources of information are predominantly internal but the catalytic referential is external and visual, a major factor in the process of transforming information, knowledge, and understanding to written text involves, according to Mr. Christopher, "converting a visual medium into language" (Interview, March 26). In this instance, a two-dimensional representation (the slide) of another two-dimensional representation (the original painting) of the creative unity of the artist's 'perceived reality' (a nail-studded iron) is converted to a linear-sequential, hierarchical, verbal representation of an intuitive or emotional as well as intellectual response. During our interview sessions, Mr. Christopher expresses his awareness of and concern over the difficulties of formulating a linguistic response to a visual experience:

How do you put into words the dynamics of the relationship between a large black square and a tiny red square?...The essential experience is so much greater than language can convey (June 19, 1984).

Converting from the visual to the verbal is a tricky operation, and therefore a difficult process to learn...the written piece itself contains no sample of the visual. It stands as a substitute for the experience of the painting...the subject is the nature of the perception, not a recorded, verbal, written analysis...it is an intellectual process of developing the theories sitting behind the work of art rather than the work of art itself. The artwork serves as a catalyst between the artist and the spectator...what the students must do is make manifest what happens in a glance by expanding that experience into a description...there's a huge gulf between their experience [of viewing the work of art] and the presentation of ideas. As the students 'read' the picture, they engage in a dialogue with themselves to formulate a verbal response. The written piece is their translating these verbal ideas and this self-dialogue into written form. It's a difficult process (March 26, 1985).

2. HOW ARE STUDENTS ENABLED TO TRANSFORM THESE RESOURCES OF INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDING TO WRITTEN TEXT?

The essay assignment on "The General Background to Dada", drawing predominantly on external sources of information, brings to the fore different areas of difficulty in the process of transforming the

information to written text. In the first instance, according to Mr. Christopher, the specialist books from which the students glean their information frequently

assume a reader with more knowledge than they have...Many of the readings tend to be biographical...or assume a large amount of philosophical knowledge...if you are trying to assume a particular body of knowledge superior to your own, it's difficult to write, to take chances...what happens then is that they tend to use expressions without explaining or without qualifying them - because they feel the need to use the expressions, but they don't really understand them (March 26, 1985).

Julia also addresses this area of difficulty during one of our conferences:

The readings have so much detail, it's difficult to get through. The essays demand a lot of reading...but there's so much detail, I can't take it all in and I lose interest. One chapter - for this essay - one chapter I read sixteen times! Most times I have to read chapters over more than once, and then I make notes because I can't remember, but then, because it's so detailed, I make too many notes. Lately I've started to - I try to write one sentence per paragraph. I try to get the gist of the paragraph or a good phrase from the original (March 14, 1985).

A second area of difficulty in transforming information, knowledge, and understanding to written text is identified by Mr. Christopher as

finding a central structure on which to hang their ideas, upon which to present a logical, reasoned analysis of a stance. Rather than to organize their work by chronology or by picture, they should organize it by philosophy...The distinction between the philosophy behind the work and the work itself should be integrated...they should be able to lead from the topic, think through the ideas, and then relate them to their historical context...combining analytical processes and their own personal evaluation...they should be able to rationalize and formulate arguments, make judgements, extrapolate from one piece of work to another piece of work...and hang their ideas on a central core...Julia's first essays were rambling and structureless, but now she's more confident about being able to formulate ideas based on written criticism (March 26, 1985).

While addressing herself to the issue of writing in history of art in general, Julia, in one of her journal entries, makes several comments which relate to this area of difficulty:

History of Art - what I know, what I express

I don't actually know a great deal about History of Art, the topic is so vast and although we learn a lot in the lessons, a vast amount of background reading is necessary to know where you are...

*In History of Art the subject can be rather philosophical as well as factual so I think a happy medium is forged between the two. I like to learn facts...and also enjoy philosophical conversation, although that's where I seem to have difficulty. I do find it easier to say things...rather than to write things to get my meaning across, because speech can be so much more gestural. One can use their hands, one can pause and flounder, etc. In writing, this is not entirely possible. I often have difficulty in finding the right words and, **more often than not, do not write certain things because it does not seem worth the extreme effort to become understood...***

I do make plans before writing essays always, but rarely make a rough draft as I wouldn't really have time (or patience) to do this. I try to stick to my points and to be precise, but, whenever I receive the essays from the teacher it often has 'confused' or 'wooly' written at the bottom. Obviously I am not planning well enough (October 18, 1984).

During one of our conferences, she indicates an awareness similar to that expressed by Mr. Christopher of an improvement in her ability to organize her essays based on a deeper understanding of the subject:

My writing has changed - is changing. It got better, then worse, and now better again. My first essays in History of Art were clear and precise, but didn't show the understanding I have now. They were just on the surface. Then, as I learned more, I tried to incorporate my new understanding, and to do what's expected. My essays got so confused - really wooly - but now, as I get more understanding, they're getting better again.

Mr. Christopher describes a third problematic area students experience in composing written text in history of art as "integrating

their personal experience with the philosophies of art criticism" (March 26, 1985), particularly in relation to preparing for an examination:

Their essays are a mixture of personal viewpoint and an art-historical view...the art-history viewpoint is a filter through which they view the picture...they make a personal judgement of the painting, their own analysis, they go through a second exercise, comparing the art historical aspect with their own....Unfortunately, the A-level paper is information-based, looking primarily for the regurgitation of accepted fact and accepted opinion...(June 19, 1985).

Art criticism relates to the artist's intention, often three or four times removed...through the eyes of critics, of art historians, or me....The exam assumes an expectation of the nature of the sort of criticism involved....there is an absolute involved, a right way and a wrong way to read a painting....there is some opportunity for individual interpretation within a contemporary context in the exam, but I doubt whether a student can really be entirely honest in a personal reaction...so I find myself in a dilemma...do you allow for individual interpretation or demand a common understanding....what I try to aim for is a move toward a common understanding....they need the esoteric knowledge of the discipline to know the artist's intention...a student reading of a painting could be naive or sophisticated, but they'll get a lower mark if it's out of line with the artist's expressed intention...we're restricted by trying to get them to pass an examination....It encourages pat, glib reactions to the major movements of art history, and therefore stultifies concept development....I feel what I'm doing develops individual perception, but I sometimes feel it's restrictive...(March 26, 1985).

That Julia feels similarly caught up in this dilemma described by Mr. Christopher can be seen in the following extract from her journal:

...in history of art...examinings seem to require a particular attitude and to question this would confuse the issue and me. For example, the recent discussions we've had have been so very long, laborious, argumentative...but at the end of the day I feel that nothing has changed. Mr. Christopher is stuck to the

examiner's argument, we're stuck to our own, and I feel as though I'm not really sure what to do, to ignore all personal contradicting feeling and learn, parrot fashion, what the examiner requires does seem a little soulless, but to try, with what little experience I have, to argue around a point only conducted on a personal inner feeling seems a little stupid.

The only way I can see out of the problem is to read a lot more on the subject and try to make oneself more learned. Even so, there is a kind of black cloud looming about because however hard one tries to understand this complex subject, there is always the knowledge that the guy teaching you knows so much more and literally dominates the lesson (not in a bad way) with his knowledge and experience (I find this very overpowering) (October 18, 1984).

She refers to the issue again during one of our conferences:

History of Art is more factual [than English]...the readings quote what the artists say about their own paintings, so you have to pay attention to that, so how can you come out with your own argument? It's written down. It's a fact. You can say what you think, but you can't counteract what the artist says....we can have our own opinion, and can disagree, and can do that on the exam if we want, but we don't really have the knowledge to carry all the ideas through (March 14, 1985).

The fourth major source of difficulty perceived by Mr. Christopher that students encounter in transforming their information and knowledge to written text involves the specialized language of history of art:

I like the nature of the language of art criticism. It's similar to literary criticism, wherein notions which are abstract have to be made manifest...it follows the structure of philosophical language...and has its particular specialist words which have critical meaning within the context of art history. Each movement has its own language...and the esoteric definitions are not a part of commonplace language. This is where many of the students experience difficulties, for example, understanding the fine differences between 'naturalism' and 'realism'...they use expressions without qualifying or explaining - they take on the language like a sort of costume - without really understanding it - but then they need to. They need to demonstrate on the exam that they know the terms (March 26, 1985).

During one of her interviews, Julia expresses a similar appreciation for what she considers to be the authorized language of art history, but also implies some problems with clothing her ideas in the not yet internalized language of art history:

I get my phrases in my history of art essays from my notes of what Mr. Christopher says in class and from the books I read....I try in my writing to take the air of an art historian - a detached view - I like writing like that....Mr. Christopher tends to speak and direct lessons on a very high level, so I tend to write like that - detached, like an expert [she laughs] which I'm not....It's a knack you pick up - by listening to Mr. Christopher, and reading books on art history....it's not just being an expert but being - you know - flowery. In English they want it clear, not flouncing about, but it's appropriate for history of art. You pick up the phrases, the attitude of seeming to know what you're talking about. If you give the impression that you know what you're talking about, people will think that you do....In history of art, I use flowery phrases...all the books I read are written that way....sometimes I think I'm managing it quite well, but then I realize my vocabulary is awful...when I come to the crunch, I haven't the right word (March 14, 1985).

Julia also mentions a fifth area of difficulty in transforming information to written text, one not specifically referred to by Mr. Christopher:

*...sometimes I've put something in and elaborated on it and was told "that's wrong", so next time I don't elaborate, and am told "This needs elaboration". I get very frustrated, and very annoyed that I can't figure out when to elaborate. I think some people must be born with a sense of when to elaborate...I think part of the difficulty is knowing whom I'm writing for. **Since he knows everything I know and so much more - what will he consider obvious and what will he think needs elaboration?** (March 14, 1985)*

In addition, there is the difficulty Mr. Christopher mentions of converting a visual experience to a verbal medium, referred to earlier in the previous section. It would seem, then, that according to the perceptions of Mr. Christopher and Julia indicated in interviews and journal entries, students in this history of art class experience at

least six major areas of difficulty in transforming information or received knowledge or intuitive knowledge to written text:

1. understanding, synthesizing, and integrating with personal, tacit knowledge the high level of philosophical abstraction and multitude of details in the literature of the subject.
2. structuring an organized, coherent response which integrates the philosophical ideas behind a work of art with the work itself, and places it within its historical context
3. integrating the 'intuitive' with the 'intellectual' [Mr. Christopher's words] or one's personal response with the authorized art historical response
4. using the language of art history as an internalized resource for formulating and articulating concepts rather than as a decorative costume to clothe one's thoughts
5. determining the appropriate amount of elaboration for a teacher audience
6. converting a visual experience to a verbal medium.

When I asked Mr. Christopher what strategies he employed, taking into consideration the above-mentioned areas of difficulty, to enable his students to transform received knowledge about art history, information gleaned from books, and their tacit and intuitive understanding into written text, he listed the following:

- a) *personal contact and discussion about the essay*
- b) *I talk to them in class about the importance of structure...a bad essay has no internal structure or intention, no excitement*
- c) *I frequently give them a ready-made logical structure that they can use to develop their ideas in response to an essay question*
- d) *I tell them to glean from the essay title six major points in relation to the idea - then they can develop the essay in a logical, almost mathematical way (March 26, 1985).*

When I asked Julia what sorts of advice and classroom occurrences she found most helpful with respect to her writing, she mentioned, first of all, a handout given her by Mr. Christopher in the lower sixth telling her how to write essays. She said it helped her with "how to structure conclusions", "how to determine what's irrelevant", and "how not to waffle" (March 14, 1985). A second feature of Mr. Christopher's

pedagogical technique that she found helpful, although she questioned some aspects of it, was the abundance of dictated notes which summarized the salient philosophical concepts behind the major art movements as well as authorized readings of several works of art, and which she could draw upon as a major informational base for her essays:

In history of art we have our notes available...in English you have to think about it - think up and structure your response from within yourself, but in history of art - it's more matter of fact. It's all there in our notes...he does dictate, and I think there's something not quite right about it because we should be writing our own interpretation because his words - I don't understand all his words, and I should know what my notes say for revising, so I write them in my own words....he would agree with me, but then say, "Well it's for you. If you don't need it, don't write it" (June 24, 1984).

...notetaking, as an integral part of the course, is valuable and enjoyable, but perhaps a little too lengthy, i.e. not 'notey' enough (Journal, September 18, 1984).

Something not mentioned by either Julia or Mr. Christopher in response to my questions about enabling strategies and advice, but which Julia refers to during our first conference as well as in her first journal entry, is the role of talk in relation to writing:

In history of art we combine our personal response with how it fits with the critical responses of the various movements. There's a lot of talk before we write on it. I find the talk very helpful, and fun... In history of art, we're talking all the time, so you learn what others think about the paintings. It helps you when you come to write your essays (Interview, June, 1984).

In this lesson [history of art class] I don't see myself as a particularly profound, intelligent, or graphically correct writer. To a point writing is enjoyable in this subject (more so in lessons as it is accompanied by lengthy discussion) (Journal, September 18, 1984).

However, in later interviews and journal entries, no further mention is made of in-class discussion as a helpful component in the transformation of knowledge and information to written text, except in

relation to Mr. Christopher's use of the language and terminology of art history. This cessation of reference to talk in relation to writing might be traceable to an administrative decision concerning the size of sixth form classes. Julia spent her lower sixth year with five other history of art students all of whom, according to both Julia and Mr. Christopher, actively engaged in frequent classroom discussion. For their year in the upper sixth, as a result of new regulations concerning class size, they were combined with six new students just beginning lower sixth. Mr. Christopher speculates that it might have been this combining of classes which stifled the willingness of students at both levels to participate in discussions. The vignette illustrates the reluctance of the students to share their intuitive responses to a newly presented work of art, although, as I shall be shortly pointing out, the circumstances were a deviation from the usual classroom procedures. Nonetheless, during the classes I attended (one per week over a nine month period), no students in the lower sixth volunteered a response, and rarely answered when asked. The upper sixth were much more responsive when questions were directed at them individually, but volunteered their ideas only occasionally, and rarely when they were not familiar with the philosophical and theoretical ideas behind the work of art in question. Once Mr. Christopher had introduced them to the major theories and philosophies of the art movement being studied, the students in the upper sixth, who invariably sat together at a table separate from the lower sixth, would be more responsive. It would appear that the lower sixth might be somewhat daunted by the extra year's knowledge of the upper sixth group. Mr. Christopher also interprets the situation in terms of increasing self-confidence, although without discriminating between the lower and upper sixth groups:

I try to encourage confidence...they have an innocence when I introduce them to a new topic...then they go on automatic pilot as they take on new understanding...they become able to rationalize and formulate arguments, make judgements, and extrapolate from one piece of work to another piece of work (March 26, 1985).

It is interesting to note the discrepancy between what Mr. Christopher considers to be pedagogically helpful and what Julia considers to be pedagogically helpful. Although there is considerable similarity in their perceptions of the difficulties of writing in history of art, there is not one area of overlap in what they each consider to be helpful pedagogical strategies.

3. HOW DOES THIS TASK RELATE TO THE WRITING GENERALLY ASSIGNED IN THIS CLASSROOM?

A. The Teacher's Perceptions of Writing in History of Art

When I asked Mr. Christopher about the kinds and functions of writing in history of art, he responded that the students' writing was "primarily in the area of criticism", combining "their personal evaluation of a work of art within the framework of major movements of art history with the history of art criticism" (March 26, 1985). He spoke of their writing as

an intellectual process of developing the theories sitting behind a work of art rather than a description of the work of art itself...The work of art serves as a catalyst between artist and spectator...so, throughout the intellectual process, the writer 'talks' to himself or herself the same as the artist 'talks' to himself as he produces the work of art (March 26, 1985).

Using the above set of propositions as a basis for his consideration of the functions of writing in history of art, Mr. Christopher then listed them as follows:

- a) it functions as "a process of self-reflection"*
- b) it "hones their analytical skills"*
- c) it "makes manifest what happens in a glance" by "expanding experience into description".*

During our first interview, he also spoke of the amount of class time spent on dictating notes, stating that although he would prefer more input from the students, because the informational demands of the examination syllabus were so heavy and because so many of the students could not readily understand the "philosophical complexity of the literature" (June, 1984), he felt forced into the position of having to give them in notes much of what they were required to know for the examination:

The A-level paper is information-based...they need to be able to regurgitate accepted fact and accepted opinion (June 19, 1984).

...they get a lower mark if their reading is out of line with the artist's expressed intention...we're restricted by trying to get them to pass an examination (March 26, 1985).

Based on these comments, I add a fourth function of writing to the three Mr. Christopher listed: to provide an information base for the examination.

B. The Student's Perceptions of Writing in History of Art

Julia mentions two basic kinds of writing done in history of art in her first journal entry:

In this lesson a lot of writing is involved, in school it is basically note-taking and, for homework, quite a lot of writing is expected (normally 1 essay every fortnight, maybe more or less) (September 18, 1984).

She elaborates on the essay writing in her next journal entry:

I find that the type of essays we are asked to do in History of Art are not normally different from each other. They normally require a half personal view, half research, and so I can't really say which I find most stimulating or easiest (October 18, 1984).

Although Julia does not specifically discuss functional aspects of her writing, some inferences can be drawn concerning her assumptions about functions of writing from her comments on other aspects of writing. For example, during our first interview, she commented:

...he does dictate and I think there's something not quite right about it because we should be writing our own interpretation because his words - I don't understand all his words, and I should know what my notes say for revising, so I write them in my own words (June, 1984).

The most obvious function of writing implied is the pragmatic function of serving as an information base for revising for the examination. However, Julia is also concerned here with another function of writing, more personal than pragmatic: her writing, her notes, should be an expression of her way of understanding the information, not simply an unintegrated copy of Mr. Christopher's way of presenting the material.

The act of changing Mr. Christopher's words to her own is, for Julia, an interpretive act which aids her understanding so that when she re-reads her notes for revision, she will find them more meaningful. Her writing, by inference, is functioning to help her make more meaningful unfamiliar received information.

She implies another function of writing during one of our later interviews, this time in relation to composing essays:

I try to take the air of an art historian - a detached view. I like writing like that....Mr. Christopher tends to speak and direct lessons on a very high level, so I tend to write like that - detached, like an expert [she laughs] which I'm not....if you give the impression that you know what you're talking about, other people will think that you do....in history of art...you use flowery phrases. All the books I read are written that way (March 14, 1985).

In this snippet of conversation, Julia is implying that writing functions to assist her to assume with increasing confidence the role of apprentice art historian. The model she presents can be schematized as follows:

- a) the teacher, as expert, has internalized the discourse of the discipline and uses this specialized language to communicate his knowledge to his students
- b) Julia receives the 'knowledge' in the 'language' of the teacher which, since she has not yet internalized either the content or the discourse of the discipline, has not been previously a part of her usable verbal repertoire
- c) Julia also receives information from specialist books written in the discourse of the discipline
- d) she incorporates in her essays phrases of the received discourse of the subject before she fully understands them, assuming the role of 'expert' before she really becomes one
- e) by using the phrases of the discourse of history of art in her assumed role or, as Wayne Booth uses the word,⁴ her 'hypocritical' role as 'expert', she becomes increasingly familiar with them as she encounters them in further lectures and readings, thereby facilitating her understanding of the discipline.

C. The Nature of the Discourse of History of Art as It Emerges from the Above Perceptions in Relation to Assigned Writing Tasks

I chose the March 22 class as the basis for the history of art vignette because of the nature of the two writing tasks assigned that day. One was typical both of the kind and functions of writing usually assigned in this history of art class as well as of the manner of its being assigned and evaluated, whereas the other was atypical in these respects. The 'typical' task is the one which was assigned during the final few minutes of the class, consisting of a title, "The General Background to Dada", and a few comments about its expected content:

I want you to put it into context - where it happened, the people, and the philosophies - don't go into the philosophies to a great extent, alright? Are you alright on that?

The students are expected to combine information from their lecture notes with information gathered from books on art history to compose a response at home and hand it to the teacher, who will evaluate it and return it near the end of a future lesson. In the classes I attended, there were no general comments to the class, or classroom discussions of either the specific topic or of texts written by the students in response to the topic, although Mr. Christopher would confer individually out of class with students whenever he or a student thought it necessary. For example, on one of Julia's lower sixth essays is written the comment:

Julia, it is difficult for me to make a written criticism of this essay. I think it would be better if you came to talk with me about it.

Although in the classes I attended the writing tasks were assigned, completed, evaluated, and returned according to the above procedures, as the year progressed, the formal requirements of the tasks changed. From September until February, seven of the nine tasks assigned while I was in the classroom were to be written in essay form; two were to be written in note form, with headings. However, from March until June, as the final examination became increasingly imminent, in the need to cover the informational requirements of the syllabus, Mr. Christopher assigned most of the tasks to be completed in note form rather than in

discursive essay form. These notes were to be handed in, and were evaluated by Mr. Christopher primarily for focus and completeness. Unfortunately, I do not have the exact wording of the presentational context of all of the assigned tasks, since I was requested not to use my cassette recorder in this particular class. However, I was able to record in my fieldnotes the exact wording for four of the tasks, from which it is possible to infer some intended functions of the tasks. The topics in themselves also provide clues to the teacher's intended aims of the tasks, but it is in the whole classroom context of assigning, completing, evaluating, and related postwriting activities that we can discern, in a pragmatic sense, a significant part of how writing typically functions in this particular classroom, and see how this compares with the teacher's and student's perceptions of writing in history of art. The following are the four task assignments which I recorded in my fieldnotes:

Upper sixth, I want you to compare and contrast the work and ideas of the Cubist movement with that of the Fauve group. Hand in also any notes you make for the essay. Make sure your argument is supported by illustrations from the paintings (October 20, 1984).

*Do some notes on Mies van der Rogh - some ideas on the development of the architecture of Mies van der Rogh - a general picture so you can remember it. Also have a look at the Bauhaus school. Just notes on the general ideas. **Limit yourself - no matter how big the subject, limit yourself to three pages. That's all you'll have time for with any question on the exam** (February 15, 1985).*

Upper sixth, I want you to do a couple of architects - look at Corbusier, van der Rogh, expand on Frank Lloyd Wright. Just do notes. There's three books you can read - they're in the library - one on each of the architects - all Pelican publications by Peter Blake. They're a doddle to read. They'll give you all the information you need...they all fit into the overall category of modernism, so be aware of it (March 29, 1985).

Upper sixth, here's your essay topic. Tell me if it's going to be a real pig. Discuss the work of Jean Miro with reference to automatic drawing. Please use specific illustrations. And do some research into

Duchamp's "Great Glass". Is that alright? Are you alright with that? (May 3, 1985).

Other essay topics assigned to the students are as follows [these titles are taken from photocopies of essays written by Julia and do not comprise a complete list, since she fell behind during the last two months of class and did not finish all of her assignments]:

Explain the difference between experiencing a painting or piece of sculpture in slide or book illustration and reality.

Toulouse Lautrec

The Romantic Movement

Matisse Exhibition - A Personal Reaction

A Brief Account of Manet's Development and Influence and Contribution to Modern Art

Describe in detail ideas of impressionism and the revolutionary changes that this movement brought about, supporting your statements with examples of particular paintings

Compare the Proto-functionalism and the Historicist

Trace the Development of Cubist Sculpture and Compare and Contrast It with Cubist Paintings

Delaney - related to Analytical Cubism (and the movement in general at that time)

Select one or more of van Gogh's paintings for each of the three periods, describe the qualities and feelings of each painting and compare the treatment with the Japanese prints, Realism, and Impressionism

Both van Gogh and Gauguin attempted to look behind the appearances of everyday reality. Compare van Gogh's and Gauguin's method (manner) of doing this.

Using five examples of Cézanne's work, one of which must be "The Bathers", describe the significant advances he made in painting.

Explain William Morris's notion of art socialism and describe Morris's revolutionary intentions in design, its variety and application, referring to one example of work per discipline.

Die Brücke

Instructions such as "compare and contrast", "do some notes on", "discuss", "describe", "trace", and "explain" assume a body of accepted information, available in these instances from suggested readings and the teacher's lecture notes, which the students must synthesize in their written text. Except for two of the topics, "Explain the difference between experiencing a painting or piece of sculpture on slide or book illustration and reality" and "Matisse Exhibition -- a Personal Reaction", the topics imply a concentration on the fourth function I listed under the teacher's perceptions of the functions of writing, the one not listed explicitly by the teacher, but implicit in many of his other comments: to provide an information base for revision for the examination. The two exceptions mentioned above, because they draw more equally upon internal and intuitive sources and resources of understanding as well as external sources of information, have the potential to fulfill the other functions of writing as perceived by Mr. Christopher:

- a) a process of self-reflection ("Matisse Exhibition")
- b) honing their analytical skills ("Explain the difference between...and reality")
- c) making manifest what happens in a glance by expanding experience into description ("Matisse Exhibition").

All of the writing tasks potentially allow for the function of writing that Julia perceives as significant in her essays, the opportunity to assume the role of 'art critic' or 'art historian', but in quite different ways. In the "Matisse Exhibition - A Personal Reaction", her role of 'expert' is being played in the 'theatre of the real'. She attended the exhibition and responded to the works of art, integrating the authorized discourse of the discipline with her personal style of expression to describe her reaction, as the following excerpts from her text illustrate:

"Mlle Yvonne Landsburg" 1914, I found rather beautiful. The shadings seemed very delicate, the drawing seemed moody, thoughtful and the strong vertical pull reminded me of the painting of the same name. The subject matter occupied a central position in the work and was simplified.

"Tiari" 1930 is another later work [of sculpture] and, perhaps, the one I think is most effective and interesting. It is extremely smooth (the subject is derived from both a face and a flower) and is slightly representative of an Eastern 'piece' of some sort. The light reflective quality is quite astonishing as it enhances the roundness of the shapes and the smallness of the object accentuates the compactness (the great desire to touch it is also quite delightful as well as being frustration [sic] (September, 1984).

Her lack of ease in this role, which relies almost equally on personal response and received knowledge, can be seen in qualifiers such as "rather beautiful" and "perhaps, the one I think is most effective and interesting", as though she is not fully confident about the 'validity' of the responses she is experiencing. Her discussion of one of Van Gogh's paintings, relying more on received information from classroom lectures and art history books, shows Julia again assuming the role of 'expert', but the role in this instance is mediated much more through the authorized gaze of the teacher and the assigned specialist readings:

The second of Van Gogh's phases was the Arles period which lasted from 1888-9. During this time Van Gogh produced quite an astonishing amount of canvasses, one of which is the "Wheatfield with Sower". This is an interesting painting which, I think, uses color in an effective way and harmonizes all the different colors (perhaps more successfully than Monet?). Yellow and blue are used predominantly (symbols of infinity and spiritual light) and the whole painting seems to have a majestic serenity about it. The composition seems to involve the sower, the path, and the sun in a circular movement, so that the sower isn't isolated but seems to be directly involved in the earth, sky, and agricultural work. Although one of the chief ambitions in the picture was to present the peasant as a hardworking, lone figure burdened with work and society I think the painting has dance-like qualities, as though the sower is in a trance, carrying out some sort of ritual, and, although alone, he seems to be quite happy that way (October, 1984).

Julia appears more confident in her assumed role of 'expert' here, venturing an unqualified interpretation, "I think the painting has dance-like qualities" and a tentative comparison, "(perhaps more successfully than most)" within the relative security of the authorized interpretation

which informs most of the text. The integration of personal response with the accepted art critical reading, mentioned by Mr. Christopher as an important feature of writing in history of art, is evident in both of the above texts, although both are weighted in favor of the latter, the Van Gogh text even more so. However, in the texts written in response to the tasks wherein the students are requested to "Do some notes on...", the focus is almost solely on received knowledge and informational content, as this extract from Julia's text, "Die Brücke" illustrates:

They called themselves Die Brücke (the bridge) after Schmidt Rottluff's suggestion for 2 reasons:

- 1) To act as a bridge between the old style and the new style and to make way for newer, more revolutionary ideas*
- 2) They all appreciated and read Nietzsche and it was he who said "What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal."*

Ludwig Kurchner was the group's spokesperson and the only one with any formal art training. They started off as a brutal movement but, through experience of their own work and others they refined somewhat. Their original ideas gave way to "more thoughtful and better informed approach... (May, 1985)

Here is virtually no evidence of Julia, the person, or Julia, the 'expert', responding to works of art or ideas which sit behind works of art. Here is only presentation of information.

I would like now to consider the other writing task in the vignette, the in-class response to Man Ray's "The Gift". Because it draws upon intuitive and tacit personal knowledge, as well as recently received information concerning the philosophies behind dadaism, but emphasizes the former, it has the potential to provide a balance to the kind of writing generated in the above types of tasks. It also has the potential to function in the ways Mr. Christopher listed as desirable functions of writing in A-level history of art: because it requires a personal response, it encourages students to undergo a "process of self-reflection"; because it requires students to extract features of the work of art and respond to them intuitively and within the philosophical context of relevant features of dadaism, it has the potential to "hone their analytical skills"; and, because it requires them to articulate an

almost immediate response, the writing most definitely "makes manifest what happens in a glance by expanding experience into description". The two functions of writing in history of art implied in Julia's comments are also potentially realizable in this assignment. Having just received from Mr. Christopher's lecture information about the philosophies behind dadaism, she is enabled by this task not just to assume the role of 'expert', but actually to be an 'expert' (since she is an expert in terms of her personal response) at the same time that she is making more meaningful to herself the principles of dadaism which she has just encountered as received knowledge.

However, this writing task of March 22, 1985, was the first of its nature given in any of the history of art classes I had attended since September, 1984. When I spoke to Mr. Christopher after the class, he said he had tried it once before, in one of the classes I had not attended, with similar "disappointing" [Mr. Christopher's term] results. Students had been as unwilling to share then what they had written as they were on March 22. Mr. Christopher attributed their lack of oral response to lack of confidence in venturing their own views, particularly in front of their peers. He tried one more time, on April 26, 1985, with a similar task, asking for a response to Magritte's "This is Not a Pipe". Again, only one person volunteered a response, but whereas during the March 22 lesson all of the students wrote for most of the allotted time (fifteen minutes) and several were still writing when the time was called, for the April 26 session, only two students put pen to paper. Consequently, despite the potential of the task to fulfill functions of writing explicitly valued by Mr. Christopher and Julia, Mr. Christopher is convinced that, in a pragmatic sense, the assignment was virtually non-productive. As an observer, the features of classroom context which militated against this type of task functioning effectively are apparent. Good intentions and good tasks alone will not result in effective writing and willing sharing of that writing. Written text does not emerge from individuals engaging in tasks, but from a network of interrelated and converging contexts rooted in cultural history and current constraints. A significant feature of the

classroom context in history of art is the nature of the language which carries the conceptual burden of the discipline.

Both Julia and Mr. Christopher, as I have already indicated in excerpts from journals and interviews, have an explicitly articulated conception of the discourse of history of art. Mr. Christopher refers to the discourse of history of art as modelled upon "the structure of philosophical language" (June 19, 1984). Meaning is made manifest through

particular specialist words which have critical meaning within the context of art history...Each movement has its own language and esoteric definitions which are not part of commonplace language (March 26, 1985).

In saying how much he enjoys the language of art criticism, he likens it to the language of literary criticism, in that "notions are abstract and have to be made manifest". He cites as examples the "fine but significant distinctions" between concepts signified by the terms 'realism' and 'naturalism' (March 26, 1985). Julia refers to the discourse of history of art as being "on a very high level" (March 14, 1985). Although she expresses frustration with the complexity of ideas and details in the books she reads, and with her lack of familiarity with some of the lexical items in Mr. Christopher's lectures:

...we should be writing our own interpretations because his words - I don't understand all his words - and I should know what my notes say for revising (June, 1984),

she expresses her pleasure in using what she perceives to be the discourse of the discipline as a kind of costume in which she dresses up her ideas when she assumes the role of art critic to dramatize her response to works of art:

I get my phrases in history of art from Mr. Christopher's lectures and from the books I read. I try to take the air of an art historian - a detached view - I like that...it's not just being an expert, but being flowery...all the books I read [for history of art] are like that (March 14, 1985).

Unfortunately, Julia did not compose a response to the essay assignment on dadaism, so that my comments on how it functions in relation to the discourse of history of art will be inferential in relation to the nature of the task. The topic, "The General Background to Dada", drawing almost exclusively on external sources and recently received knowledge for its informational content, puts the student writer in the position of synthesizer of authorized 'knowledge' or information. In this position, the student will be most likely to use many of the authorized words and phrases in which he or she receives the knowledge, first, because the nature of the task - the topic, the pre-writing, and the post-writing activities - does not encourage integration of the new material with what is already known, and second, because she needs to demonstrate to the teacher that she has satisfied the informational and discourse requirements indicated by the topic. The excerpts from the "Die Brücke", "Van Gogh", and "Matisse Exhibition" texts illustrate how the nature of the task influences the opportunity students have in composing a response to internalize and integrate the specialized knowledge and discourse of the discipline with their own tacit and intuitive knowledge.

The "Die Brücke" text is heavily reliant on authorized information, including direct quotations, to make its meaning manifest. In the authorial stance imposed on her by the task - as mediator between texts she has read and the text she is composing - Julia remains closest, in this instance, to the texts she has read. In the "Van Gogh", text, which requires her to draw upon a broader base of her knowledge about art to use as a contextual frame in which to place her response to Van Gogh's "Wheatfield with Sower", and to integrate her personal response with received knowledge from books and lectures, Julia's authorial position is made more complex in relation to the different sources she is required to draw upon, and she has more need and therefore more opportunity to integrate the discourse of the received knowledge with the discourse of her felt response, as well as to integrate these two kinds of discourse with a third - the discourse of academic institutions. To use Julia's metaphor, in the assumed role of art critic which the task urges upon her, she is trying to 'detach' herself or distance herself sufficiently

from the authorized stance and her personal stance in order to arrive at some sort of integration of the two. Phrases such as "majestic serenity" and "dance-like qualities", which derive from a preceding lecture, and "Yellow and blue are used predominantly (symbols of infinity and spiritual light)" and "the sower is in a trance, carrying out some sort of ritual", which derive from lecture notes, "yellow and blue predominate" and "trance-like ritualized movement", carry the burden of meaning in the excerpt and contrast with phrases such as "This is an interesting painting" and "seems to be quite happy that way", which indicate, rather unexcitingly, Julia's personal response. Another interesting lexical feature is her use of the indicative mood for ideas which have been authorized and her use of modal verbs for her own contributions to her reading of the painting. In "Matisse Exhibition - A Personal Reaction", the task, although drawing upon a similar array of external and internal resources, because it is dramatized in the 'theatre of the real', allows Julia to assume the role of art critic or 'expert' in a much more experiential sense. The language of the text reflects this more personal engagement with works of art, the increased ratio of modal verbs and speculative phrases to the more assertive indicative mood she uses for the authorized views which she has more confidence writing about indicating the greater contributions of her intuitive and tacit knowledge to the text. Consider, for example, the tentativeness of this personal response:

The shadings seemed very delicate, the drawing seemed moody, thoughtful, and the strong vertical pull reminded me of the painting with the same name

and this one:

"Tiari" is another later work and, perhaps, the one I think is most effective and interesting

with the confidence with which she asserts what is safe and authorized:

The subject matter occupied a central position in the work and was simplified.

Her written response to the other task in the vignette, Man Ray's "The Gift", functions quite differently in relation to the discourse of history of art, as perceived by Mr. Christopher and by Julia, from the

three texts mentioned above. Since she is not mediating between an authorized response and her written text as she was to varying degrees in the other three texts, but rather trying to make verbally manifest her intuitive response, she is not playing the role of Julia, the art critic, or Julia, the 'expert', but is responding as Julia, herself. Her ideas are consequently not clothed in what she perceives to be the discourse of history of art nor in the discourse of art history and criticism authorized by Mr. Christopher, but are presented predominantly in Julia's personal 'expressive' mode of discourse. Julia, however, does not consider her expressive language sufficiently appropriate in relation to the usual discourse of the history of art classroom:

...it really isn't sophisticated enough for this class...it just didn't seem at the right level - the language, the ideas, the overall concept - it just didn't seem to fit...the level of conceptualization of this class (March 22, 1985).

In relation to the discourse of history of art (as perceived respectively by Mr. Christopher and Julia) and the students' own expressive mode of discourse, it is evident that the task functions intentionally and pragmatically in quite different ways. It encourages the students to compose within an expressive mode of discourse, a mode of discourse much more likely to integrate personal response with ready-to-be-internalized art historical discourse and knowledge than the other tasks. Theoretically, then, it should function within the students' zone of proximal development while they compose **as** the 'experts' they are in relation to their personal knowledge, rather than **in the role of** 'expert', as they do in their more usual writing tasks. Pragmatically, however, in Julia's case, and in the case of other students as well, the task functions to reinforce their lack of confidence in their expressively written representations of their intuitive responses, and the teacher's suspicions that such writing tasks, despite their theoretical potential, are not as beneficial as he would like them to be. On being asked whether more tasks of this nature might increase their confidence, Mr. Christopher sighed and said "Possibly", but went on to talk of the pressures of heavy syllabuses and information-based examinations as constraints which militated against his devoting more class time to writing of this nature.

VIGNETTE #5 : SOCIOLOGY

(TEACHER : MR. GOODMAN)

(STUDENTS IN THE STUDY : SUSAN, SIAM, JOHN, STEVE)

OCTOBER 11, 1985

A. Beginning of class - Teacher Handout

It has been claimed that "social stratification has changed in the past 100 years from a simple two-class system to a new system of many varied levels". Explain fully the implications of this claim. What evidence is there to support and/or negate this claim?

B. Excerpts from the Lesson:

Right, now, how do we go about analyzing what the question is asking? ...First pick out the phrases that are important ... "two-class system" - there's a sociological theory that rests very heavily on the concept of a two-class system...Marxism. Okay? So that's shouting "Marxism" at you. "Many varied levels" - that shouts something else - that what Marx was going on about a two-class system is not appropriate anymore. Society, if you want, has become more differentiated, more finely differentiated ... there are intervening classes ... and I've mentioned there that Weber is the sociologist that we have encountered before who offers an alternative - an adaptation of Marx's notion of a purely two-class system...and then a very, very important word in that question is the word "evidence". "What evidence is there to support or refute this claim?" What evidence - what concrete evidence is there to say that there is or is not a two class system? In other words, they're saying to you that you've got to back up these theoretical propositions with actual concrete evidence.

Every question you encounter, every essay question you encounter, you must analyse in that form....

What they're [the examiners] looking for is the ability for you to apply the knowledge that you have - what they're looking for is your power of analysis, your ability, having analyzed the problem, to mount a coherent argument in order to answer it. That's what's being tested at A-Level.

At the moment, because you're in a nice and calm, cool, calm and collected situation, you should be able to do that. You should be able to give time to analyzing the question and you should be able to give time to the way you are going to answer the question, and you should become so thoroughly used to doing that, that when you are actually in a position of having to do it under time pressure, you can do it very quickly. That is the skill you are trying to develop ... once you begin to see how to use your material to build an answer, then you're there.

One of the things you'll find is that your immediate knowledge, your recallable knowledge is a bit scant. So - clearly - one of the things you have got to do in order to do this essay is to take Marx's theories and put them into a coherent description and I would guess that in order to do that it will not be enough simply to use your notes but that you should refer, I would suggest, to the basic section in your textbook on Marxism. And then, taking it further...on alternatives to Marxism...Dahrendof's "The Nature of Conflict in Post-Capitalist Societies". What Dahrendof deals with is a number of criticisms that have been offered against Marx's theories. Your last year's notes list some of these criticisms...Dahrendof addresses himself to these problems.

All this will get you extra points. Most people would do their Marx, do their Weber, and leave it at that, but a lot of subsequent thinking has been done on Marxist theories...

Another rider: if you've argued for the Marxist way of looking at society, or even alluded to it, which you've got to have done, you've then got to say to yourself, "Well, what's at the root of all Marxist argument?" ...Marx is considered to be an economic internalist [determinist?] ...all institutions are superstructures on an economic base - that's very important, very, very important.

What is the whole basis of Marxist argument? The relationship to the means of production. To gain equality, you have to take the means of production out of the private sector. Now where has this been done? You have to look at where this has been done and what's happening there...in Russia, in Cuba, in China...you could argue that differentiation exists in socialist countries...

This is the picture you should be getting - that you actually are saying, "Look, here is one theoretical explanation. What's the evidence that supports it? What's the evidence that is counter to it? Is there an alternative explanation? What's the evidence to support it? What's the evidence that is counter to it? That is critical analysis. That is taking your argument and looking at it through both ends, and integrating the argument. That's ideally what you should be doing.

You're going to have to do this fairly efficiently because you're not writing a book, you're aiming at four sides of A4, so you have to refine it down...

Finally, you've got to draw things together. Your conclusion should effectively be a summary. It should draw together the way things are argued and make some tentative conclusions, and you'll see that I've underlined here the word "tentative", because what you mustn't do is say "This is what I think is right!"...Think of it as an exploration...

Okay. There is an outline. Now what is it that you have to do in order to get from that - which is sketchy - to a coherent, well-ordered, well-argued, well written, precisely expressed, direct, simple essay - that I, or in fact anyone else, could read? Well, that's where the work is, because in order to get that sense of coherence, in order to get that

argument - your task is not really standing up in a debating society and having to argue one side - or like a barrister - ... you have to present a balanced argument, and the way to do that is to make sure you actually know what you're talking about thoroughly. So in between what I've given you and what you've got to produce, you've got to do the reading. Now, you've got to go back to your Marx, you've got to go back to your Weber, and if you - if you're reading, you should read actively. Don't just read through it. Go back to the notes you've taken or that I've given you in the past - and if there are areas you don't understand, that's where you should ask, "What does this actually mean?" and obviously your primary source will be Haralambos, and Carathwaite. And what you do is go from that plan to your set of notes and then hopefully you will have knowledge you can live with, that you can apply... and then you've got to marry that information to the plan... and then what you have to do is you have to do your analysis of the question...

Then what you might like to do is build up a diagram, starting with things you intuitively know. But what that doesn't give you is a route through the question. So, by diagramming things - having it in front of you - you can plan a route. I think it is wise when you're planning not to write down and finalize what you're going to do, just to say everything that is relevant. Then, after you've transferred it to diagrammatic form, to look at it and say, "Alright, now, if I start there, where does it match?" and that's the stage I want you to be able to get to quickly before you take your exams...

Next week I'll see you individually and see what you've done and what you're doing, what material you've read, what notes you've extracted, what things you don't understand, what your confusions are. I want to take the process nice and slow, so that you know what you've got to do.

OCTOBER 18, 1984

A. Extracts from Interview with Susan:

Mr. Goodman: Right, now, what've you done so far?

Susan: I've planned it, planned the introduction.

Mr. Goodman: What reading?

Susan: Haralambos.

Mr. Goodman: How far have you followed the plan?

Susan: I've followed it as it is.

Mr. Goodman: As it is? Have you found that you've had to add additional things to it? [pause] Did you write notes while you were reading or did you just read?

Susan: Well, I wrote some notes. I've read, I've just read notes on the readings, except the Haralambos.

Mr. Goodman: And you feel confident you're ready to write it?

Susan: Yeah, I do.

Mr. Goodman: You say in your introduction you talked about the Industrial Revolution?

Susan: Yes.

Mr. Goodman: And you're going to go on to Marx and Weber as the plan suggests?

Susan: Right.

Mr. Goodman: You mustn't forget that key part, the evidence... On an exam there would be a mark scheme and a separate number of marks for each part of the question. And that would be a key part ...

Susan: Yes. Before I didn't used to go through the question and look at all the key words. I just tried to answer it as a whole.

Mr. Goodman: Yes, uh huh [pause]. In terms of the sort of theories of Marx and Weber - you now feel quite confident about that?

Susan: I do, but I still feel a bit - slightly - weak on the background.

Mr. Goodman: You can't quite understand it? Can't quite get it into words?

Susan: I understand it. I understand Marxist theory, but I can't relate it to the -

Mr. Goodman: Well you have to start reading Westergaard and Resler...[pause]. Is there anything else you feel you might need to bring in? I mean, the essay's essentially about class, right, but there are other forms of social differentiation, aren't there?

Susan: Yeah, like gender-

Mr. Goodman: Yeah, like gender, race, yeah.

Susan: But that's not part of the question.

Mr. Goodman: Well, yeah, Marx has a theory, there's a Marxist theory of the family...obviously you won't end up writing an essay about gender, about sexism, but it is a legitimate thing to bring in because if you take a Weberian view, for example, look at Weber's status groups - you could argue that women are a status group, you see? If you're using Weberian notions to argue against Marx, for example, you could say, "Well here's an example that cuts across class that still has influence in an industrial society" - it's that kind of link. You've got to start -

while I don't want you to go off on sort of massive tangents - you've got to start thinking of useful areas that you can bring in. In the past, what do you reckon has been the main problem with essays you've done?

Susan: Organization. It's difficult - getting everything in - there's so much information to order.

Mr. Goodman: True. Your essays in the past often haven't included all the material they should have done...planning for you is terribly important....I think you're a person who'll benefit from diagramming your plan as I showed you...and it will get easier as you do it...so you're not up the creek, as it were.

Susan: No...now, I feel a lot better now than last year - I feel better now.

B. Extracts from Interview with Sian:

Mr. Goodman: Tell me, Sian, what've you done?

Sian: I've just written about Weber...Could I write about a functionalist point of view? and -

Mr. Goodman: Yes.

Sian: Praxis. Can you explain that?

Mr. Goodman: Yes - it's a difficult concept, but yes.... [takes nearly five minutes to explain "praxis"]. Now, when you say you've written some stuff, do you mean notes?

Sian: Yes, on Weber.

Mr. Goodman: What references did you use?

Sian: Brown, but I was also looking at Haralambos, but it didn't have what I was looking for.

Mr. Goodman: Well, the best thing to do is find a source that suits you. There's not a lot of point necessarily reading the same stuff in a variety of different books. Are you with me?

Sian: Mmm.

Mr. Goodman: I mean, if you read something in Brown and then you read it in Haralambos and Haralambos deals with it, you know, in a slightly different order or with a slightly different emphasis, you could end up confusing yourself. If you find that O'Donnell lays it out in a way that you can understand more easily, then use that, stick to that. You base

your opinion on Weber on that. [pause] What about the -uh- you've got the plan there, haven't you?

Sian: Oh, yeah - so we have to follow this then, haven't we?

Mr. Goodman: Well, I've got - uh, not necessarily, but I think that - uh, well - what do you think?

Sian: I don't think - I don't know.

Mr. Goodman: Well, what would you say has been the biggest problem in your essays?

Sian: I dunno. Probably organization.

Mr. Goodman: Yeah, alright...It worries me slightly the way you just presented yourself here this morning - the way you talked to me - it sounds as though it's all a bit haphazard.

Sian: Yeah, I know. That's the way things seem to work out.

Mr. Goodman: Well, have you thought about - have you thought about yet what you're going to say in your introduction?

Sian: No, not really. Well, I thought I could find out about all these people and once I get all these bits together then I could get writing.

Mr. Goodman: Okay, well, yeah - you have got the plan there - and a significant body of that essay is going to be the theory of people like Marx and Weber, and then there's Davis and Moore on functionalism.

Sian: If it says "the many varied levels", then could you do Weber and Davis and Moore?

Mr. Goodman: Yes, because they both - Weber identifies four categories, right?

Sian: Weber has four?

Mr. Goodman: Yes...he starts with three, class, race and party...out of which he identifies four stratifications in society [explains at length Weber's categories] ...which totally counter Marx's notions that the middle class is transient, yeah? And that's what you should be thinking of when you're writing about Marx and Weber and Davis and Moore. You should be thinking to use them to argue against each other, yeah? Rather than just a straight description [of what each says]...what you should be trying to do is - uh - cross reference, yeah?

Sian: It's hard.

Mr. Goodman: It is hard, yes. Of course, that's what you're rewarded for - that is showing your analytical powers...the trick of doing it is when you say [pause]. Let's say you're basing it on Marx's notion of a two-class system. Okay. You then say something like, "Although there is

agreement between Marx and Weber concerning the ownership of the means of production, Weber would disagree with Marx..." you know, you actually say, "Weber would disagree with Marx" and "Contrary to what Weber says, Marx thinks".

Sian: Yeah, but when I do things like that I get so confused. It's better if I just write it all out, but then I've got to get the marks, don't I?

Mr. Goodman: You won't get as much credit for putting it down in prose fashion. You will get much more credit if you can utilize the theories in an integrated way.

Sian: Okay.

Mr. Goodman: One way you can do this - let's say you've done some reading on Marx,...and you've done some reading on Weber, yeah? If you then adopt that thing I always do of - you know - making a diagram - if you put it all down - I mean things that you think you should include, and then you look at it in total - that's the point at which you may be able to see connections. And really it's not that difficult.... your Marxist book will tell you that you're basically talking about a two-class system. Once you've read that, you'll see that Weber is arguing against that, so right away you'll see that there is an area of disagreement, and what you should do in the body of your essay is focus on that disagreement, okay? I mean, at this stage, just take one particular bit - like that - and try to deal with that in an integrated way, okay?

Sian: Okay [sigh].

Mr. Goodman: And that's much better, Sian, than putting it down one, two, three, and then trying to draw - you know - weak conclusions. It's better if you can actually get some of those arguments into the body of your essay. [pause] So where did you say you've got? You've got to do a bit more reading, haven't you?

Sian: Yeah, I-

Mr. Goodman: You want to get a plain, simple view of Marx, of Weber, and of Davis and Moore. If you've got those clear, then you should be able to actually put things together and begin writing it, thinking about that integration. Anything else?

Sian: No, that's alright.

Mr. Goodman: Do you see why it's important to solve these problems?

Sian: Yeah.

Mr. Goodman: Because I want to get you to the point where you can do this very rapidly, okay?

Sian: Yeah. [end of interview]

C. Excerpts from Interview with John:

Mr. Goodman: Right, then, c'mon, what've you done?

John: Not a great deal. I've done a sort of plan on what I should take notes on.

Mr. Goodman: A sort of plan. Show me.

John: I'm having a bit of trouble with the question, with what it's asking me.

Mr. Goodman: Mmm [flips through pages of John's notes] It means "assess the reality of that statement", i.e., that in Britain we have grown from a very obvious two-class system to a very much more finely layered system, yeah?

John: Yeah.

Mr. Goodman: That's what it means, assessing, Now what if you were here 100 years ago, what you'd identify is the line of capitalist society Marx was talking about...and if you look at modern Britain now, you don't see that, but...you could go on to say - you know - this would be in line with Weberian views of class, wouldn't it?

John: Mmm, yeah, that's something - I didn't know what order I should put these points in it - where I should explain Marxist theory and when Weber-

Mr. Goodman: Basically, in terms of your introduction, effectively what you're saying is what I just said, right? Basically on the surface it would appear that - you know - this statement is basically true, and there, I think, you could do one or two things. You could go straight into Marxism and say Marx's position was...and then right - then - you could offer a further Marxist view which takes account of how Britain has developed post-industrially - are you with me?

John: Mmm, yeah.

Mr. Goodman: Yeah, alright.

John: When I'm explaining the change, why it changed, or how it's changed-

Mr. Goodman: Yeah, right, keep on-

John: When it says it's changed -uh- it's not that long an essay, is it? - four pages - so I can't really go a lot into Marx's theory of social change.

Mr. Goodman: No. You've got to get that bit in briefly. You don't want to spend time - you know - telling about the five epochs. You want to go straight into talking about capitalisim and how Marx sees that as

the basic enemy to socialism. You don't want to find yourself talking about ancient society and all that sort of bit. You focus in on what you're dealing with, which is capitalism, and what I'm trying to say to you is if you have a Marxist theory, right?

John: Umm, yeah-

Mr. Goodman: - in relation to the introduction I've just mentioned, what would you tend to say - it fits or it doesn't fit the picture?

John: The Marxist theory fits the picture of what was, but not of what is.

Mr. Goodman: So you could then do one of two things. You could talk of alternatives

John: Weber-

Mr. Goodman: - i.e. Weber, which I think you would be sensible then to bring forward, but if you want to develop it further, you've got to look at Marxism post-Marx.

John: Okay.

Mr. Goodman: Yes, you've got to look at what Marxists have said to take account of the fact that Marxism doesn't seem successfully to be describing the kind of society that we've got now. Now, have you come across any-

John: Would that be Dahrendof?

Mr. Goodman: It would be Dahrendof, and others - it would be Westergaard and -

John: Them too?

Mr. Goodman: Yep. So what I'm saying to you is instead of saying: "This is how it was 100 years ago - this is how it is now" - in a descriptive way, you would say, "This is what Marx says about social class...but that doesn't seem to fit the picture, and Weber offers an alternative view which may seem more appropriate - " but what you can then do is come back and counterargue again using Marxist thinking, so you have the Marxist perspective, the Weberian perspective, and the functionalist perspective

John: So they would all come into the controversy?

Mr. Goodman: Well, yes, well they all certainly could, yes, but the important thing in a debate about class from a sociological point of view is...it's inappropriate to be one-sided...now what you're doing is you're arguing, you're counterarguing, you're arguing, you're counterarguing, which is what we're after.

John: Mmm.

Mr. Goodman: And that should constitute the essential body of your essay. So when you say to me, "I don't know what order to put these points in -"

John: You put one in and counterargue it?

Mr. Goodman: Yeah, yeah, basically, and if you integrate it you get more credit than if you lay it down one and then the other. Now you're capable of doing that if you sort your ideas out thoroughly before you start writing.

John: Yeah...in your plan, you've got something about inequalities that exist in today's society - can I base the whole thing on that?

Mr. Goodman: No, it's not totally relevant - only if you relate it back to where it started...the implication is that if you move away from a two-class system, the majority of people will enjoy greater equality...if you can show that inequalities still exist on a fairly grand scale, then that gives support to the position that nothing really has changed. Are you with me?

John: Yes.

Mr. Goodman: Mmm, if you look at education...still suggests a pretty massive divide between middle class and working class kids in terms of their success and achievement and so on...similar in the sociology of health - mortality rates...

John: And the Eastern Block, do I just -

Mr. Goodman: The reason that I mentioned the Eastern Block is that the Marxist claim is that if you remove private ownership of the means of production, you eradicate class, right? If you look at the Eastern Block countries, you do find that there is still differentiation between people, yeah? And therefore it's worth mentioning...I'm not asking you to draw definite conclusions.

John: Uh, no.

Mr. Goodman: Alright? I'm asking you to juggle with the debates. Is that alright?

John: Mmmm.

Mr. Goodman: Unless you feel that you can argue a particular line, you know.

John: Yeah.

Mr. Goodman: I think that probably at this stage it's much more likely that you can develop this skill of putting down one aspect of somebody's theory and then finding a counterargument, okay?

John: Mmmm.

Mr. Goodman: I'm asking you in a sense, yes, I suppose I am asking you to sit on a fence because what I don't want you to do is to draw naive conclusions.

John: Mmmm.

Mr. Goodman: I want your final paragraph to be tentative...you know, "We have seen alternative ways of looking at this. On the one hand you've got Marx and on the other hand, Weber's views - "...What I don't want you to say is, "I think Marx was right" or "I think Marx was wrong", because you're in no position to make that kind of definitive judgement. I mean, people are still arguing about it and will for evermore, so there's no way that you are going to come up with the final word on it, so be tentative and remember, what's going to be rewarded is your ability to critically analyze theories.

John: Mmmm.

Mr. Goodman: And the more you can integrate that, the better.

John: Mmmmm.

Mr. Goodman: Do you understand what I mean by that?

John: No, not really, I'm getting better -

Mr. Goodman: Yeah, but there are ways and ways. The most frequent tendency is for people to say, "Right, there's my Marx, I've done that, there's my Weber, there's my bit of functionalism, there's some evidence - ", like in a line, and actually write their essay like that. You will get much more credit if you will actually take your theoretical positions and integrate them.

John: So cross-reference them?

Mr. Goodman: Exactly, yeah, cross-reference them.

John: Mmmmm.

Mr. Goodman: So what might be useful for you is once you've got your basic points on Marx and Weber, jot them down side by side, and then look for the links between them, visually. Write them down and then start looking...

John: Yes, I should make some notes -

Mr. Goodman: Yes, make some notes - do your reading and make your notes, and then, if you like, within the context of what I've given you...look for these links, these cross-references, and when you're writing it, look to using sort of key things like - uh - like, "Contrary to what Marx says, Weber's view is - "...One thing you can do because you've proved it before, is that you can actually put things in a fairly simple way...you don't try to emulate the text book.

John: No.

Mr. Goodman: On occasion you've done that and not included any sociology.

John: Yeah?

Mr. Goodman: Yes...you wrote at a sort of common sense level.

John: Mmmm.

Mr. Goodman: I mean, you are doing sociology and you're expected to use sociological language. If you talk about Marx, you've got to talk about it in Marxist lingo, okay? But apart from that, you've got quite a good style. You get things down your way rather than in book language.

John: Mmmm.

Mr. Goodman: There you go [end of interview].

D. Excerpts from Interview with Steve:

Mr. Goodman: You haven't done anything?

Steve: Well, I've thought about it.

Mr. Goodman: You've thought about it. You have to do better than that. What about reading? Done some reading?

Steve: Yeah.

Mr. Goodman: What?

Steve: Sutton.

Mr. Goodman: That all? What else you gonna read?

Steve: Weber, and some studies like the ones you listed.

Mr. Goodman: Yes, that's useful. You've got to get down to it this week.

Steve: Have we got to follow the plan?

Mr. Goodman: You don't have to. I've offered you that. What's come out from talking to people this morning is that there's a deal of planning has to be done within that plan, right?

Steve: When you describe Marx's theories and Weber's theories, how much detail should I go into? This looks as though it could go on forever.

Mr. Goodman: Yeah, it could do. You've got to refine it into fairly concise statements. You're talking about a background paragraph - a sort of descriptive outline.

Steve: Yeah.

Mr. Goodman: What you should be concentrating on is the contradictions between what Marx and Weber say....What we're looking for, what you'll get credit for, is your ability to integrate the material on Marx and Weber and whoever else. Do you know what I mean by that?

Steve: Means I need to understand the theories and apply them to the question.

Mr. Goodman: It does mean that, yeah, and you've got to cross-reference them.

Steve: Yeah.

Mr. Goodman: I mean you get more credit for talking about Marx's two-class system and then immediately comparing it with Weber's view of a say middle class...

Steve: Yeah.

Mr. Goodman: Rather than one: Marx, two: Weber, three: functionalism, or whatever - rather than putting it in that block fashion, what you should be trying is to find themes that you can debate in each of the theories-
Steve: Mmmmm.

Mr. Goodman: What we would call critical analysis.

Steve: Tell me, I'm not going to go and describe in a chunk Marx's theory of class, but I'm going to describe an aspect of it and then kind of compare that with others?

Mr. Goodman: You could, yes, you could, but you have to be fairly clever to do that, because what you're doing is indicating that you know what Marx said

Steve: Yeah.

Mr. Goodman: - and at the same time counterarguing it. Now you may want to spend the section immediately after the introduction - you may want to give a broad outline, yeah?

Steve: Yeah.

Mr. Goodman: But you're right. The body of it should be that critical analysis - shouldn't just be slap down a chunk of this and then a chunk of that. It's not that easy. It's very difficult.

Steve: And then the introduction would be the interpretation of the question - that could be the introduction?

Mr. Goodman: Mmmm, yeah, could be, and also the indication of how you're going to deal with it...now you can't do that until you've planned your essay - that's what the plan is. And the other key bit is the evidence, yeah?

Steve: Yeah.

Mr. Goodman: I mean that needs concrete evidence.

Steve: ...and the conclusion - how do I conclude?

Mr. Goodman: You conclude tentatively. I think your conclusion should constitute a summary of the argument you put forward in your essay - the idea in a nutshell - "This is what Marx says in a nutshell; this is what Weber says - but we have seen..." - okay?

Steve: Mmmm.

Mr. Goodman: That's what I mean by tentative, not "I, Steven Henry Smith, have got the final word on it and have got it right" - are you with me? - because that just sounds silly and naive...

Steve: Is it necessary to put much in about the Eastern Block countries?

Mr. Goodman: Yeah, the reason I mentioned this is because of the Marxist position that if you remove the private ownership of the means of production, you basically create a classless society, so it's worth making reference to societies where there has been an attempt to do that and identify whether in fact they are classless...But again, you're not going to write an essay on Eastern Block problems, but showing you're aware of it will be rewarded, okay?

Steve: Yeah [end of interview].

Although this vignette is lengthy, I wanted to keep the lesson and the interviews as intact as possible, because there is so much occurring in these two class sessions which bears directly on the major concerns of this study. Although the writing task is a fairly standard one for A-level sociology, Mr. Goodman is using it as a pedagogical tool whereby he can engage his students in what he considers an appropriate process for composing sociology essays. It is in the dialectical interplay between the strategies he employs to assist his students in this process of composing text and how the students interpret these strategies in the light of what they bring to bear on responding to the task, and how this interplay is manifested in the students' written texts, that the vignette has some things of consequence to tell us.

1. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE SOURCES AND RESOURCES OF INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDING REQUIRED IN THIS WRITING TASK?

Most explicitly and most frequently, as we see in the vignette, the students are directed to their textbooks, reference books, and previous class notes for their information. Mr. Goodman makes some attempts to draw upon their "immediate or recallable knowledge" during the October 11 session by direct questioning, but finds this knowledge "very scant". He also directs them to draw upon and extend their general knowledge of what is currently happening, in terms of inequalitites, in Eastern Block countries, and in their own country, particularly in the areas of education and health and welfare. There is, in addition, the students' knowledge of formal written discourse in an educational setting which Mr. Goodman is focusing on in both the October 11 and October 18 sessions, and which he is trying to refine.

2. HOW ARE THE STUDENTS ENABLED TO TRANSFORM THESE RESOURCES OF INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDING TO WRITTEN TEXT?

Essentially, the entire vignette responds to this question, in that Mr. Goodman has intentionally devoted the October 11 and October 18 sessions to enabling his students to compose written text in response to a particular question. Before I go on to discuss what Mr. Goodman intends as enabling strategies, I should mention that the procedures I identify as "enabling strategies" or "enabling procedures" or "enabling techniques" are so labelled because that is, in Mr. Goodman's view, their explicit intention. As we look further to see how the students interpret these procedures, and how their interpretations are manifested in their written text, we will note some occasional dissonance between intention and actual function of these strategies.

His first strategy is to write out and distribute an interpretation of the question, and a plan of how to go about answering it. It serves as the major point of reference during the October 11 lesson.

Acknowledging that interpreting what the question is asking is one of the first difficulties the students experience, he first of all

suggests that they identify key phrases and determine what aspects of their knowledge of sociology these phrases are referring to. Mr. Goodman assumes sufficient recallable knowledge for them to connect "two-class system" to Marxist theory and "many-varied levels" to alternative theories they have studied, most notably those of Weber. The concept of "sociological evidence" is interpreted in Mr. Goodman's plan as "actual concrete studies", case studies authorized as appropriate evidence in the sociological canon.

Initially, Mr. Goodman's process model seems to proceed in a fundamentally linear fashion. Since "what they're looking for is the ability for you to apply the knowledge that you have", the next step he recommends is to gather the information from Haralambos [the basic textbook], Dahrendorf, Goldthorpe and Lockwood, Westergaard and Resler [standard references available in the sociology library], notes from the previous year, and so on. But it is in the part of the lesson devoted to his procedures for enabling the students to "apply the knowledge" that they have gathered together, and during the conferences, that Mr. Goodman and his students struggle with this process of transforming information, understanding, and knowledge into written text. He says:

Okay, there is an outline. Now what is it that you have to do to get from that, which is sketchy, to a coherent, well-argued, well-written, precisely expressed, unconfused, direct, simple essay? That's where the work is.

The procedure he recommends is as follows:

- a) read actively...if there are areas you don't understand, that's where you should ask, "What does this actually mean?"*
- b) go back to the notes I've given you from last year*
- c) go back to the plan and marry that information to the plan*
- d) construct a diagram in order to visualize relationships and...plan a route through the question.*

He then gives them a week to work on a) to d). It is important to note, as you read through the vignette, that although I have listed a) to d) in linear fashion, and Mr. Goodman moves through them in a predominantly linear fashion, his strategic model implicitly encourages, or at least potentially allows for, recursive movement, from analyzing the question to consulting notes to further reading, back to the question, making more notes, doing more reading, and so on.

Since each of the interviews brings to light somewhat different strategies, as well as differing responses from the students in relation to these strategies, despite obvious overlaps, I decided to include excerpts from all four of the sociology students in my study. The parts which have been omitted are either lengthy explanations of content, or repetitions of strategies which have already been emphasized. A feature to note is how the dialogue between the students and Mr. Goodman in each interview influences part of what Mr. Goodman says in each successive interview.

A. SUSAN'S INTERVIEW

Early on in Susan's conference, Mr. Goodman asks, "How have you followed the plan?" When Susan responds, "I've followed it as it is", Mr. Goodman's further comments about the plan indicate an attempt to have Susan envision further possibilities. He asks, "Have you found that you've had to add additional things to it?" and, receiving a negative response then, later prompts more explicitly:

Is there anything else you feel you might need to bring in? I mean, the essay's essentially about class, right? But there are other forms of social differentiation, aren't there?

When, during the verbal negotiation which follows, Susan seems doubtful about the relevance of including specific areas of social differentiation, Mr. Goodman tries to get her to see that there are other areas implicit in the obvious and immediately explicit parameters of the question, areas which Susan might choose to draw upon:

You've got to start - while I don't want you to go off on sort of massive tangents - you've got to start

thinking of useful areas that you can draw upon...your essays in the past often haven't included all the material they should've done.

This particular strategy is important because it encourages students to seek for opportunities in questions to draw upon areas of greater personal knowledge or interest when responding to a question, and to integrate related areas of knowledge which may have been presented to them discretely. It also gives them somewhat more 'ownership' over what might be included in a written response than the October 11 lesson and plan seemed to grant. Certainly, Susan's comments during the conference seem to indicate that she had taken on board, virtually unquestioningly, the explicit parameters of the October 11 plan. In her journal, she writes her reaction to her discussion with Mr. Goodman:

The conference made me realize/made clearer

1) the essay will take longer than I thought i.e. in reading relevant texts or studies such as Goldthorpe and Lockwood's "Affluent Worker" then applying the embourgeoisement thesis to the question for example.

2) the essay is more complex than I thought - a lot has to be mentioned such as the Industrial Revolution, but in an organized way (October 22, 1984).

An examination of Susan's written text in conjunction with Mr. Goodman's plan reveals how scrupulously she followed it, staying very close to the information in her lecture notes and reference books, and not venturing into broader areas. Space prevents my reproducing her complete text here, but since the opening sentence or two of each paragraph quite clearly indicates the macrostructure of her essay, we can see the extent to which she takes on board Mr. Goodman's plan, while rejecting his prompts for her to go beyond its explicit parameters:

MR. GOODMAN'S PLAN [EXTRACTS]:

- 1. Point out that by the 1880's Britain had undergone an industrial revolution...*
- 2. Outline Marx's theory of class...*
- 3. Then ask - has it happened? - what alternative explanations are there?*

4. What evidence

- (i) Goldthorpe and Lockwood
- (ii) Westergaard and Resler
- (iii) Do basic inequalities still exist in education/health/welfare?
- (iv) What has happened in Eastern Block countries?

5. Conclusion: Draw together main themes of your argument and make some TENTATIVE conclusions of your own [DO NOT BE NAIVE HERE!]

SUSAN'S ESSAY [EXTRACTS]:

1. A change in the stratification system in the "past 100 years" refers automatically to the Industrial Revolution, an economic and technical change.

2. To begin, it is necessary to describe Marx's concepts of the "two-class system" or dichotomous class system.

3. However, this claim is refuted by other sociologists such as Weber who does not see the future of Capitalism as socialism....

From these explanations, we can see that Marx concentrates on polarization, a "two-class system" which he claims will eventually lead to socialism. However, this new epoch has not occurred and we are faced with alternative explanations.

4. The embourgeoisement theory will now be discussed with reference to Goldthorpe and Lockwood's 'The Affluent Worker'....

Other sociologists place importance on inequality as the solution to the persistence of class. Westergaard and Resler emphasize private ownership of capital as the key to class divisions.

'Schools and colleges have been set more deliberately to the business of preparing and sorting young people for their places in the world of work.' This quote, from Westergaard and Resler sums up how inequalities even in education still exist.

Although ownership of the means of production has radically changed in Eastern Block countries, class divisions still exist.

5. *In Conclusion, I would agree that the social stratification has changed to a new system of 'many varied levels'.*

B. SIAN'S INTERVIEW

Since Sian arrives at the interview with two questions:

*Could I write about a functionalist point of view?
Praxis. Can you explain that?*

Mr. Goodman's first bit of assistance is in helping her to clarify these ideas. That she acknowledges and appreciates this as an enabling opportunity can be seen in this extract from her journal:

I think the most helpful thing about the conference was that it allowed me to ask many questions of parts which I didn't understand...it allowed me to understand and clarify particular points for the essay, eg. the question of praxis (December 13, 1984).

His second tactic, and one which he repeats at the end of the interview, is to urge Sian to clarity and simplicity, in the first instance by suggesting that she find one reference book that she is comfortable with and stick to it, and, in the second instance, to formulate "a plain, simple view of Marx, of Weber, and of Davis and Moore. If you've got them clear, then you should be able to actually put things together and begin writing it".

It is Sian's questioning his plan, however, "so we have to follow this plan, then, haven't we", which provides the impetus for a lengthy explanation of how to transform the information she gathers into a "well-argued...essay". He first tries the image of "using [Marx, Weber, and Davis and Moore] to argue against each other" and then the metaphor of "cross-referencing". When Sian protests, "It's hard", he tries to make the idea concrete with specific examples:

You then say something like, "Although there is agreement between Marx and Weber concerning the ownership of the means of production, Weber would disagree with Marx" - you know, you actually say, "Weber would disagree with Marx", and, "Contrary to what Weber says, Marx thinks - "...

Encountering further hesitancy from Sian, he employs a different metaphor for the concept - "integration" - and tries to get her to see

how constructing a diagram will provide a visual aid to her being "able to see connections...and focus on areas of disagreement", urging her to try it with just one macrostructural element of the essay at a time. Although Sian's journal entry would seem to indicate that, other than providing an opportunity for her to have her questions answered, the interview did not influence her as much as it might have:

Since the particular essay had a guide line to follow, the conference didn't change or modify my approach to the essay...the guide line was sufficient enough so there didn't need to be any changes.

From the conference I read more about the subject of stratification and I found out more about the praxis.

I would like to say that I would have preferred to have discussed the problems or whatever involved with the essay with more people. So that maybe there would be three people plus Mr. Goodman instead of a one to one basis. Because when doing rough notes prior to going into the conference you may have missed something out yet someone else may bring it up. With say three people it allows for questions which you may not have thought of (December 13, 1984),

her written text shows the extent to which she attempts to argue and counterargue in the "integrated" or "cross-referenced" pattern Mr. Goodman advises during the conference. The following snippets are from the sections of text which illustrate how Sian tries to transform information and knowledge into written text following the pattern of integration recommended by Mr. Goodman:

Weber saw class as important yet didn't place as much emphasis on it as Marx. Weber's definition of class also differed to Marx's definition.

Weber describes four major classes. Like Marx, he recognized that the most powerful are those who own property.

Weber's view of their role and importance in a capitalist society differentiates against Marx.

Marx saw that economic control was based within the political power in a capitalist society. Weber disagreed and felt political power was a distinct dimension of stratification.

C. JOHN'S INTERVIEW

During John's interview, Mr. Goodman expands even more on how to organize the information into the argument-counterargument pattern he speaks of in Sian's interview, probably prompted by John's "I didn't know what order I should put these points in". Sitting in on the interview, I have another impression, however, a sense that Mr. Goodman is himself searching for a means of helping his students with a process he knows to be complex and difficult. From interview to interview that morning, he spends increasingly more time on how to transform gathered or received information into macrostructural elements of written text, building on the metaphors of "integration" and "cross-referencing" to create the argument-counterargument-conclusion [or thesis-antithesis-synthesis] pattern which he *prefers to* what he refers to as a "one-two-three descriptive" pattern. Although he expresses these ideas and enabling strategies in a confident mood during these student conferences, he mentions later in the year to me that he is very unsure of what would effectively help students to structure an argument. He says:

It's a particular academic style of writing you're after...wherein the student offers a particular view and supports that view and uses alternative views for discussion...it requires an ability to structure an argument around a theme so that there is a sense of moving through an argument...most can't do it...really, it's the main skill you're trying to teach...few achieve it by the end of A-level...Do you want an honest answer? I don't know how to teach it....Personally, I do it diagrammatically. I set up ideas or information in a diagram and look for links. It works for me, so I suggest they try it, but it doesn't seem to work for them, not often (March 28, 1985).

Two days prior to the interview between Mr. Goodman and John, John had written in his journal the following observations about writing in sociology:

Sociology is the easiest subject to write for. Although the subject matter is the hardest, the scope for writing is good. There is not a strict format, although a plan is needed. I write as I might talk because each point has to be thoroughly explained and clarified. Sociology essays could go on forever and become books, there are so many angles to write from and minor points that could be talked about. However,

I still need a plan to write in order to explain the question properly. Sociology questions are easier to answer because they refer to solid blocks of information which are easy to find yet don't require the rigid and careful sifting of a history essay (October 16, 1984).

And yet, during the October 18 interview, this "careful sifting" of "solid blocks of information" in order to find areas of agreement and disagreement is precisely what Mr. Goodman is trying to enable John to do. Unfortunately, a short time after the interview, John was hospitalized for a number of weeks, and did not complete the assigned essay.

D. STEVE'S INTERVIEW:

During Steve's interview, Mr. Goodman, in response to Steve's "Have we got to follow your plan?", expresses his observation that "What's come out from talking to people this morning is that there's a great deal of planning has to be done within that plan". The plan seems to suggest a block-by-block pattern of organization, which Mr. Goodman iterates is not the most appropriate way to structure information in a sociology essay if the students want to "get more credit [marks]". In this particular aspect, his enabling tactics sometimes seem to work at somewhat contrary purposes, and we can see further evidence of this as the interview progresses. He tells Steve:

You've got to cross-reference...you get more credit for talking about Marx's two-class system and then immediately comparing it with Weber's own view of a significant middle class...rather than one - Marx; two - Weber; three - functionalism; or whatever. Rather than putting it in that block fashion what you should be trying to do is find themes you can debate in each of the theories...what we would call critical analysis.

Steve then tries to clarify what he interprets Mr. Goodman's comments to mean by restating it in his own words:

Tell me - I'm not going to go and describe in a chunk Marx's theory of class, but I'm going to describe an aspect of it and then kind of compare that with others?

Mr. Goodman's response seems to contradict the procedure he has just been stressing, but what he seems to be implying in his explicit

example is that there can be appropriate places for "chunks" of description or information as well as appropriate places for integrating information:

You could, yes, you could, but you have to be fairly clever to do that, because what you're doing is indicating that you know what Marx said...and at the same time counterarguing it. Now you may want to spend the section immediately after the introduction - you may want to give a broad outline, yeah? But you're right. The body of it should be that critical analysis - shouldn't just be slap down a chunk of this and then a chunk of that. It's not that easy. It's very difficult.

What occurs macrostructurally in Steve's written text is similar to what occurs in Sian's. Both students try to adapt Mr. Goodman's suggestions on constructing an integrated argument after a brief description [chunk] of Marx's theory of social class.

Two other areas of difficulty in transforming information to written text are brought into focus during Steve's interview. The first is indicated in his question, "How much detail should I go into? This looks as though it could go on forever." I heard variations of this question several times throughout the year, in all six subject areas. Written text is so highly selective that it indicates only a part, an especially focused part, of what the student knows or what is available information for the student to draw upon. Mr. Goodman's response is helpful in relation to what he is trying to accomplish in this particular task, although it is not necessarily generalizable to other tasks. He tells him:

*You've got to refine it into fairly concise statements. You're talking about a background paragraph, a sort of descriptive outline...**What you should be concentrating on is the contradictions between what Marx and Weber say.***

This focusing on areas of contradiction might be a good tactic to employ to eliminate unnecessary or irrelevant details in this particular text, but extent of elaboration remains a problem which perplexes Steve, and several other students in my study (you may recall Julia's comments about it in the history of art vignette) throughout the year.

The other major area of difficulty highlighted in Steve's interview is the concept of a "conclusion" to the essay. Mr. Goodman has written in his plan:

CONCLUSION

Draw together main themes of your argument and make some TENTATIVE conclusions of your own [DO NOT BE NAIVE HERE!]

and during the October 11 lesson says:

Finally, you've got to draw things together. Your conclusion should effectively be a summary. It should draw together the way things are argued and make some tentative conclusions, and you'll see that I've underlined the word 'tentative' because what you mustn't do is say, "This is what I think is right!"...think of it as an exploration...

When Steve asks near the end of his interview, "In the conclusion, how do I conclude?", Mr. Goodman replies:

You conclude tentatively. I think your conclusion should constitute a summary of the argument you put forward in your essay - the idea in a nutshell: "This is what Marx says in a nutshell: this is what Weber says...but we have seen...". That's what I mean by 'tentative'...not "I, Steven Henry Smith, have got the final word on it, and have got it right", because that just sounds silly, sounds naive, so, in a sense, what we're after is...a very efficient summary in the conclusion - an essence, and if you think a Marxist view or a Weberian view is more appropriate, indicate that, but tentatively, okay?

How Steve responds to this advice can be seen in the conclusion he composes, which certainly avoids any strong statement of assertion:

The above arguments lead us to the fact that all arguments bring us back to the fact that different sociologists define class differently and that all conclusions on modern society rest on these contradictory definitions. However, the importance of social class is in how it affects social change and social order and this in turn depends on how individuals in society see themselves. Enoch Powell warns of a split in Britain, and a polarisation in politics is particularly evident, however, do the middle class identify themselves as workers?

During one of our interviews, Steve talks about his problems with conclusions:

I often do the conclusion first, then write the essay, and then change the conclusion if I find, from reading or from writing the essay, new evidence which disputes the evidence I had in mind at the start...but in sociology, you can often use the organization of your notes for the organization of your essay. It's good in that it clarifies points for the exam, but it doesn't make you feel important. You can't reach any conclusions, and the conclusions you reach are naive (March 12, 1985).

He acknowledges that Mr. Goodman's enabling advice is helpful for exam revision, but he does not appear to find it helpful for developing a sense of importance or confidence as a writer and a thinker in sociology. Concerning the conference itself, he writes:

*CONFERENCE WITH MR. GOODMAN ON SOCIAL
DIFFERENTIATION*

1. The conference was mainly helpful simply in explaining some of what Mr. Goodman had written to give a plan to the essay. A few things I didn't understand, or understand the relevance of were discussed.

2. The conference didn't change my approach to the essay, I will still use the same methods to do it, but I definitely understand better what it's about.

3. Since the conference I have 'read up' on some of the things he showed me were relevant and I knew little about, eg. Eastern Block countries.

4. I think it's useful to approach an essay in the way we've done this one. It shows clearly what is actually expected of us for this type of essay (October 22, 1984).

There are many other features of the strategies and procedures used by Mr. Goodman to help his students transform information, understanding, and knowledge to written text which merit discussion, for example, the ratio of teacher talk to student talk, which is noticeably teacher-dominated, the control of the agenda at the interviews, also teacher-dominated, and the frequent use of tag questions to elicit acquiescent responses after what are essentially interpretive or assertive statements. While acknowledging the existence of these features, and their significance as part of the classroom context out of

which written text emerges, I want rather to emphasize that Mr. Goodman has identified a critical difficulty in the process of composing in an educational context: the problem of once having determined what a particular question is asking, and having gathered together information from various sources, internal and external, then, from the students' perspective, how do you formulate that 'knowledge' or information into coherent, well-argued written text? and from a pedagogical perspective, how do you enable students to more confidently and successfully undertake that transformation? In the interaction between Mr. Goodman's attempts to help his students develop some effective procedures and the manner in which his students adopt or adapt his suggestions is dramatized a major scene in the social dialectic of the classroom.

3. HOW DOES THIS TASK RELATE TO THE WRITING GENERALLY ASSIGNED IN THIS SOCIOLOGY CLASSROOM?

A. The Teacher's Perceptions of Writing in Sociology

Considering 'function' as it is used by language theorists such as Britton⁽⁵⁾ and Moffett,⁽⁶⁾ Mr. Goodman's comments would place the predominant 'function' of writing in sociology in the analogic category. During the October 11 lesson, he says:

Look, here is one theoretical explanation. What's the evidence that supports it? What's the evidence that is counter to it? Is there an alternative explanation? What's the evidence to support it? What's the evidence to counter it? That is critical analysis. That is taking your argument and looking at it through both ends and integrating the argument. That's ideally what you should be doing.

He positions this particular form and pattern of critical analysis into the context of an educational setting during one of our interviews:

It's a particular academic style of writing you're after, wherein the student offers a particular view and supports that view and uses alternative views for discussion...the theories being discussed are in the social sciences....They need to develop the ability to structure a theme with a sense of moving through an argument...that's the main skill you're trying to teach (March 28, 1985).

But it is reasonable to ask, " Why are the students writing essays in this 'critical analysis' or 'analogic' mode? Who will read them? How do they 'function' in the pragmatic, communicative world of the classroom?" Mr. Goodman's comments during the October 11 session suggest that the predominant pragmatic, communicative function of their assigned writing is to develop skills they will need to write effective answers in the examination:

...every essay question you encounter, you must analyze in that form...

*What they're [the examiners] looking for is the ability for you to apply the knowledge that you have - **what they're looking for is your power of analysis, your ability, having analyzed the problem, to mount a coherent argument in order to answer it. That's what's being tested at A-level.***

*At the moment, because you're in a nice and calm, cool, calm, and collected situation, you should be able to do that. You should be able to give time to analyzing the question and you should be able to give time to the way you are going to answer that question, and you should become so thoroughly used to doing that, that when you are actually in a position of having to do it under time pressure, you can do it very quickly. **That is the skill you are trying to develop.***

Demonstrating the ability to structure discipline-specific knowledge efficiently into a coherent, well-argued essay as practice for performing well on the final exam would appear to be Mr. Goodman's perception of a major function, in the pragmatic sense, of writing essays in sociology.

B. The Students' Perceptions of Writing in Sociology

Steve expresses his views of the function of writing, not just in sociology but in all of his A-level subjects, more explicitly than the three other sociology students involved in my study. In one of his journal entries he writes:

The purpose of writing in the subjects is to demonstrate how much you have learned and know about the subject (September 20, 1984).

As he goes on to express his dissatisfaction with the situation described in the above statement, we can see how such a view of the

function of writing can influence how students perceive formal aspects of writing:

There are many disadvantages to the system of using essays as a demonstration of knowledge in many subjects, a main one being the fact that a great deal of credit [marks] can be gained simply by having good essay style and organization. This is unfair to someone [who] may have a difficulty expressing in an essay what they know, so many marks in essays go to the people with better essay style etc.

It would help to have lessons in study skills and essay technique; the way I have tried to learn is through trial and error, not knowing the simple 'formula' for essays until well into last year (September 20, 1984).

In a very important way, this relates to the previous discussion on enabling strategies. Mr. Goodman has interpreted the difficulty of transforming knowledge or information into written text in formal or structural terms, and has therefore stressed a particular formal structure or pattern - thesis-antithesis-synthesis - as a major approach to solving the difficulty. What can happen, as this extract from Steve's journal shows, is that students learn to think of essays primarily in terms of formal patterns, and to give this structure priority over other concerns of writing.

During our interviews and in his journal, Steve implies that learning should be a function of essay writing, but that the kind of essay writing that he is most frequently required to do does not necessarily engender learning:

My main problem is that I can barely get myself to do it [write essays] because once I get to writing it, I'm regurgitating what I know, so why do it? (Interview, June, 1984).

I find it hard to put down on paper what I know already, have discussed in detail in class, and know that my teacher knows more about than me... (Journal, September 20, 1984).

In preparing the essay, I learn it...it therefore seems sort of anticlimactic to write it all out neatly, in proper paragraphs...I suppose it's a part of learning, but I suspect it's more for the convenience of the

teachers - so they can read it more easily - than for the learners.

I learn more doing the background reading than from writing the essay...I quite enjoy writing once I get into it, but so much of the time it's just a chore (Interview, June, 1984).

I think it's important to put myself into it. That's why I do better on things I don't know, things I haven't already reached a conclusion on (Interview, March 12, 1984).

His comment that polishing a final draft is more a "convenience" for the teacher than a benefit for the learner illustrates that he does not consider his essays to be functioning within a social semiotic system of communication. His teacher-examiner audience does not seem to exist for him as an interested audience for what his written text has to offer. His prior statement offers an explanation:

I find it hard to put down on paper what I know already, have discussed in detail in class, and know that my teacher knows more about than me.

But his statement of March 12 is even more interesting in its implications for the roles writing can play in the classroom. Writing in order to find new conclusions or understanding is a function of writing which frequently conflicts with the more common function of writing to demonstrate knowledge, and competence in articulating that knowledge in a 'well-structured essay'.

Although John is not quite so explicit as Steve in talking about the functions of writing in sociology, similar themes arise during our interviews:

Sociology essays are easier [than English or History]. You read the books, take down the facts, repeat them, and show that you understand...the learning experience comes from the required reading....In the sociology essay [assigned October 11], I only half finished it before I went into the hospital. I did the reading, had the conference, it was really good, but I didn't finish it...he tells you what to put into them and how to do it, and then you just do it (March 14, 1985).

In emphasizing, as did Steve, that most of the learning comes from their background reading, both boys seem to be implying that the enabling

strategies, although helpful in making the task easier, take something away from their personal engagement with the essay.

Susan also sees the writing in sociology as quite prescribed:

Sociology essays are obviously different [from English essays]. When asked to describe, for example, Durkheim's view of social order to compare it with another sociologist, this is relatively easy if organized in the right way.

Sociology essays include a lot of facts and comparisons...in sociology there seems to be more emphasis on writing than on discussion as it involves less unseen material of different varieties [than English]. There is a limited amount that can be gained from a sociology text, whereas in poems, for example, ideas can be seen from many different angles (Journal, September 24, 1984).

In sociology, you must select from your notes and background reading, and then apply it to the question...the concepts are already formulated - they just need condensing and organizing...(Interview, March 20, 1985).

Susan's comments, as well as Steve's and John's, represent a significant dissonance between the level of abstraction Mr. Goodman is aiming for with his enabling strategies, a high level analogic verging on the tautologic if we use the London Writing Research Group's function categories for our basis of classification,⁽⁷⁾ and the level of abstraction the students interpret his enabling strategies to be aiming for, basically straight analogic. There is also dissonance among the students' interpretations, in that whereas John mentions how sociology essays could "develop into a book", there were so many angles to be considered, Susan sees the possibilities for considering theories and ideas from different angles quite limited. This dissonance between students and teacher and among students illustrates part of the complexity of the classroom context out of which written text emerges.

C. The Nature of the Discourse of Sociology as it Emerges from the above Perceptions in Relation to Assigned Writing Tasks

The relationship of what Mr. Goodman refers to as "sociological language" [October 11] to understanding sociological concepts and to

writing in sociology, mentioned briefly in the vignette [John's interview] is given greater emphasis in the lessons immediately prior to the exam, although some of the students make reference to the importance of sociological terminology in their essays earlier in the year:

In sociology, you've got to say it in certain key words and phrases to get the marks (Susan, Interview, March 20, 1985).

In sociology...although there are specific terms that need to be written down and understood, there is not so much emphasis on the accuracy of such words. The writing involves being more descriptive and maybe a word may not be mentioned but can be explained...there are so many dimensions, so many everyday examples which can be used in explaining a question (Sian, Journal, December, 13, 1984).

Again, we notice a considerable dissonance between the students. In the following extract from Mr. Goodman's interview with John, three important ideas about discipline-specific discourse are brought to the fore:

You actually can put things in a fairly simple way...you don't try to emulate the textbook...On occasion you've done that and not included any sociology...you wrote at a sort of common sense level...I mean, you are doing sociology and you're expected to use sociological language. If you talk about Marx, you've got to talk about it in Marxist lingo, okay? But apart from that, you've got quite a good style. You get things down in your way rather than in book language.

We see here a differentiation between "book language" and "sociological language" made explicit, wherein the student's own style is being valued over "book language". At the same time, however, Mr. Goodman is also making John aware of the need for the appropriate use of sociological language: "If you talk about Marx, you've got to talk about it in Marxist lingo, okay?" The third item becomes the topic of a lengthy discussion much later in the year, the idea of the greater "acceptability" of common sense ideas if they are framed within the conceptual classifications of sociological discourse. It is a theoretical problem concerning the stability of meaning in relation to shifting signifiers. "Does what is signified change when the signifiers change?"

would seem, therefore, to be a critical question, essentially the same question Mr. Fox raises when he asks Barbara whether her understanding is different if she uses his phrasing with respect to the process of diffusion or hers (in the biology vignette). The following dialogue between Mr. Goodman and Steve offers a possible way into answering that question. Mr. Goodman is talking to Steve about strategies for the exam:

Mr. Goodman: The first section is ninety-five per cent interpretive. Make sure that theoretically that's where you score. That is the area where people are at their most vulnerable — not quite sure what's being asked for. If you've prepared your groundwork well, you can come across as being fairly confident in your sociological thinking...the sorts of concepts you bring to bear on a specific question...you have to think on your feet, marshal all the theories, cite relevant, concrete empirical material...

Steve: How'm I gonna actually employ some of that stuff without coming across as being common-sensical, [this question arises out of a discussion the previous week that his essays were relying too heavily on common sense]?

Mr. Goodman: Certainly in the past people have dealt with these sorts of questions in a very common-sensical way, and then afterwards, when we say, "Well, you should have used so-and-so", they've said, "Ah, I didn't think of that"...Now take a look at that question we did last week.

Steve: Yeah. I wrote quite a bit on that just using my common sense.

Mr. Goodman: Obviously you can identify it as being, say, a functionalist notion...but you wouldn't necessarily, using a common sense approach, think about cultural specificity or historical specificity...(May 8, 1985).

In a pragmatic sense, Mr. Goodman is suggesting that sociological terminology which represents sociological concepts or modes of classification, such as "cultural specificity" and "historical specificity" function as heuristics which prompt further sociological critical analysis. From that perspective, the discourse of the discipline has the potential to enable the students in that critical area

of composing: drawing upon internal resources of knowledge and understanding, and transforming that knowledge and understanding to written text. By using root metaphors and organizational paradigms such as social order, social change, and social differentiation as conceptual 'hangars', students can more readily apply their tacit and intuitive 'common sense' knowledge to sociologically authorized modes of conceptualizing the evidence of the discipline which will "gain credit on the exam". To return to the theoretical question of whether what is spoken about changes in some crucial way depending on the terms of reference or signifiers used, Mr. Goodman implies that a more comprehensive, more focused, and deeper response will result from using sociological language. If so, it would appear that using sociological language as conceptual hangars for intuited or 'common sense' responses does change what is signified, in that it shifts it from the realm of personal or even 'common' knowledge into the more rarefied and authorized realm of sociological knowledge.

VIGNETTE #6 : ENGLISH

(TEACHER : MS. ELLIOTT)

(STUDENTS IN THE STUDY : STEVE, LINDA, BARBARA, VIRGINIA, JULIA, SUSAN)

DECEMBER 6, 1984.

A. *The Task:*

WRITE A LETTER TO VIRGINIA WOOLF IN WHICH YOU GIVE
HER YOUR RESPONSE TO "A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN"

You ought to include in this comments on:

what you have liked or found interesting in the
book (or the opposite)

her arguments and the issues she raises

how these have been developed since she wrote the
book and which of them are still relevant

your own position on the matters she discusses

B. *Extract from the Lesson:*

I think it would be useful for you to start thinking right away about the essay. Talk it over in pairs or groups of three, or even think about it by yourself, if you prefer, and make a sort of sketchy outline. I'll circulate and read what you've written and try to pre-empt some of the problems as they arise, before they go down on paper.

C. *Extracts from One Small Discussion Group:*

Barbara: Do you think we're supposed to sum up?

Linda: Last chapter - she doesn't seem to put any new information in it, does she?

Barbara: Don't you think so? About the - uh - about the [unintelligible]?

Linda: Yeah, I suppose so.

Barbara: I find it so stuffed with different things, you can't keep up with names and so on. Once you've read on for a bit, about three or four pages, you've forgotten the bit that went before it.

Linda: Yeah, it's difficult for you to - uh - clue in to the various paragraphs to get your points.

Barbara: Let's see, [reads from assignment] "what you have liked or found interesting in the book". Well [laughs].

Linda: [laughing] Mmmm, yes.

Barbara: I didn't like anything. Well, some of it's pretty interesting.

Linda: It's interesting, yeah, but no, here, in the last paragraph, she says something about symbols, doesn't she, with the taxi?

Barbara: Hmmm, the taxi. I dunno. I couldn't see the point in that altogether. What do you think?

Linda: I just thought she was saying how - uh - it was sort of a symbol of the mind. These two, male and female, together in a taxi, which would be a mind, being swept together downstream in the traffic.

Barbara: Hmmm. I don't know. I just find it hard to remember. I can't pinpoint...

[ten minutes later]

Linda: How about when she brings in people and she says, "And Mary Beaton speaks" and this sort of thing?

Barbara: She brings so many people in.

Linda: Don't worry about -

Barbara: The more I think about it, the more I dislike this book.

Linda: Alright, what's its good points?

Barbara: It hasn't got any [laughs]. No - uh - I think if we were to understand it, we'd see that it was very well structured, but at the moment, we can't really tell.

Linda: Yeah.

Barbara: If I knew it a lot better, I could see the structure.

Linda: Yeah.

Barbara: I can see the things, that they follow a pattern and that sort of thing, but I can't see the pattern.

Linda: Well, as you said earlier, at the moment, until we understand it better, it doesn't seem logical, does it.

Barbara: Well, I suppose it is logical.

Linda: Ummm, so - it's taking us - it's too much to think about -

Barbara: What we could do is do, you know, like -

Linda: Yeah, like those Eliot poems, where you do a couple of paragraphs, and see how they relate, and link up to -

Barbara: But then that would take so long.

Linda: Yeah, because there's so much that's in it, and so long. Some of the links could be 110 pages long.

[ten minutes later]

Barbara: It strikes me as being very attitudinal. I mean she's passing an opinion, but I would have thought it would be more - well, she's making it very apparent that -

Linda: Yeah. That that's what's wrong - not that's what might be wrong or - I mean she's so -

Barbara: Yeah, like if Shakespeare would have had a sister this is what would have happened, rather than -

Linda: Yeah, isn't she kind of doing what she's saying that men are doing?

Barbara: Yeah.

Linda: She suggests, well, she says that, you know, about confidence -

Barbara: Yes, exactly the same as what men do -

Linda: Yes, well that's what strikes me as being funny about this book.

Barbara: It could be that - well, why is she writing about man's side of the brain?

Linda: Well, it's her way of explaining how and why men write the way they do.

Barbara: It's confusing, isn't it?

[end of tape]

DECEMBER 13, 1984.

D. Extract from the Lesson:

I've been agonizing again - it gets worse towards Christmas - but I have been agonizing again over this essay topic, about whether or not this essay topic is too big, too difficult, too unmanageable,...whether I shouldn't make it easier. So what I want you to do this afternoon is to think about the essay you are going to write on "A Room of One's Own" and come up with suggestions of what you can do with it that will make a decent essay.

I've got one other suggestion to offer you, which is that if you've already made a decent start on the letter to Virginia Woolf with your response to the book, that's fine, press on. If you've tried to start and you think it's too unwieldy and unmanageable, then I'm suggesting that a task which would be reasonable and acceptable would be to write an essay which shows how chapter six makes an appropriate conclusion to the book.

Doing that adequately would mean that you would have to look at the content of chapter six, which bits of her argument are in there, link them up to what's gone before and also look at the way the chapter's written and relate it to the rest of the book. But it doesn't ask you to express your own personal statement on the issues she raises and things like that. It's a more - it's like doing sort of a piece of practical criticism on a whole work rather than on a little extract, so if that sounds possible, you can offer me that as an alternative. There may be other things that occur to me that you could do. What it's going to necessitate is you're going to have to sit down and read the whole book through again. It is very short and you can read it in an afternoon. I feel a little guilty that it's all been sort of dragged out. It's partly my fault, and partly yours, in that you haven't actively engaged with it as you did with the Eliot.

So, think about what you will offer on the Virginia Woolf, and I'll go over your folders with you and talk to you about the Virginia Woolf one by one.

E. Extracts from Conference with Steve

Ms. Elliott: So how about your Virginia Woolf essay?

Steve: Mmm, yeah, I might change the title a bit -

Ms. Elliott: Mmmm, I suppose the obvious thing would be to give it a male reading. I mean, the people, the men, who read it when she wrote it said things like, "What a pity she's so hysterical and so shrill" about this book...I'm sure it must be quite a different sort of book to read from a man's point of view.

Steve: Well, I don't know what it's like to read it as a woman, so -

Ms. Elliott: No, but there must be things in it that you think are unfair.

Steve: Yeah, that's right...but I don't know how a woman would read it.

Ms. Elliott: But does that matter? You don't have to look at it from a woman's point of view. It just says to write her and give your response.

Steve: What was that other title you mentioned about chapter six?

Ms. Elliott: (basically repeats what she said in part D), but that wouldn't give you much opportunity to air your criticisms of her point of view, the issues that she raises.

Steve: Some of the things I found sort of - I wasn't satisfied with because I didn't really know what she was getting at, so that wouldn't be very good to put in an essay.

Ms. Elliott: No, you'll have to go and grapple with it a bit.

Steve: I still think that if she's saying some things are incomprehensible to her, how am I supposed to understand it? I mean, comprehending and experiencing is sort of different -

Ms. Elliott: But if you say, "I find it incomprehensible", it doesn't mean you don't understand, it means - uh- that you can't relate to it - she -

Steve: But if someone said that to me, I'd try to explain to them why - I think I've probably got it wrong...I think I'll do the letter then. Can I just focus in on the one thing?

Ms. Elliott: [hesitant] Yes, you could do -

Steve: -and once I've done that, I suppose I could change the title so that it -

Ms. Elliott: Yes, well I can't really say too much until I see just what it is you intend to focus in on and what you intend to do with it, because if you honed in on something that was actually a bit naive...then it really wouldn't be worth - I'm not sure I could identify just one issue out of it...that's the problem.

Steve: If I put in what particularly interests me, and if I develop that, and then find the title seems a bit - ah - narrow, I could change the title...

Ms. Elliott: A short essay on one particular point?

Steve: Yeah, that I could relate, you know, to the general argument.

Ms. Elliott: I think what you want, what you say is, "What I find interesting is the way you say... - I don't agree because - ", and that would actually do it -

Steve: Yeah, if I justify it.

Ms. Elliott: That would place the bit you selected in a context that would at least show why you selected it and would also satisfy the folder requirement that the essay gives evidence that you studied the text and that you know it and so you're actually firming up your folder. It should be okay, but it needs doing thoroughly, because - it's not that the notions you put down aren't intelligent but that they are very often left or underdeveloped...

Steve: Mmmm. I've just gotta - rather than just mention something and leave the - rather than show I know something lightly, I've got to develop it -

Ms. Elliott: Yes...you've got to explain more thoroughly the statements you make...you give notional evidence of being aware, but all of that needs to be expanded. In fact, sometimes you say very little that shows you have a real grasp of what you're saying.

Steve: You know what would be really helpful to me would be to know how people mark these essays. I mean, in other subjects, they seem to go through - when you make a point in a paragraph, they make a tick, and then count up the ticks at the end...

Ms. Elliott: It can't be done like that because - um - well, for example, I could have just ticked off each point and if the essay was worth thirty points, totalled the ticks for a mark out of thirty, but it just doesn't work that way...the problem with marking English is that because the essay represents a cognitive process of your demonstrating your knowledge of what you've read, your understanding of it, your ideas about it, your ability to write about those thoroughly and share what you think with a reader, your ability to use a text in support of what you say, your ability to shape your answer, to argue a point and arrive at a conclusion of your own - you can't start off with a list of things and use that to tick things off. You have to take it all into consideration and sort of juggle - now, I do try to tick when I feel you've made a real point...

Steve: But it's difficult with how to structure it. I don't know just what you have to do - a little paragraph to get your point out - and get a little tick, and then another paragraph to develop it - might be worth another tick - I don't know -

Ms. Elliott: Well, even if you were functioning like that...you'd still have to get your points in and get them explained.

Steve: Well, if you haven't been told or ever shown what should go in - how to structure an essay or what should be in the introduction...I'm still not really satisfied I know how to write an essay. I don't think it's human instinct.

Ms. Elliott: I'm not suggesting it's human instinct. I'm saying actually that it's your problem and you have to sort it out. All one can say is it's got to have an introduction, a middle which expands on the introduction, and a conclusion which ties the ends together - that's about as much use as a hole in the head, because it's only when you sit down with a question and a text and your ideas about it that you can start to put it into operation. You're right, yes, you have got to make your points and so on, but there isn't a simple way. If there were, we'd be doing it. So, can you see why on that essay why I haven't put any ticks on that first paragraph?

Steve: Because I haven't made any points, but if you - would I get marks if I put five or six points in my introduction, and then again when I expanded on them...?

Ms. Elliott: Yes, you get credit for singling out major points...but then you must show that you are capable of developing these ideas, of using them...it would be a matter of how much you were saying. You get credit for knowing where you're going when you start, and taking it there through thought. You get credit for saying real things, not empty phrases like, "many differences" or "it is interesting to note". Here, for example, you say "the mood is different", but you don't say in what way...you're actually relying on the mental energy of your reader to fill in the gaps...your job is to show that you can use information from the book to develop your thoughts...you've got to do the showing to make the reader come with you - you've got to do the showing -

Steve: So I just go on and make points and develop them -

Ms. Elliott: Yes, but you've got to be able to set a context for your points so your reader can see...

Steve: So it's all right to tell a bit of story or to be descriptive as long as it supports your argument or sets a context? I was always told not to be descriptive, not to tell a story -

Ms. Elliott: Yes.

Steve: I just always steered clear from that, because we were told not to.

Ms. Elliott: Yes, well, it depends on whether you use the description to make a point...

Steve: So how would I - I would give an example -

Ms. Elliott: Yes, more examples, but also showing how the examples further your argument.

[bell goes to end class and interview]

1. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE SOURCES AND RESOURCES OF INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDING REQUIRED BY THIS TASK?

The external sources of information the students are asked to draw upon are, textually, the arguments and issues in the book, "A Room of One's Own" as well as features of style and/or structure that they find interesting [or not], and, contextually and intertextually, what they know or can find out about the development and relevance of these arguments and issues in today's world. However, since the task asks for

the students' personal reactions and positions to be an essential part of their answer, their resources of intuitive and tacit knowledge are also being tapped. In addition, they are being required to combine or integrate their understanding of the formal requirements of critical analysis with letterwriting, even though the proposed recipient of the letter, Virginia Woolf, is a contrived audience.

Ms. Elliott describes this kind of task as being "less phoney" than the standard 'critical analysis' type of questions more usually assigned to sixth formers preparing for their A-level examination, in that "it genuinely wants the students' opinion". However, she goes on to stipulate that this kind of task

does assume that it will be a considered, thought through opinion, formed from standing at the far side of the book and looking back over it and thinking about the whole thing...and recognizing the need for solid reference to the text to support it (Interview, March 27, 1985).

Her comments to Steve (vignette, section E) would appear to indicate that Ms. Elliott firmly and confidently validates this idea of written text as being "end of process" in relation to the students' engagement with text:

You get credit for knowing where you're going when you start, and taking it there through thought...

...the essay represents a cognitive process of your demonstrating your knowledge of what you've read, your understanding of it...your ability to arrive at a conclusion of your own....

During the March 27 interview, however, she talks of her doubts about always having students write after their opinions have been formed. Although granting that the Virginia Woolf task is better than the more traditional kinds of literary critical tasks, in that it does require the students to integrate personal response with textual knowledge, she speculates whether it might not be better to tap their responses earlier in the process of coming to understand the text:

Their essays in their folders are mostly 'end of the process'. Perhaps the one on "The Hollow Men" might be considered 'intermediate', and I suppose that, in a way, all essays are 'interim', but it is generally

assumed that they have a knowledge of the text. Perhaps we don't give them enough time - give them the essay while they're still uncertain - while they're still working their way through their response (March 27, 1985).

It would appear from the following journal entry that Steve has composed his response to this task on Virginia Woolf more in line with this middle-of-the-process "still working their way through their response" type of task described by Ms. Elliott than the "end-of-process" type of task they discussed during their December 13 conference:

A CONCLUSION OF ONE'S OWN

Another essay which illustrates the fact that I do better on subjects I know little about. On re-reading the first and last chapters I realized who Mary Seton, Beton, and Carmichael actually were, and how the actual structure of the book worked. During classwork, I didn't realize at all and didn't bear in mind any of the points made in the first three pages of the book, which definitely reduced my understanding of the book.

My essay, at first, followed the normal evolution - find an argument, write an introduction, etc, but then I thought I'd satirize it. The satire actually turned out loose and not convincing, but I was in a hurry to finish as I only decided to use the satirical structure very late, and it was difficult to get all the points I wanted to in. Quite enjoyable though (January 10, 1985).

Although it would be appropriate to reproduce Steve's essay here in its entirety, a more fruitful opportunity presents itself in a later chapter. The opening paragraphs, however, illustrate the manner in which Steve takes on board Ms. Elliott's comments during the conference, and integrates these with some of the fundamental arguments in the text in a manner that seems to anticipate Ms. Elliott's remarks of March 27. I cannot help wondering whether his title derives from her December 13 injunction, "to argue a point and arrive at a conclusion of your own":

A CONCLUSION OF ONE'S OWN

But, you may say, we asked you to write about the conclusion of "A Room of One's Own" - what has that got to do with a Conclusion of One's Own. I will try to explain. When I looked at the question given to me I sat down on the banks of a river and began to

wonder what the words meant. I thought about what a conclusion is and concluded that it is that which stops one from thinking more about a particular question. Applying this to the book as a whole, I wondered whether you wanted me to write about how chapter six holds the answers to questions raised in the other five chapters of the essay, questions like, "Why haven't women managed to write as well as men?" and "What has money to do with poetic talent and natural gifts for writing?" I realized that these questions had been answered earlier in the essay (eg. the first question was answered in the first two pages [though not in detail]). After thinking awhile, I realized that I was getting away from the purpose of my writing and thinking. The duty of a student is to reach a conclusion, to hand over a pure nugget of truth to his answer who may delete him or knight him with a pen. I reached the conclusion that one must reach a conclusion of one's own from the essay, and Woolf asks the reader to do so, very early in "A Room of One's Own".

I have shirked the duty of coming to a conclusion upon these two questions (the true natures of women and fiction). Women and fiction remain, so far as I am concerned, unsolved questions. In my opinion, the best way to help the reader understand how well chapter six serves as a conclusion is to show how I, with all my constraints and weaknesses, reached my conclusion (that one must reach one's own conclusion). I shall present to you in the form of a fictional account, a shortened version of the days leading up to my handing in this essay, so that the inadequacies and flaws in my argument may show up, and one may reach 'A Conclusion of One's Own.'

It is evident, from both the journal extract and the written text, that, in addition to intertextual influences from "A Room of One's Own", Steve is drawing upon internal resources which involve tacit, intuitive, and received 'knowledge' or understanding, but which involve them during a process of 'coming to know or understand', rather than after he has already formed conclusions on the topic. I realize that there is a danger here of my oversimplifying cognitive processes, in that when thinking through a problem or concept, we are continually making and rejecting tentative conclusions, and that the 'final' draft of written text does not necessarily reflect our 'final' thoughts on a subject. However, in the context of a sixth form classroom, as Ms. Elliott says, most of the essays are "end-of-the-process" and assume that the

student has reached his or her conclusions before starting to write. To that extent, most of the assigned essays want students to demonstrate how they have thought, or how they have reached an understanding, whereas in this essay, Steve uses the generative act or process of composing as a heuristic which enables him to come to an understanding through the process of writing. Consequently, although it is not a different internal resource that Steve is drawing upon, he is bringing these internal resources to bear on his formulating a response in a quite different way than is usually assumed when a task stipulates something in the nature of "You get credit for knowing where you're going when you start" (vignette, part E), or the often heard, "Think about what you are going to write before you write it".

2. HOW ARE STUDENTS ENABLED TO TRANSFORM THESE RESOURCES OF INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDING INTO WRITTEN TEXT?

The vignette is based on a variety of enabling procedures and strategies designed by Ms. Elliott to help her students with and during the process of composing a response to the Virginia Woolf task. However, since it is the interactions between the teacher's intentions, actions, and advice and how the students interpret these and make them manifest in their written texts that I will be focusing on in my analysis of these six classroom contexts, before I investigate the variety of procedures and strategies enacted in the vignette, I want first to present what the students perceive as difficulties in composing written text in English. Julia writes in her journal:

It is more difficult for me to express myself in English than in History of Art. Both in writing and talking I find it hard to get other people to know what I mean. For example, normally writing essays and, in particular, the exam piece in the mock exam, in which I was trying to explain an answer and, in writing it, found it quite tangible yet reading it afterwards found that it didn't flow at all or sound at all reasonable. I can't think why this happens. I always try to make a plan before I write, but this doesn't seem to work. In talking, as I have said before, one can be gestural and, though difficult at times, it is not that bad. The main difficulty is that while knowing what I want to say and in voicing it in what I think a reasonable manner, no one seems to know what I'm talking about! The words I use seem

fairly reasonable but perhaps I use them out of context or something (December 18, 1984).

Barbara also finds expressing her ideas as clearly as she would like a difficult feature of composing written text in English:

...I enjoy pieces of writing better when they want me to express what I feel rather than what's going on in the text, etc. Sometimes this is not as easy as it seems, because on occasion I spend quite a long time writing a particular sentence over and over again, in order to try and express what I feel clearly. On these occasions my mind seems to go blank. Possibly the reason is a lack of vocabulary to express what I feel or mean. Actually now I come to think of it I do find myself, when writing an essay, thinking "Oh no, I can't write that phrase again, I've already written it about ten times!" (November 15, 1984).

The most important thing about the mocks (the English one), was that I found I was stuck for words. I found it very difficult to write down what I felt and meant. It was clear in my mind, but I couldn't express it on paper (December 16, 1984).

A similar problem is experienced by Linda:

I find getting across what I think and feel in English much harder [than in Biology]. When talking about poems, for example, T.S. Eliot's poems, it is very difficult to convey the meaning they give. To account for the different impressions that you gain from a poem is very difficult, because how can you explain what the poem makes you feel. It's just an overall image (November, 1984).

Earlier in the year she had written about a somewhat different problem:

While I'm writing in my journal I thought I might as well get something out of my system which I came against last night. It might even prove helpful for you!

When writing my long essay I have big problems with trying to structure my essay. It wasn't until yesterday when I started my third draft (which has a totally new title) that I realized why. I suddenly realized that I've never been taught how to write an essay. It's just something you get on with. However, when writing a 13 page essay you really need some rules or guides or something to help you on your way. I feel it's just too much of a responsibility for me. On smaller essays you can get by with a bit of work and thought, but it's not until you get to the crunch that you realize that something's up....This is not a

criticism of Tiara Glen education. I just feel that modern education is trying to get us to work for ourselves setting us these mammoth tasks when we're really not prepared (October 23, 1984).

Difficulties with expression and with "rules and regulations" are also articulated concerns in this extract from Virginia's journal:

ENGLISH

I feel very conscious of my writing in this subject. English is all about a language and the use of it, so obviously if you are writing an essay on a work how you express yourself is going to be crucial. How can you justify criticizing one celebrated poet if you can only write misspelt, boring essays yourself?

In general, I think my creative writing is passable, but as far as literary criticism is concerned I am far from comfortable. It's the rules and regulations which worry me. I find structure and technical areas difficult to criticise. I think I have a tendency to waffle, which to my surprise hasn't been heavily penalized up to now. My punctuation is a bit on the dodgy side.

Basically, I think writing is an integral part of English and I do not think I have anything near mastered the art yet (September 19, 1984).

Susan, once again, focuses on the difficulty of writing what she wants to say:

In English literature I sometimes have difficulty in presenting what I want to say. I write laboriously instead of summarising in a few words what I really want to say - perhaps it is because I have a rather limited vocabulary. Also, when asked to describe a character in single words it takes a longer time to think of the words I want....In other words, for English Literature it takes me longer to formulate what I want to write (November 8, 1984).

Steve mentions a quite different problem, in addition to repeating what he had said about writing in sociology:

My essays have been poor during the [English] course so far but I (arrogantly) claim that the reason again is lack of interest and motivation. I find it hard to put down on paper what I know already, have discussed in detail, and know that my teacher knows more about than me. I also find it hard to attach significance to the exam at the end of the course - it all seems so distant (September 20, 1984).

When Ms. Elliott spoke of her perceptions of her students' difficulties, she focused on similar themes, but from a differing perspective:

At A-level, we accept it as basic that they will have all the things that get them an O-level pass... but it seems that once they get to A-level, they abandon the technicalities...It would be charitable to say they're grappling with more difficult concepts, and are putting their efforts in that direction...but I think they've pigeon-holed it as something for O-level language...

They get the 'look' of the thing right, but there are still problems with their level of understanding the content and ideas...the essay can be superficially correct, with good usage and vocabulary, but the content absolute crap, full of sweeping generalizations, although it might have the right shape and good sentences...

They want a grasp of the ideas...and a voice of their own which they can employ with confidence - a personal style...

They need a variety of strategies and tactics, so that they can apply one set of strategies to answering questions that require analysis and selection, for example, and others when the question requires a more fluid, more personal style...How do you teach when to use which tactics? - other than to point out that when it says something like, "How do you find...?" that it requires a more personal style?...

When you teach people practical criticism, there is nothing more stultifying than trying to give people a checklist of things to do, so they crutch along on it ...inevitably they do first what you put first, but the question might not dictate that as a priority...they need flexibility...and the confidence to function (March 27, 1985).

She goes on to speak of two students who, she feels, have a much better grasp of ideas than their writing usually indicates:

With Julia, what hits the page is closest to the way her mind is working at the time - it goes in so many directions...she will probably do badly [on the exam] unless she goes in with a clear head...I think she has a more complex understanding, but she can't articulate it clearly. Julia doesn't convey a firm grip on what she's doing. It's not just content, but a way of working. What do you do when faced with a certain

question requiring a certain focus? You must be able to tolerate not putting down everything you know.

With Steve, I have a feeling that not enough will get onto the [examination] paper. There is a horrible mismatch between what goes on in his head and what he actually gets down on paper, although the gulf is narrowing. Lower down he would do anything to avoid writing, so he didn't get the practice...he wriggled out of written work. Really, he just hasn't done enough.

The most often mentioned difficulty among the students is expressing their ideas - their knowledge and understanding - clearly, both for their own satisfaction and to be understood by others. Ms. Elliott recognizes this as a major problem, but envisions different causes and solutions than the students. Whereas many of them indicate a limited vocabulary and lack of knowledge of rules and formal structures as possible or probable causes, Ms. Elliott feels that most of them have a sufficiently good vocabulary and grasp of basic formal structure. What would benefit them most, she feels, is the ability to flexibly apply various strategies appropriately and confidently in their own personal style. The dissonance between students and teacher is where to place the emphasis - on external linguistic procedures, such as increasing vocabulary *per se* and following algorithmic rules and structures, which the students feel would provide them with a base of competency, or on internalized linguistic procedures, such as developing a personal style and the ability to confidently adapt style and strategy to the particular requirements of a question, which Ms. Elliott feels would better enable them to compose written text. Because of this dissonance, some interesting interaction occurs between Ms. Elliott and her students as they work together in the classroom on this process of transforming information, understanding, and knowledge to written text.

One of the most evident features of the vignette is that it shows students and teachers involved in process-product interactions. Although the task, particularly as originally presented, seems set within the less formalized genre of a personal letter discussing personal reactions, it nonetheless inevitably thrusts the students into a process of literary analysis. And this process, although validated as a [and

and often as the way of responding to literature throughout the relatively brief history of literature as a "respected" course of studies, has not been concretized or crystallized or formalized in generic terms. As Linda writes in her journal:

To account for the different impressions that you get from a poem [or other literary text] is very difficult because how can you explain what the poem makes you feel? (November, 1984).

What the students, most notably Steve in the vignette, seem to think would help them in this difficult and relatively uncharted area of written discourse would be for Ms. Elliott to present them with a basic structural formula, some, as Virginia puts it, "rules and regulations". Ms. Elliott's comments indicate her disagreement:

I'm saying actually that it's your problem and you have to sort it out...there isn't a simple way. If there were, we'd be doing it.

She makes it clear that she does not intend to usurp their responsibility of having to grapple with the concepts and ways of expressing them required by the task, and that she does not envision the process of their formulating their response in formulaic terms. What she does take on board as her pedagogical responsibility, as indicated in the vignette, is to employ a variety of procedures and strategies to assist her students' explorations of possible ways of conceptualizing the demands of the task.

The wording of the task itself is one such strategy. In an article on teaching T.S. Eliot [in press], she writes:

The wording of the title deliberately uses phrases which students can expect to meet in examination papers, but also tries to clarify the activities which those phrases require... the emphasis is on his/her reading, not on reproducing a consensus version of class discussion.

Although she is referring here to a different task, given earlier in the year, the task in the vignette, both the original and the alternative versions, indicate the procedural directives and/or some of the cognitive activities required by the task:

Original:

*You ought to include in this comments on:
 what you have liked or found interesting in the
 book(or the opposite)
 her arguments and the issues she raises
 how these have been developed since she wrote the
 book and which of them are still relevant
 your own position on the matters she discusses*

Alternative:

*Doing that adequately would mean that you would have
 to look at the content of chapter six, which bits of
 her argument are in there, link them up to what's gone
 before and also look at the way the chapter's written
 and relate it to the rest of the book.*

That the students find this helpful is indicated in the following extract from Barbara's journal:

*I was quite surprised to find the wording of the
 questions in English very easy to understand and
 clear. This was a great help, and somehow gave me
 more confidence in writing the essays. I found it
 particularly helpful when the examiner gave me a list
 of things to look for and help you to go about
 tackling the question (December, 1984).*

The next strategy described in the vignette, and one employed by Ms. Elliott frequently throughout the year, is to have the students talk about the task and share their ideas about the text. Out of this talk, they were to produce "a sketchy outline" which Ms. Elliott would go over with them, in an attempt to pre-empt some of the problems as they arise". Unfortunately, Ms. Elliott did not have time to get to all the groups before the end of class, and so the group I taped does not have the benefit of this teacher-intervention during their discussions. What the tape does reveal, however, is that the ideas which begin to surface during these small group discussions, and which begin to be clarified as the discussion progresses, can enable students to grapple with ways of conceptualizing a response to the question. In the following extracts from Barbara's and Linda's texts, we can see how their interest in the taxi symbol, their concern over Virginia Woolf's "attitudinal" stance, and Barbara's confusion over the structure of the book emerge as written text:

A. The taxi symbol:

I think the most interesting part of the book and the way in which it is written, apart from the issues about women's oppression and the freedom of the male mind, is the symbolism you used. To take an example of this, at the beginning of the final chapter, you describe a river flowing invisibly down the street, carrying a young man, a young woman, and a taxi. These three come together under your window and are then carried away. This symbolizes the joining of the mind, perhaps to form the androgenous mind, and the river is the stream of thought (Barbara).

Your use of symbolism I find very clever in the book. For instance, my interpretation of the beginning of chapter six when you talk about the taxi, is that this bringing together of the two sexes is very closely linked to the mind. As you go on to say, and have already stated, you see the mind as being made up of female and male halves. The taxi is the symbol of the mind, the male and female getting into it are the two halves of the mind. It is then swept down the stream of thought as it moves off. Here is where I think I must state that I do not completely agree with your theory (which you put forward as if it were fact) that the mind is made of two halves. I think that the mind is the same for both sexes, but influence on the mind begins immediately from birth....Through this conditioning, the mind of the two different sexes becomes different. That is why females cannot relate to male's books, because the thoughts and activities that males write about have never been experienced by women. However, this idea which is expressed with the symbolism of the taxi seems very clear in chapter six and the idea of it sweeping away along a stream of thoughts is very illustrative (Linda).

B. Concern over the "attitudinal" nature of the book:

On reading a novel written by a man you say that this letter 'I' casts a shadow, preventing you from relating to the book. This is because the letter 'I' is a symbol of the writer's superiority, dominating everything, especially the woman. It is a symbol of protest and therefore the book means nothing to you for it concentrates too fully on the writer, a male, and it is with the male side of his brain that he is writing. On this note, I ask you to question whether your book could mean nothing to men because I find that the letter 'I' dominates your book. You make strong judgements on people, such as 'let her speak her mind and leave out half of that she now puts in,

and she will write a better book one of these days'. You state your arguments as if they were fact, all great men depend on women, women can't write in peace because they are protesting, and so on. You are very conclusive in what you think, but do you stop to wonder that you are alone in this opinion and perhaps men, and even other women see women's writing in a different light (Linda).

C. Concern about difficulty of perceiving the structure:

I must admit that after reading the book for the first time I did find myself rather confused, as the book is very compact and bulging with issues and your own feelings, as well as numerous examples you have used to convey these ideas. After studying each chapter it became apparent that the contents of the book were written in an ordered manner and the end of each chapter raised a point which easily led into the next. This structure made my reading of the book a lot smoother. I was able to go from one chapter to the next without having to make a mental list of the points you raised earlier on in the book (Barbara).

That students find these opportunities for discussing their ideas about the literary texts helpful, particularly in relation to written tasks, can be seen in these extracts from their journals and interviews:

Writing in English Literature is important, expressing ideas in a particular way, though just writing is not enough. I think it's very important to have discussions in order to hear others' viewpoints (Susan, Journal, September 19, 1984).

In English we talk most of the time...I find it really helpful. Apart from bringing you out of yourself, everyone exchanges ideas and brings different things to it (Julia, Interview, June, 1984).

Usually we discuss things in class, then go away and write - it's very good. For example, in the Pinter essay, where we had to determine whether it was a comedy of manners, we sat for twenty minutes and wrote out our ideas, then talked about them with others, and used it as a basis, if it's good, for our essays (Julia, Interview, March 20, 1985).

When you first read things on your own, it's difficult to have a sense of what's important, but when you discuss it, like we did with Eliot, it's easier to see what's important when you hear what others say (Virginia, Interview, March 4, 1985).

Although discussion, in either or both whole class and small group sessions, was a part of every class in English during my period of observation, the next major enabling procedure dramatized in the vignette, individual conferences with the students, was less frequent, occurring in four different class sessions. However, individual conferences outside of class time occurred with roughly equal frequency, averaging about four times per student, more if required. The focus of the individual conferences was either an individual written task-in-process, their exams, their extended essay, or their folders. As the conference with Steve in the vignette demonstrates, the enabling strategies employed by Ms. Elliott during these conferences place the burden of responsibility for deciding specific content on the student. Her role, at least in this particular conference, is to elicit from the student what he thinks in relation to the task, and to help him see where that will take him with respect to the requirements of the task.

Another enabling strategy employed by Ms. Elliott, although, since it is more product-oriented than process-oriented, it doesn't play a significant role in this vignette, is the extensive amount of comment she writes on each of her students' texts. These comments serve a number of functions: they address specific problems in the particular text so that if the student decides to re-write it in order to upgrade his or her folder, advice is readily accessible; they also address more general problems the student may be experiencing in composing written text in response to particular kinds of tasks, and so are, in some cases, intended to be generalizable to subsequent writing tasks; they let the student know how he or she is functioning in relation to sixth-form A-level examination standard. If we look at the comments she writes on one of Barbara's texts, we find examples of all three:

Barbara

1. Para. 1. 'interesting argument (ABOUT WHAT?) and ISSUES (WHICH?) that you raise'

If you answer my two questions here you start to SAY something about the book straight away - if you don't it could be about anything from knitting to CND!

Same goes for ISSUES, FEELINGS (OF WHAT?)

EXAMPLES. a few lines further on.

Where else on the first page do you think I will make the same comments?

2. (Side 2) Women's oppression and the greater freedom of the male mind ARE issues.
i.e. say 'the issues OF' (not ABOUT)
There are chapter, sections, paragraphs ABOUT these issues in the book.

Once you start looking at examples it obviously gets much better, though you need to be more explicit about which parts you enjoy and which parts baffle you!

3. (Side 3) You say oppression in YOUR society - although I agree things have improved a bit for us, those comments I read on from 'How to suppress women's writing' show that things are pretty much the same deep down. Men's colleges now admit women at Oxbridge - newer universities are obviously more egalitarian - but the discouragements she describes, and many of the attitudes to women writing persist.

Side 4. 'wide variety' - such as? and are things different now?

5. top. You'd better give up using THINGS - it's always a danger sign that you are being vague.

Because of the vague bits this essay is D-ish - about 4½/5 out of 10.

More specific comment, more reference to points V.W. raises, fewer 'things' would shift it to a C quite easily.

Most of the students involved in my study make reference to these extensive comments during our interviews. Although many of the references are positive about the enabling influences of Ms. Elliott's written comments, the reactions are mixed:

The teacher's comments help you not to make the same mistakes (Barbara, Interview, June, 1984).

The comments on the English papers are extensive. They help you to write and to organize your writing (Susan, Interview, March 20, 1985).

The comments don't really help you develop your own style - that just comes from practice, from just doing it and asking myself questions. Each book, each essay

is separate, so comments on one particular essay don't seem to help develop the whole picture. I can apply the strategies to my reading and understanding the different books, but they don't help me when it comes to writing about them (Linda, Interview, March 15, 1985).

In English I've learned a lot from the teacher's comments, although I must say at times I find them soul destroying...Ms. Elliott says I must think things through, but that's why I get so confused, or appear to be - thinking of everything I could possibly think of and trying to fit it in, so I didn't quite understand that kind of criticism, but it must look as though I've done it very quickly. I don't know. I think Ms. Elliott thinks I can develop a clear line of thought or something, but I don't think I can unless I ignore her (Julia, Interview, March 14, 1985).

I don't know - you don't actually consciously learn from the teacher's comments - I don't know that I paid that much attention to teachers' comments directly. You hear so many different things - one says to do this; the next one says, "Don't do this, do that", but I do find the teacher's comments helpful especially in English, for rewriting for the folder - but sometimes I disagree with the comments...I hardly pay any attention to teachers' comments unless they're very specific (Steve, Interview, March 12, 1985).

I've learned a lot from Ms. Elliott's written and oral comments, also from trial and error, and from class discussion (Virginia, Interview, March 4, 1985).

Various forms of writing make up the final major category of enabling strategies employed by Ms. Elliott and acknowledged as enabling by her students. I want to avoid a simplistic "You learn to write by writing" interpretation of this statement by pointing out that 'writing' in this instance refers to such diverse forms as focused lists (i.e. "list all the different **kinds** of references to nature in "King Lear"), star diagrams (i.e. "write down what you think are the major ideas in "The Caretaker" and then find some way to link them up, to show how they are related, on your poster paper"), association lists (i.e. "list all the things that come to mind when you think of 'fire' and 'rose'"), "sketchy outlines" [vignettes] which arise from discussion and which form the basis for further discussion and/or for written text, and discursive

writing in immediate response to a task, which forms a basis for group or class discussion and for the subsequent written response (see Julia's March 20 comment above). However, as the following journal and interview extracts point out, the students regard the actual writing of the essay an enabling feature:

T.S. Eliot - "Little Gidding"

To work through the poem interpreting it in my own way I find very useful. When faced with one of Eliot's poems it's easy to get lost in the complicated sentence constructions and his use of words. To put each line into my own words helps me to understand it and follow a theme through the poem. This also helps for essays because in being able to understand the poem better it is easier to write about it...Eliot's poems are very rewarding after you have worked your way through them, interpreted your own meaning and even managed to write an essay on them! (Linda, Journal, September 18, 1984).

I find that writing detailed notes on the T.S. Eliot poem, 'The Hollow Men' has helped me to understand the meaning of the poem. It is a good idea to write an essay on it, because I really had to sit down and study the structure and repetitions of the poem. Due to this I found that I understood how Eliot feared the unknown and seesawed between the two kingdoms (Barbara, Journal, September 26, 1984).

Having written a critical analysis of 'The Hollow Men' by T.S. Eliot, it has helped in understanding 'Little Gidding'. From studying other T.S. Eliot poems, it has prepared me not to expect a storyline to each poem, rather to read the different images Eliot uses to express ideas (Susan, Journal, September 24, 1984).

Finished at last. This one took ages, but I quite enjoyed it. We studied TROTL ["The Rape of the Lock"] all last term but I didn't actually have any interest in it until the last week we spent on it....The fact that we hadn't actually got to the crux of the poem in class helped enormously with the essay. It was a voyage of discovery and I had nothing much to regurgitate from my classwork (Steve, Journal, January 10, 1985).

I find getting the essay together most difficult - organizing it into a pattern - but I'm getting better through practice - we write so many essays in English (Susan, Interview, June, 1984).

My writing has really improved this year - the organization is much better. I think it's because we write so many more essays (Barbara, Interview, June, 1984).

I'm writing a lot better now, because I feel I know what to do - mostly through practice, through trial and error...I spend a lot more time - that's definitely a reason, because I make a lot more drafts (Steve, Interview, March 12, 1985).

The comments don't really help you develop your own style - it's just practice - just doing it and asking myself questions (Linda, Interview, March 15, 1985).

What is apparent in the students' comments about writing in English class is that most of them, despite the difficulties they said at the beginning of the year that they experienced in expressing their ideas clearly, feel they have improved, for reasons related to the diverse strategies employed by Ms. Elliott to help them transform their knowledge and understanding to written text.

3. WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF THE TASK IN THE VIGNETTE IN RELATION TO WRITING IN GENERAL IN THIS A-LEVEL ENGLISH CLASSROOM?

A. The Teacher's Perception

Since Ms. Elliott made no explicit statements during class sessions or our interviews about functions of writing, my discussion here is inferred from my observations throughout the year I spent in her classroom. What was most evident was that writing worked hand-in-glove with reading and talking towards what Ms. Elliott refers to as a "gradual discovery of meaning".⁽⁹⁾ By looking at the kinds of writing done throughout the year, it might be possible to discern patterns of exploration which have the potential to lead to this sort of "discovery". Not once in the ten months I was Ms. Elliott's class was the students' first written engagement with a literary text a formal essay assignment.

As I mention in the previous section, part of the process of first, coming to a richer understanding of a literary text and second, transforming that understanding to written text, involves collaborative visualizing of major concepts in various forms of diagrams, lists, short

discursive bits of text, outlines, and the like. The essays which subsequently developed from the reading, discussions, and collaborative conceptualizing were kept in a folder which would be submitted for evaluation at the end of the year, and which would account for one-third of the students' final mark. Since students could rewrite whichever of their essays they felt they could improve upon, all of their written texts could, in a sense, be considered "in process", and could be redrafted and revised. However, in a more traditional sense, these essays serve the function of demonstrating certain aspects of communicative competence in the study of English literature. As Ms. Elliott says to Steve [vignettel]:

That...would satisfy the folder requirement that the essay gives evidence that you studied the text and that you know it....the essay represents a cognitive process of your demonstrating your knowledge of what you've read, your understanding of it, your ideas about it, your ability to write about those thoroughly and share what you think with a reader, your ability to use a text in support of what you say, your ability to shape your answer, to argue a point and arrive at a conclusion of your own.

In addition to the essays on "set texts" and class work, the students are required to do an extended essay of approximately 3000 words on a topic of their own choosing, in an area of their own choosing. Although guidance is readily available from members of the English Department, it is one of the goals or intentions of this assignment that students try to identify an area or subject or writer that they are particularly interested in. One other kind of writing assumes importance as the sixth form year draws to a close: timed essays to prepare the students for the final exam. Had I been an observer in this class for only the final three weeks of class, I would have received a quite different impression. Instead of small groups in lively discussion sorting out the conceptual problems of a given task, the class was frequently engaged either silently writing a response, timed, to an examination type of question, or listening to enabling strategies aimed at writing effectively under examination conditions. However, even during this period of exam preparation, Ms. Elliott, in some classes, retained the

procedural 'flavor' of the greater part of the year, for example, on May 2, 1985, having the students begin a discursive response to a question on "The Caretaker" and then, after fifteen minutes of writing, talking over their approaches in small groups, and on May 7, "rough planning" an answer to an exam-type of question, and discussing it in a whole class (12 students) session. Concerning the type of questions for the A-level exam, Ms. Elliott, who has had several years of experience as an O-level examiner, explained that

..this A-level exam is unique in that it values an imaginative piece as a response to literature...it is a considerable improvement over the traditional A-level "lit crit" type of question (March 27, 1985).

In addition to the two major functions of writing mentioned above - exploring ideas in and responses to literary text in search of "a gradual discovery of meaning" and "demonstrating...knowledge...and understanding" of literary text - Ms. Elliott suggests two others in the following comment about writing in English at A-level:

I don't know whether we make them do enough writing because - I worry a bit - it's not until you get things down on paper that you get your mind clear, and force yourself to come to conclusions - so that what they write is useful for me to see what they understand and the doing is useful for them to sort their ideas out (March 27, 1985).

The phrase, "the doing", is very telling here, underscoring the emphasis on the processes of composing which I noted during my observations. Two of the four major functions of writing in this class are product-oriented - as a demonstration of learning and as a pedagogical tool - and two are process-oriented - exploring concepts and sorting out ideas to reach some sort of conclusion.

B. The Students' Perceptions of Writing in English

According to entries in journals and discussions during interviews, the students regard the writing in English as functioning in several ways. In the interests saving space, I will just refer to one example for each perceived function:

1. Developing your own style:

*The comments don't really help you develop your own style - **just practice - just doing it and asking myself questions** (Linda, Interview, March 15, 1985).*

2. Explaining ideas to myself:

*Planning is difficult. I try to understand the question, and how much depth is involved. Sometimes I go into too much depth. I try to go into as much depth as I need to understand it. **Writing helps me to explain things to myself** (Linda, Interview, June, 1984).*

3. Understanding literary text:

*Writing "A Room of One's Own" essay helped me to **understand the book** (Steve, Interview, March 12, 1985).*

4. Experimenting with ideas:

*In English, I don't have to memorize; **I'm free to try a personal approach - a new idea or a new angle**...putting your own comments and your own ideas, trying to see things in a fresh or original way, brings it from a mediocre essay to a very good essay (Virginia, Interview, March 4, 1985).*

5. Enjoyment:

*However, when I get into an essay I can work for hours and enjoy doing it - with OK results eg. my "What do you find disturbing about 1984?" essay - **I thought that I had something significant to say that we hadn't discussed in class, and enjoyed saying it**, even if the actual form of the essay was confused (Steve, Journal, September 20, 1984).*

And, a somewhat unusual function:

6. Retaliation

T.S. ELIOT. THE HOLLOW MEN.

*Mmmmm...very interesting one this. I was told to write an essay on a poem that I didn't like, understand, or want to understand, and I was told to write a 'critical appreciation of it. I was very reluctant to do the essay at first (more than usual), but I was nagged into doing it. At first I began to write the usual waffle about the author and background etc. and then tried to give some clue as to what it was all about - and of course couldn't. I slowly began to change the mood of the essay and in the end just said exactly what I thought of it (stupid), and **the essay was purely a retaliation to Ms. Elliott for***

having Eliot stuffed down my throat for too long. I wrote it all in about forty minutes and didn't bother to copy it out as I was having second thoughts about handing it in, but I did about a week later. Ms. Elliott greeted it with enthusiasm "so much of what you say is right", but avoided the topic of whether or not to put it in my folder in any form (That's what you get for writing what you thought of the poem) "It is a fallacy to assume that there is one reading of the poem that must be right". As for the meaning - "it is what the poem means to different sensitive readers" - T.S. Eliot - and not writing what everyone else did (Steve, Journal, October 18, 1984).

C. HOW DOES THE WRITING TASK FUNCTION WITHIN THE DISCOURSE OF THE DISCIPLINE?

Although in the other vignettes, discipline-specific terminology plays a significant role in writing within the subject areas, the esoteric language of critical analysis was not mentioned by either teacher or students throughout my period of observation. What the students do mention, and I cite examples earlier in the vignette, are feelings of inadequacy with respect to their vocabulary, interpreting this as a cause of their difficulty in expressing their ideas clearly. Ms. Elliott's reaction to this, also discussed earlier, implies that having the confidence to develop their own personal voice is more important than acquiring specific terminology for critical analysis. If we consider the root metaphors and governing paradigms for conceptualizing response to literary text in Ms. Elliott's classroom, we might infer that the discourse of the discipline is founded upon verbal expression which is "exploratory", which "grapples" with ideas, and which seeks to "share" these ideas with a reader. As we have seen from the extracts from the students' texts, from their journals, and from their interviews, this would seem to describe the nature of the discourse within which they are struggling to make meaning.

CHAPTER FOUR A-LEVEL CLASSROOM LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENTS

Written text, as I argued in the first chapter, emerges from a dynamic network of interactions among context, task, language, and cognition. By using contextualized vignettes, I have tried to evoke the language atmosphere of the six classrooms in the study in order to ascertain how it can inform us about these interactions: about the ways in which writing tasks relate to knowledge; about the ways in which students transform their knowledge to written text; and about the range of functions and kinds of tasks within the classroom context. Three questions were posed in each vignette:

1. What is the nature of the sources and resources of information, knowledge, and understanding required by this task?
2. How are students enabled to transform this information, knowledge, and understanding to written text which responds to the specific task?
3. How does the task relate to the writing generally assigned in this classroom?
 - a) the teacher's perceptions of writing in the discipline
 - b) the students' perceptions of writing in the discipline
 - c) the nature of the discourse of the discipline as it emerges from the above perceptions in relation to the assigned writing tasks.

I want now to look more closely at these three questions in relation to the view of writing which has been offered in the preceding chapters. The effect of looking at the classroom language environment through their focus has been to present a view of the atmosphere of classrooms in three major interdependent movements. The first movement focuses on the students, in their search for the sources and resources of information, knowledge, and understanding they will bring to bear on formulating their responses to writing tasks. The second movement focuses initially on the teachers, in their search for appropriate enabling strategies and procedures to help their students transform this

information, knowledge, and understanding to written text. It develops contrapuntally with the theme of the first movement, at times harmoniously as students and teachers work together through the processes of searching, enabling, and formulating, and, at times, discordantly, when conflicts, contradictions, and differing perceptions cause teachers' and students' efforts to work at cross purposes. The third movement might be characterized as predominantly reflective. It concerns the perceptions of teachers and students about the role of written text within the classroom contexts of specific disciplines. When we consider these three movements together, some central issues emerge related to writing as a taught process within the educational context, one of the most important being the tremendous shaping influences of teachers' enabling strategies on the composing of written text. This chapter looks, in a fairly abbreviated way, at the issues that surround this most central issue, the enabling strategies of teachers, which, in turn, will be analysed much more comprehensively in the following chapter.

1. THE NATURE OF THE SOURCES AND RESOURCES OF INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDING

The first movement concerns the sources and resources of information, knowledge, and understanding which the students bring to bear on formulating their responses to writing tasks. In posing this question in the vignettes, I am reinforcing the view of writing presented in chapter one as not just an instant 'skill' which can be mastered, but as a kind of knowing, as well as a means of knowing. And, as the theoretical discussion indicates, and the vignettes reveal, different levels of knowledge enter into the fulfillment of different kinds of writing tasks. When during the course of presenting these vignettes, I divide these sources and resources into 'internal' and 'external', I am, in essence, saying that for every writing task these sixth formers engage in, some part of the information or knowledge required to formulate a response is available through 'internal' resources such as the following:

- a) their discipline-specific 'recallable knowledge' from their short term and long term memories

b) their 'tacit knowledge', by which I mean their breadth of knowledge and understanding which goes beyond discipline-specific boundaries to their experiential knowledge of the real world, their intertextual knowledge, and their knowledge of academic discourse, and which might need heuristic prompting in order to be more fully tapped.

c) their 'intuitive' knowledge, by which I mean their ability to 'intuit' the requirements of a specific question and hone in on and integrate whichever areas of their tacit and recallable knowledge would be most suitable with the information they glean from external sources.

What I have, perhaps too broadly, labelled 'intuitive knowledge' is a critical part of these 'internal' resources which students bring to bear on formulating written (and oral) responses to assigned tasks, since it signifies the cognitive events which activate and integrate other kinds of knowledge, and might therefore, perhaps more aptly, be termed 'ways of coming to know'. My intended meaning of the term 'intuitive knowledge' is derived, in part, from Michael Polanyi's discussion of subjective aspects of personal knowledge:

...as human beings, we must inevitably see the universe from a centre lying within ourselves and speak about it in terms of a human language shaped by the exigencies of human intercourse. Any attempt rigorously to eliminate our human perspective from our picture of the world must lead to absurdity....⁽¹⁾

in part from what George Kelly calls our "hierarchical construct system"⁽²⁾ wherein we select salient features of concepts or ideas through contrastive processes, and, in part, from what Michel Foucault calls "procedures of intervention" in the formation of concepts, such as

- a) methods of transcribing statements according to a more or less formalized language
- b) modes of translating quantitative statements into qualitative statements, and vice versa
- c) the ways in which one delimits, by extension or restriction, the domain of validity of statements
- d) the ways in which one transfers a type of statement from one field of application to another
- e) the methods of systematizing propositions that already exist, because they have been previously

formulated, but in a separate state; or the methods of redistributing statements that are already linked together, but which one rearranges in a new systematic whole.⁽³⁾

For information which is not available from these 'internal' resources, the students need to turn to 'external' sources or resources, such as notes, textbooks, reference books, newspapers, audio-visual media, real-world examples, and the like. It is in the drawing together of these external and internal resources, so that they 'speak' to each other in meaningful terms, that the interactive drama of the first movement is developed.

The ratio of external to internal resources brought to bear on the task determines to a significant extent the nature of the struggle. As we have seen from the vignettes, different writing tasks tap these various resources in different proportions, with students experiencing different sorts of problems in each area, ranging from struggling to articulate clearly the maximally compact understandings represented in what Vygotsky calls 'inner speech' or thought⁽⁵⁾ when the focus is predominantly on 'internal' resources, to determining the salient points and how to organize them when the focus is on 'external' sources of information. A comprehensive investigation of relationships between tasks and the resources of knowledge, understanding, and information they tap constitutes a study in its own right, and my crude generalization (above) does insufficient justice to the subtle variations of relationships evident in the vignettes. For my purpose in this study, I need to move from the generalization, with its most interesting pedagogical implications, to some specific examples presented in the vignettes. I have chosen three which illustrate the relationship.

In history of art, both teacher and student express concern about the need to draw so heavily on external sources of information, particularly because of the conceptual depth and difficulty of the relevant literature. Julia speaks of having to read one chapter over sixteen times before she can understand what it has to offer her with respect to the information she requires for her writing task; she also tells of the difficulty she experiences 'reducing' the information to

usable notes because of the abundance of detail (Interview, March 14, 1985). She describes two tactics she uses to help her tap these external resources: she either reduces the content of each paragraph to one macrostructural sentence formulated in her own words, or copies one sentence from the paragraph, if there is one, which accomplishes the same purpose (March 14). A related concern of both teacher and student is the amount of time spent on dictating notes. Mr. Christopher would prefer to spend more class time drawing out his students, and having them express their own personal responses to the (already once removed) slides of works of art. However, because of the amount of 'knowledge' or information required by the history of art syllabus, and the difficulty many students have understanding the discussions of philosophical concepts sitting behind the major art movements in the reference materials, he feels that his dictated notes, which make the philosophical concepts and authorized readings of the works of art more accessible in less time, provide an essential component of the resources of information students can draw upon. Mr. Christopher describes the two major types of writing tasks he assigns as those focusing on "a personal response within an art historical context" and those focusing on "the history of art criticism" (Interview, March 20, 1985). In the latter, the sources of information are predominantly external, although internal and internalized resources of discipline-specific, tacit, and intuitive knowledge and understanding are all brought to bear on the process of responding to this kind of task. Mr. Christopher's concerns with these tasks center on the difficulties students experience with structuring a "clear, logical argument", and selecting the relevant details to develop the "central core of the argument" (March 26, 1985). Julia, correspondingly, refers to the difficulties of finding, understanding, selecting, and organizing the relevant details from the related reading (vignette). In the personal response type of task, there is more of a balance between internal and external resources being brought to bear on answering the question, and a corresponding shift in the expressed concerns of both student and teacher. Julia's references to these tasks indicate her concern with both expressing her ideas clearly and organizing her response logically and coherently. Mr. Christopher is concerned, in these tasks, primarily with the difficulty

students encounter when transforming a visual experience to a verbal medium (March 26).

In history, as Cora so tellingly points out, there is very little opportunity for personal response. All information in the students' readings is mediated through historians; all information received in the classroom is mediated through the teacher who has made her lecture notes on the basis of information mediated through historians. In the students' search for information and knowledge to draw upon in response to writing tasks assigned for homework, external sources of information predominate, although internal resources of discipline-specific recallable knowledge, their knowledge of academic writing, and their intuitive knowledge which helps them to hone in on what to foreground and how to develop it in response to a specific question are also brought to bear on formulating their response. For timed essay tasks, the ratio is somewhat similar, except that in preparing for the writing task, external sources of information are temporarily 'internalized' in the students' short term memories, some of which will be retained as 'knowledge' in their long term memories. This focus on external resources is reflected in the major concerns of both teacher and students, as presented in the history vignette, for structuring a "lucid argument with supportive evidence in response to a particular question" (March 20, 1985).

In English, most of the writing tasks involve personal response to a literary text. Although the referential is necessarily external, most of the resources the students bring to bear on responding to the writing tasks are internal: their discipline-specific knowledge of how particular kinds of literary texts can be 'read'; their broader tacit knowledge of wider reading, intertextual relationships, academic writing, and so on; their intuitive knowledge of where they, as individuals, stand in relation to the particular literary text, how its values, ideas, assumptions, and representation of the world fit with their their values, ideas, assumptions, and view of the world. As the English vignette illustrates, although the students express concerns about coherent organization of their responses, their primary concern is how to express

their 'intuitions' or thoughts or ideas in words that convey them clearly. Ms. Elliott's concerns also reflect a balance between students' demonstrating their knowledge of what they have read and exploring thoroughly their ideas about it (December, 1984).

I have chosen rather obvious examples to illustrate the relationship I want to emphasize, and fear that this all too brief account may have reduced the complexity of the relationships between tasks and the resources of knowledge, information, and understanding they tap. My purpose has been threefold. I wanted first of all to propose an account of the relations between knowledge and composing which show the complex nature of the three levels of internal resources that students need to bring to bear on composing a written response to a particular task. Secondly, I wanted to reinforce the idea, suggested in the first chapter, and illustrated in the vignettes, that different writing tasks bear differently on these three levels of knowing in ways which may be characteristic of particular subject areas. Thirdly, I wanted to emphasize that the cognitive engagements inspired by these writing tasks are sited in the classroom context. It is evident that this first movement of the classroom polyphony, this gathering together of information, knowledge, and understanding in response to a particular writing task, plays a major role in the interactive drama between student, teacher, and task in creating the particular context out of which a particular text emerges. It defines the loci, internal and external, of the composing problems set by any particular writing task, and thereby foregrounds writing as much more than a 'mechanical' operation or skill, showing instead that writing is indeed a kind of knowing which is organized and made available through particular features of the classroom context. One of the major points of interest of this classroom context is the means whereby students are enabled to transform their information, knowledge, and understanding to written text.

2. TRANSFORMING INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDING TO WRITTEN TEXT

The evidence presented in the discussion of the first movement confirms the complexity of writing as a way of knowing. In any task, all three levels of internal cognitive resources are involved. But tasks differ, within classrooms, from classroom to classroom, and from subject to subject. Within these different classrooms and different subject areas are made available opportunities for a wide range of cognitive activities through assigned writing tasks, tasks which call upon the three levels of internal resources in a variety of ways. The act of transforming information, knowledge, and understanding into written text which responds to a particular topic organizes the interrelations among the levels of cognitive response into a kind of skilled knowing, skilled in the sense that it involves both experience and direction. The second question which interrogates the vignettes confronts the evidence on how this experience and direction take place.

As the vignettes illustrate, both teachers and students acknowledge that transforming information, understanding, and knowledge into coherent written text is a difficult and complex enterprise. Teachers therefore find it needful to employ a variety of strategies to try to enable their students to articulate competently and confidently in writing what they have come, or are in the process of coming, to understand about the body of knowledge which comprises their respective subject areas. What complicates this 'stage' of composing even further is the strong influence of the examination-oriented context of A-level classrooms upon the constant dialectic between convention and choice which permeates all writing. The teachers' and students' perceptions of the conventions of writing which will be rewarded on the examination are powerful determinants in shaping the enabling strategies developed by the teachers, and the manner in which they are interpreted and taken on board by the students, and manifested in their written text.

When I asked the six teachers for their views of what constitutes written competence in their respective disciplines, all six of them

framed their responses in relation to the kind of writing which is required on the examination:

1. *...to put forward a logical argument accurately, concisely, clearly, in scientific language, with the main points isolated (Biology, March 20, 1985).*
2. *...to construct an essay that is relevant to the title, shows a logical development, and is closely argued, contains an abundance of relevant examples as supporting evidence for the argument, and exhibits wider reading around the subject...uses language economically but to fulfill a purpose (Geography, March 26, 1985).*
3. *...to rationalize and formulate arguments, make judgements, extrapolate from one piece of work to another piece of work,...hang their ideas on a central core to achieve consistency of argument. It's a logical process,...a rational statement (History of Art, March 26, 1985).*
4. *...to develop a lucid argument with supportive evidence in response to a particular question (History, March 20, 1985).*
5. *...it's a particular style of academic writing you're after, wherein the student offers a particular view and supports that view and uses alternative views for discussion. They need to structure an argument around a theme, and give a sense of moving through an argument (Sociology, March 28, 1985).*
6. *...the essay represents a cognitive process of your demonstrating your knowledge of what you've read, your understanding of it, your ideas about it, your ability to write about these thoroughly and share what you think with a reader, your ability to use a text in support of what you say, your ability to shape your answer, to argue a point, and to arrive at a conclusion of your own (English, December 13, 1984).⁽⁴⁾*

These textual goals offer a powerful statement of teachers' perceptions of what constitutes written communicative competence at A-level. They undeniably confirm the concentration on transactional writing which the London Writing Research Group and Applebee studies affirm, but they also imply a tremendous variety of cognitive activities which are an essential part of the process of composing within this transactional mode. It is the carrying out of these cognitive activities

in relation to discipline-specific conventions which challenges and frequently confounds the students, and which provides the focal points for the strategies the six teachers employ to help their students transform information, knowledge, and understanding to written text. If we consider the six statements together, it is evident that they converge upon what we might call a 'set' of cognitive activities related to formulating and developing an argument or a line of argument. Although each teacher's conception of argument has somewhat differing, discipline-specific components, some common assumptions about the nature of argument are either implied or made explicit in these responses: it is logical and lucid; it has a hierarchical structure of main ideas and supporting evidence; it manifests developmental movement throughout the text, from a statement of the argument or line of argument through evidence-based elaboration to an informed or 'proven' conclusion; it is composed in an appropriately academic, discipline-specific register. And, although these assumptions do not, in themselves, preclude using the writing process itself as a means of clarifying for the writer what her or his line of argument might be, they do presuppose a considered, thought-through response to the assigned topic. Consequently, when students have to write under constraints of time, such as during examinations or in-class timed essays, they need to be able to formulate a line of argument in response to a specific topic quite quickly, since they have insufficient time to use the writing process itself to help them discover what it is they want to say about the topic. Most of the twelve students in the study have sufficient knowledge of the content required for specific writing tasks; their problem lies, as the vignettes illustrate, in how to 'structure' what they know into a line of argument relevant to the particular focus of a specific topic in the appropriate discipline-specific register. All six teachers use the writing events which are not timed to enable their students to develop confidence and competence in this transformation process, so that when they are composing under the pressures of time constraints, they will be able to conceive, formulate, and articulate a line of argument within the allotted time.

Although all of the vignettes show teachers engaged in helping students with processes of composing, the sociology vignette offers the most explicit example of a teacher employing strategies to enable his students to develop cognitive activities required to transform information, knowledge, and understanding to written text so that they can formulate an argument or line of argument efficiently and effectively under examination conditions. Mr. Goodman tells his class;

What they're [the examiners] looking for is the ability for you to apply the knowledge that you have - what they're looking for is your power of analysis, your ability, having analyzed the problem, to mount a coherent argument in order to answer it. That's what's being tested at A-level.

At the moment, because you're in a nice and calm, cool, calm and collected situation, you should be able to do that. You should be able to give time to analyzing the question and you should be able to give time to the way you are going to answer the question, and you should become so thoroughly used to doing that, that when you are actually in a position of having to do it under time pressure, you can do it very quickly. That is the skill you are trying to develop...once you begin to see how to use your material to build an answer, then you're there.

At this point in the class, he is trying to help his students analyze what the topic requires in terms of sociological knowledge, and then to organize and formulate that knowledge into a "coherent argument". He suggests that the difficulty of composing lies not so much in structuring an outline of an argument, since that is often implicit in the question, but in tracing a developmental path through the ideas in order to formulate a line of argument, and articulating the direction of that path competently and appropriately in written text. A bit later in the lesson, he says:

Okay. There is an outline. Now what is it that you have to do to get from that - which is sketchy - to a coherent, well-ordered, well-argued, well written, precisely expressed, direct, simple essay - that I, or in fact anyone else, could read? Well, that's where the work is, because in order to get that sense of coherence, in order to get that argument - ...you have to present a balanced argument....what you might like to do is build up a diagram....by diagramming things, having it in front of you, you can plan a route. I

think it is wise when you're planning not to...finalize what you're going to write, just to say everything that is relevant. Then, after you've transferred it to diagrammatic form, to look at it and say, "Alright now, if I start there, where does it match?", and that's the stage I want you to be able to get to quickly before you take your exams.

After a week of this preliminary planning, Mr. Goodman meets with each student individually, and offers them a particular rhetorical structure - thesis-antithesis-synthesis - which he suggests is well-suited to developing a line of argument in essays such as the one they have been assigned. He becomes quite concretely directive in offering this strategy, even so far as suggesting actual organizational phrases, in order to help his students understand how the pattern requires them to draw out from their information and knowledge primarily those details and concepts which can be related by their similarity or opposition to each other, and how to demonstrate strongly and effectively this relationship in their written text. In his conference with Steve, he says:

Mr. Goodman: What you should be concentrating on is the contradictions between what Marx and Weber say...What we're looking for, what you'll get credit for, is your ability to integrate the material on Marx and Weber...do you know what I mean by that?

Steve: Means I need to understand the theories and apply them to the question.

Mr. Goodman: It does mean that, yeah, and you've got to cross-reference them....I mean you get more credit for talking about Marx's two-class system and then immediately comparing it with Weber's view of a say middle class...so you don't say "This is how it was a hundred years ago - this is how it is now" in a descriptive way. You would say, "This is what Marx says about social class...but that doesn't seem to fit the picture, and Weber offers an alternative view which may seem more appropriate", but what you can then do is come back and counterargue again using Marxist thinking, so you have the Marxist perspective, the Weberian perspective, and the functionalist perspective....but rather than one: Marx, two: Weber, three: functionalism, or whatever, rather than putting it in that block fashion, what you should be trying is to find themes that you can debate in each of the theories...

What Mr. Goodman is trying to achieve in these interviews is the development of an awareness in his students that a deeper cognitive engagement with the evidence of the discipline is required in the formulation of their responses than in the "classificatory writing" described by the London Writing Research Group as a predominant mode in secondary schooling in the statement:

...attention was directed towards classificatory writing which reflects information in the form in which both teacher and textbook traditionally present it.⁽⁵⁾

In the model he recommends to his students, they are required to analyze the information available to them to find correspondences and contrasts in relation to common themes, select relevant material, arrange it both hierarchically and contrapuntally, and articulate it in a register appropriate to A-level sociology. Realizing the complexity of the task, he devotes considerable time and energy to trying to enable them to work within this model, to help them understand the particular cognitive activities required, and to help them to perform them. As the sociology vignette indicates, his students do take his advice on board, and they do try to integrate and reformulate received information as they compose their essays.

But how do they do this? How do the strategies of their teacher influence the way in which students transform information to written text? The significance of posing this second question lies not so much in the teachers' strategies *per se*, but in how they are interpreted by their students and made use of during the formulation of written text. The sociology vignette shows both similarities and differences among the four students involved in the study who take sociology in the way that they interpret Mr. Goodman's strategies and use them as guides to composing their responses. Journal extracts quoted in the vignette show that all four students find the opportunities offered during their conferences for discussing the essay and clarifying problems helpful, and that all four students apply Mr. Goodman's suggestions for transforming their information and knowledge to written text. However, in their interpreting of his strategies, we see some dissonance between

Mr. Goodman's intentions and his students' constructions of them. For example, whereas Mr. Goodman is suggesting a way of reading, analyzing, selecting, and synthesizing sociological knowledge, Susan, John, and Steve express feelings that Mr. Goodman, and the sociology reference books, have done this analyzing, selecting and synthesizing for them, and that all they need to do is write what he, or they, have said:

In sociology, you must select from your notes and background reading, and then apply it to the question...the concepts are already formulated... (Susan, Interview, March 20, 1985).

Sociology essays are easier [than English or history]. You read the books, take down the facts, repeat them, and show that you understand...the learning experience comes from the required reading....In the sociology essay, I only half finished it before I went into the hospital. I did the reading, had the conference, it was really good, but I didn't finish it...he tells you what to put into them and how to do it, and then you just do it (John, Interview, March 14, 1985).

...in sociology, you can often use the organization of your notes for the organization of your essay. It's good in that it clarifies points for the exam, but it doesn't make you feel important.

What this dissonance between intentions and interpretations indicates is that interactions among task, text, and context, specifically the contextualizing influences of teachers' enabling strategies in relation to responding to a particular task, are neither straightforward nor predictable. So many historical, socio-cultural, and situational factors are operative in any teaching-learning-writing event that large scale generalizations based on individual case studies would be out of order. At the same time, it is evident that teachers' enabling strategies play a key role in shaping the written text which emerges from the classroom context.

I chose the above writing event from the sociology vignette as just one example of the ways in which teachers and students work interactively to try to solve composing problems at this very complex stage of transforming information, knowledge, and understanding to written text. Despite the fact that it is framed by the expressed

intention of the teacher to prepare his students to demonstrate in writing, under time constraints, their understanding of sociology to an examining audience, the task and the pedagogical strategies Mr. Goodman employs engage the students in cognitive activities necessary to the reformulation of discipline-specific information in response to a particular topic, cognitive activities which serve to distance the resulting texts from the "classificatory writing" which the London Writing Research Group found to be alarmingly prevalent in secondary schools in the mid-seventies. I chose the above example also because it highlights these transformation procedures as an important feature of writing as a taught process, a feature which demands a tremendous amount of conscious attention on the part of teachers and students. The vignettes reveal a wealth of other examples, some of which stress similar cognitive activities, some of which focus on exploring a variety of alternative possible responses, some of which focus on discipline-specific registers, and some of which encourage the students to manoeuvre more competently and confidently within the constant dialectic between the conventionalized manner of responding and their own felt responses. These enabling strategies are critical influences in transforming information, knowledge, and understanding to written text in these six classrooms.

In this account of procedures of transformation, I have described one teacher's strategy on a particular occasion, and have given his students' responses to it, as well as, in the sociology vignette, shown how the resultant written text manifests these strategies. I have not been concerned to untangle the interrelations between thought and language which occur during the actual transformation of information to written text, a task which calls for attention, and has been calling for attention ever since the seminal work of Vygotsky which elaborates the relationship between language and cognition. Oral protocols might have provided access to some of the cognitive activities, but their intervention in the already complex network of context, task, and process which influences this transformation to written text would have distorted the findings. The students' reflections on their writing,

offered in their journals and during interviews, while indicating a high degree of insight into the writing they do at A-level, have not enlightened me concerning the actual internal processes which occur while they are composing. The evidence, instead, from both teachers and students, highlights the role of the teachers in seeking to model their students' writing performance, and it is therefore that particular feature of the process of transforming information, knowledge, and understanding to written text in the educational context which this investigation focuses upon.

In their attempts to enable their students in these transformation procedures, there appear to be three major moves. First, the teachers seek to identify for the students the kind of text at which they are aiming. Secondly, they draw attention to the constraints under which their students will be operating and indicate the necessary simplifications which will be required because of these contextual factors. Thirdly, they try to help their students with the intermediate analysis and decision-making which lie between task and text. Reflecting on these particular aspects of the transforming of information and knowledge to written text, I need to comment on some key issues which have arisen so far in the discussion. The first is that writing is for both students and teachers a site of competing claims, growing out of the constraints of the A-level examination context on the dialectic between convention and choice. Next is that despite these competing claims, the teachers of six different disciplines converge on the aim of developing a "lucid argument". Finally, within this convergence about goals for writing, the teachers utilize a wide range of enabling strategies in the course of seeking to develop their students' performance.

That said, it is clear from this brief attention to the processes of transforming information, knowledge, and understanding to written text that the development of written literacy and competence is much more than a simply transferrable skill. It is further suggested in the discussion that different disciplines, requiring different sorts of cognitive engagement with discipline-specific evidence, have

concomitantly different ways of perceiving and structuring 'lucid argument'. Among the range of matters which might be followed up in relation to these observations, the strategies employed by teachers in their attempts to enable their students to transform information and knowledge to written text which develops a "lucid argument" in response to a specific writing task emerges as a key issue, central to the shaping of the written text composed within the A-level classroom context. It is therefore upon these strategies that the analytical focus of the study will concentrate.

However, before passing to an analysis of teachers' strategies to enable their students to achieve certain aims with respect to written competence, it is necessary to make some estimate of the range of aims perceived for writing by both teachers and students in this A-level context. This is the evidence that the third question which interrogates the vignettes leads us to.

3, THE ROLE OF WRITING, AS PERCEIVED BY THE TEACHERS AND STUDENTS, IN THESE SIX CLASSROOMS.

The third question in each of the vignettes asks how the particular writing event spotlighted in the discussion relates to the writing generally done in the six classrooms. The preceding discussion has suggested that within the overarching category of transactional writing at the analogic level for an examining audience, we in fact find a wider range of functions. These functions are related to the varied aims and intentions of teachers and students as they work together to reconcile the conflicting claims made upon writing in the A-level examination context. In order to complete the picture I am trying to recreate of the writing which occurs in the six classrooms involved in the study, I want to illustrate the spectrum of these functions by examining the teachers' and students' perceptions of writing in their respective disciplines, and the nature of the discipline-specific universes of discourse that students are being required to enter through their assigned writing tasks.

A brief summary of the roles that writing plays in these classrooms, as indicated in the vignettes, will reveal both general trends and discipline related trends. Writing in the history class, as the history vignette indicates, functions almost exclusively as a demonstration of knowledge to an examining audience. Although Miss Aird and her students both express regret at not engaging in exploratory, investigative, and creative writing, they concur that getting through the examination is the most important goal at A-level. When students reflect on the writing they have composed in history, however, some goals and attainments other than just purely demonstrating knowledge in order to pass an exam are mentioned: Christine, for example, uses assigned writing tasks as an opportunity to "explore historical controversy" (March 20, 1985) and to develop her own voice; Elaine takes pride in learning how to "structure an argument" in a way which allows her more personal engagement with the ideas in her writing than in previous years, where she just "basically listed the facts" (March 19, 1985). Even so, the four students in the study who take history agree with Cora's statement about writing in this class:

...because it is, at the moment, doing work for the exam, and that's it. We're not working at things you're especially interested in. We're working on questions that are likely to come up. If we have a special interest in something that isn't likely to come up, what's the point in using time on it?...it's an intermediate phase...to get good results for a job or university. It's not something to enjoy, but working towards an exam (February 26, 1985).

Writing in Mr. Moore's geography class serves a broader range of roles, although still within the predominant function of writing to demonstrate knowledge to an examining audience. Based on teachers' and students' perceptions referred to in the vignette, writing in this class can be categorized into four mutually inclusive functions:

- a) as demonstrations of knowledge, and of how to structure that knowledge in appropriate style for an examining audience
- b) as syntheses of content knowledge to serve as a study tool for the students

c) as indications of content knowledge and competence in communicating that knowledge to serve as a pedagogical tool for teachers

d) as opportunities for exploring controversies and/or speculating on the formation of physical phenomena

This fourth function epitomizes how the three movements interpenetrate polyphonically in the classroom language environment, and how they operate within the contextualizing influence of the examination syllabus. Because the Cambridge Examining Board's geography syllabus encourages 'hands on' engagement with primary evidence by requiring two major fieldwork projects plus an individual exploration of geographical phenomena, several of the students' writing tasks put them in the role of 'apprentice geographers', wherein their writing functions not only to record their engagement with the evidence, but also to speculate about origins and causes and effects, and thereby to enter the universe of discourse of geography as 'protogeomorphologists'. Because of the primary nature of the evidence in these tasks, Mr. Moore's enabling strategies focus on exploring alternative possibilities, assessing contradictory explanations, and integrating what is newly learned with what the students already know and understand about the physical world they live in. The discourse of the discipline becomes therefore an integral part of their interactions with the evidence of the discipline, and discipline-specific terminology becomes less of a problem than it might be if the students were encountering it only through engaging with secondary and tertiary evidence of the discipline. As the geography vignette indicates, Mr. Moore's students manifest this approach to writing in the texts they compose, even when, as in Christine's case, they think of writing in physical geography as primarily the marshalling of 'facts'.

In Mr. Fox's biology class, although the Nuffield Foundation syllabus is supposed to encourage individual exploration and experimentation, the content demands of the syllabus are so heavy that even though they have an extra session a week on Fridays after school, the students' engagement with biological evidence is predominately through the printed word. Consequently, although the first three

functions of writing generated from the teacher's and students' perceptions of writing in geography can be also found in the perceptions of the teacher and students in biology, the fourth function, which the syllabus intends to foreground, is absent. Correspondingly, as the vignette indicates, students in this class experience far more difficulty with discipline-specific terminology, finding it difficult to achieve the precise degree of specificity required. The following observation by Mr. Fox sums up the problem in relation to the predominant function of writing in this class:

You get your answers wrong not because you don't understand the concept but because you get the language wrong. Is your understanding different depending on whether you use your phrase or mine? The examiner will think so....You must be able to predict what the examiner wants (October 10, 1984).

In their writing, students must converge not only upon the ideas anticipated by an examining audience, but in the actual terminology anticipated by this audience. As the biology vignette indicates, Mr. Fox devotes a considerable amount of class time trying to enable his students to transform what they know into written text which enters the discourse of biology perceived as authorized by tradition and the requirements of the examining board.

Mr. Christopher, in history of art, is the teacher in the study who most explicitly describes his conflict between wanting his students' writing to reflect their personal engagement with works of art, and being forced by syllabus demands to use writing as a means of gathering information and received knowledge about art history and art criticism, particularly as the year draws to a close. Whereas his goal is to have his students integrate their felt responses with their knowledge of authorized 'readings' of works of art within the historical and philosophical contexts of the movements behind the works of art, he feels compelled as the examinations approach to assign writing which synthesizes authorized knowledge about the topic. He speaks of wanting his students' writing to be

an intellectual process of developing the theories sitting behind a work of art rather than a description of the work of art itself....The work of art serves as

a catalyst between artist and spectator...so, throughout the intellectual process, the writer 'talks' to himself or herself the same as the artist 'talks' to himself as he produces the work of art (March 26, 1985).

He then mentions the following functions or roles of writing in history of art:

- a) as a process of self-reflection*
- b) to hone their analytical skills*
- c) to make manifest what happens in a glance by expanding experience into description*

As the history of art vignette shows, in the earlier parts of the year, and in the lower sixth, he engages his students in writing tasks which function in the above manner, but in the later part of the year, as the examinations approach, his writing tasks become primarily tasks of information gathering.

The earlier discussion of transforming information, knowledge, and understanding to written text indicates that Mr. Goodman, in sociology, also perceives writing primarily in relation to the examination. He describes the kind of writing he is encouraging his students to compose as follows:

It's a particular academic style of writing you're after, wherein the student offers a particular view and supports that view and uses alternative views for discussion....They need to develop the ability to structure a theme with a sense of moving through an argument...that's the main skill you're trying to teach them (March 28, 1985).

There is a considerable dissonance between how Mr. Goodman envisions written text in sociology and how his students envision it. The vignette shows Mr. Goodman stressing the complexity of cross-referencing and integrating contrasting points of view, and using these to develop a line of argument in response to a specific writing task. Yet the earlier discussion, considered in conjunction with the sociology vignette, also indicates that his students interpret his strategy as doing most of the cognitive, organizational work for them. They write:

In preparing the essay I learn it...it therefore seems sort of anticlimactic to write it all out neatly....I

learn more from doing the background reading than from writing the essay (Steve, June, 1984).

You read the books, take down the facts, repeat them and show that you understand....the learning experience comes from the required reading....he tells you what to put into them, and how to do it, and then you just do it (John, March 14, 1985).

In sociology, you must select from your notes and background reading, and then apply it to the question...the concepts are already formulated - they just need condensing and organizing....When asked to describe, for example, Durkheim's view of social order to compare it with another sociologist, this is relatively easy if organized in the right way (Susan, March 20, 1985).

This dissonance is an interesting feature of the language environment of the sociology classroom, illustrating that student-teacher interactions do not function at the level of straight transmission, but are subject to interpretations which can be quite at variance with intentions. What might be an explanation, or at least part of an explanation, for this dissonance in this particular classroom is that the sociology course is in a state of transition from preparing for a traditional examining board to preparing for a new board which encourages writing that integrates and reformulates sociological theory within the context of real world examples. Some of Mr. Goodman's writing assignments, those he repeats from previous years, seem to require the more traditional kind of response, whereas others, which he has prepared for this new examining board, elicit responses that require a greater amount of integration and reformulation of information. The students appear to be holding on to the safety of the kind of writing they have been producing for the past year in sociology. Rather than expose themselves to the risks involved in taking Mr. Goodman's advice as an initial step, and progressing on their own from there, they interpret his advice instead as having done most of the cognitive work for them. In this situation, their writing functions primarily as a demonstration of knowledge, rather than as the exploration of ideas that Mr. Goodman would like to see.

The English vignette illustrates the broadest range of roles and functions for written text. Excerpts from students' journals, quoted in the vignette, indicate six discrete functions for their writing:

1. developing one's own style
2. explaining ideas to oneself
3. as a means of understanding literary text
4. experimenting with ideas
5. enjoyment
6. and the quite unusual - retaliation

Ms. Elliott describes the following two roles that writing plays in her classroom:

...it's not until you get things down on paper that you get your mind clear, and force yourself to come to conclusions - so that what they write is useful for me to see what they understand and the doing is useful for them to sort their ideas out (March 27, 1985).

Part of the explanation for this broader range of function is the generous coursework component of the Cambridge Examining Board, which allows considerably more opportunity than the traditional boards for personal response, and the nature of the questions which are on the examination itself. According to Ms. Elliott:

...this A-level exam is unique in that it values an imaginative piece as a response to literature...it is a considerable improvement over the traditional A-level 'lit. crit.' type of question...it genuinely wants the student's opinion... (March 27, 1985).

Even so, she goes on to say, all of the examination questions and writing tasks assigned to the students

assume that it will be a considered, thought through opinion, formed from standing at the far side of the book and looking back over it and thinking about the whole thing...and recognizing the need for solid reference to the text to support it...Their essays in their folders are mostly 'end of the process'...I suppose that in a way all essays are 'interim', but it is generally assumed that they have a knowledge of the text. Perhaps we don't give them enough time - give them the essay while they're still uncertain - while they're still working their way through their response (March 27, 1985).

Although this last function of writing is not intentionally utilized by any of the six teachers, some of the students' comments suggest that they understand and take advantage of this heuristic function of writing

to help them come to a deeper understanding of the assigned topic. For example, Linda writes:

Planning is difficult. I try to understand the question, and how much depth is involved. I try to go into as much depth as I need to understand it. Writing helps me to explain things to myself (June, 1984).

It is evident from the vignettes, and anticipatable from empirical studies of secondary classrooms previously cited, that the predominant role of writing in all of these classrooms is to demonstrate knowledge to an examining audience. However, it is equally evident from the vignettes, and anticipatable from theoretical studies of learning and writing previously cited, that within and/or alongside that predominant function, writing can function in a variety of ways to stimulate deeper cognitive engagement with discipline-specific evidence through the processes involved in composing written text. In their efforts to reconcile these potentially, but not inevitably, conflicting functions through the enabling strategies which comprise writing as a taught process at A-level, teachers, and their perceptions of the roles that writing can play, are the most critical factor in determining the role which writing will play in the language and learning environments of their respective classrooms. It is here that the three movements interpenetrate most profoundly, because how the teachers perceive the role of writing will determine the tasks they assign; these tasks determine the first movement, the nature of the sources and resources of information, knowledge, and understanding tapped by the topic. The teachers' perceptions of the role of writing, the task, and the nature of the evidence it draws upon influence the second movement, the strategies which the teachers employ to enable their students to transform these resources of information, knowledge, and understanding to written text, while the students' perceptions of the role of writing influence how they take these strategies on board, interpret them, and manifest them in written text. This written text, shaped by the contextualizing influences of the first two movements, provides the referential for the third movement, the role of writing and of written text in the A-level

classroom in general, and within discipline-specific universes of discourse in particular.

These three movements characterize writing as a taught process in these six A-level classrooms. Within the contextualizing influences of the A-level examination system, they position teachers and students, their perceptions of writing and the enabling strategies they engage in interactively, as the critical central factor in shaping the written text which is composed in these classrooms. It is to these strategies I now direct the attention of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE
PERCEPTIONS, CONCERNS, STRATEGIES
STUDENTS AND TEACHERS WORK IT OUT TOGETHER

*Once upon a time there lived an iron.
The Gift could be a gift given to someone to hurt them
but there seems to be no relevance here (Julia).*

This excerpt from Julia's response to a writing task in A-level history of art makes an appropriate introduction to this chapter for three reasons: first, it was generated in a teaching situation representative of the kind of conflict in which writing as a taught process is positioned in schools; second, it is indicative of the ways in which students can creatively draw upon their tacit knowledge of a variety of forms and genres in unfamiliar writing situations; third, it appears to begin to tell a story, and I am about to tell a story.

The setting for my story is the A-level classroom (in general) as it is represented by the six particular A-level classrooms described in the vignettes. This A-level classroom is the site of a number of fundamental contradictions. It is the site of a tremendous variety of processes of learning, as students experience personal growth while they engage with new bodies of discipline-specific knowledge, and use these experiences to construct their own world view. At the same time, it is the site of a tremendous variety of social expectations with respect to what we might call 'marketable skills'. The highly-specialized functions of the A-level classroom - preparing students for university, or other venues of further education, or better employment opportunities - demand that it deliver with respect to these marketable skills, according to standards acceptable to universities and/or employers. The tension generated by these conflicting functions of A-level education sets up the A-level classroom as an arena for a dramatic struggle, as students and teachers attempt to cope with these contradictory demands. And since it is primarily through writing that students must deliver or demonstrate the extent of their competence in these marketable skills, writing therefore becomes the key site of this struggle. Teachers and students, realizing the need to teach and learn, respectively, the forms and styles of writing traditionally accepted as

appropriate by universities and prospective employers for demonstrating the kinds of competencies necessary to survive, compete, and succeed in these institutions, find that their concentration on formal standards constantly undercuts their mutual desire for more personal engagement with new bodies of information. Consequently, we find the situation documented by the London Writing Research Group: a narrowing of function and audience in writing to the predominantly analogic level of the transactional mode for teacher-as-examiner.

In presenting "Some Implications" of their study, the London Writing Research Group writes, in relation to the above narrowing:

...we do not suppose that these patterns of function and audience in the writing in our sample were *planned*. What we do believe, however, is that a greater general awareness of the potential roles of language in school, with a clearer notion of what actually goes on, might have led to the better management of resources of time and effort.⁽¹⁾

However, if the limitations on function and audience within the sample were not "planned", then either the sample was skewed (which could happen for all sorts of reasons), or concerns other than the broadening of function and audience are influencing the nature of written text at A-level, concerns which might result in the kinds of written texts analyzed by the London Writing Research Group. What their findings imply is that through the narrowing to one mode of writing, the transactional, for one type of audience, the teacher-as-examiner or the unknown examiner, students lose touch not only with their personal feelings in response to what they are learning, but also with the opportunity to realize the full heuristic powers of writing for generating deeper understanding of what they are trying to articulate. Because the developmental progression from expressive to transactional is foreshortened, students are generally expected to grapple with new concepts at the same time that they are required to articulate them as communicative transactions, frequently resulting in predominantly "classificatory writing" which, in the words of the London Research Group, reflects little independent or speculative thinking. The feeling of pessimism which accrues from their conclusions is reflected in the following observation:

It begins to look as though organizational changes in the circumstances in which learning takes place may make little difference in the face of the effect of examination upon school writing.⁽²⁾

Without denying these perceptions, the story I have to tell is not a pessimistic one, but rather an optimistic one. Despite the constraints of examinations, despite the constraints of content-laden syllabuses, despite the almost exclusive reliance on writing as a means of demonstrating learning within standards based on outmoded views of both writing and learning, what actually happens in this educational process is that teachers and students do learn, and one of the things they learn is how to cope within the situation. My story is not a criticism of a lack of "general awareness" among teachers, but an account of students and teachers wrestling with the constraints of the situation as they converge upon the formal registers of the different subjects. My story is about how teachers and students in this context, through interaction and engagement in highly creative strategies in their teaching and learning, can, and often do, succeed in producing written text which enters discipline-specific universes of discourse while retaining the integrity of the author's own voice.

The story needs to be told, not through any desire to retain the restrictive educational contexts within which these teachers and students struggle to reconcile conflicting demands, nor through any desire to diminish the valid criticisms of the A-level examination system by the London Writing Research Group and other groups and individuals. My story needs to be told because it begins to fill a gap - the gap left after it is said:

The most striking feature of this - indeed perhaps of these tables as a whole - is the pattern which has been reached by the seventh year. In that year, as will be seen from the tables, about 85% of the writing was judged as transactional, over 58% as transactional for an examining audience, and no less than 42% of the writing was allocated to one cell alone - analogic writing for the teacher as examiner.⁽³⁾

This is the story of how some of that huge category of 85% transactional writing emerges from the classroom context, specifically

from the interactions of students and teachers based on their perceptions of how writing functions in an educational context. It looks not so much at what is not being done, but at what is being done, creatively and productively, to enable students to articulate in written text their encounters with new bodies of knowledge.

As all stories are shaped within a beginning and an ending arbitrarily imposed on the continual flux of existence, each selected event or motivation having beginnings and endings, influences and repercussions far beyond the borders of the narrative, so my story, which 'starts' in September, 1984, and 'ends' in July, 1985, is similarly seeded with a vast number of untold stories, reaching years into the past and future: stories of the development and roles of educational institutions in society, particularly in British society; stories of how the six teachers learned and selected the particular disciplines within which they are working; stories of how the twelve students acquired and developed linguistic competence within the contexts of home, school, and community; stories of latent learning, and of how this will manifest itself in the years to come; and a host of others. Therefore, when on the first day of 'my' story I walked into these six classrooms and observed teachers and students together engaged in what appeared to be a mutually agreed upon compact to teach and learn in preparation for and despite a final exam, I was immediately thrust, in somewhat of an *Alice in Wonderland* fashion, into arenas of struggle and conflict in stories begun much earlier, and which will continue to unfold long after this tale is told.

This 'compact' between students and teachers, differently conceived and differently manifested in each of the six classrooms, has grown from a mutually acknowledged awareness of the potential conflicts between learning how to integrate the evidence of different bodies of knowledge into a developing world view and having to demonstrate that learning, in writing, to an unknown examiner. What results is that each of the six teachers assumes what could be called a 'collaborative' relationship with his or her students, in which they work together to try to satisfy the regulated, standardized demands of 'the examiner',

while getting on with the business of learning how to conceptualize new, discipline-specific categories of information, and integrate these with their emerging intellectual construction of the world. Since these assumed 'collaborative' roles are frequently taken up by the teachers in relation to assigned writing tasks, they vary according to the nature, focus, and function of the task, as well as according to the individual personality and intellectual stance of the teacher. How the teacher conceives his or her role in this relationship with the students shapes, to a large extent, the dramatic realization of the struggle to reconcile the conflicting demands in the A-level 'theatre of the real'.

Although each teacher varies in the role he or she assumes in different class sessions and at different times of the year, four discrete interpretations emerge as predominant throughout the year in varying combinations. These roles, which are not mutually exclusive, I have called 'the exhorter', 'the mediator', 'the tactician', and 'the shaper'. When teachers assume the role of 'exhorter' in relation to the students, the writing task, and the examiner, they appear to take on the values of the examiner, and make statements such as the following:

The examiner will come down very heavily on you if you use twentieth century vocabulary for nineteenth century concepts....it's appropriate to make a statement of your argument before proceeding step-by-step, but not a good idea to make a dogmatic statement in your opening paragraph because it leaves the examiner the impression that the discussion is a waste of time - that there's really nothing to discuss (History, October 23, 1984).

The examiner is looking for confident knowledge of the text - how it works, and what's there...examiners don't want to have to make the connections; they want to see how you've made the connections (English, March 19, 1985).

You must use the proper terminology. Your line of thought can be correct, but you'll be penalized [by the examiner] if you use the wrong word.

[In response to a students' rather lengthy and complicated answer to a question] No. I want the O-level way you learned. You could do it your way, but the O-level way is a much simpler way. That's what the examiners would want (Biology, May 1, 1985).

Steve: *Can we just use our common sense to answer a question like that on the exam?*

Mr. Goodman: *No! The examiner will expect you to demonstrate your knowledge of sociological concepts (Sociology, May 16, 1985).*

The roles of 'mediator' and 'tactician' are similar to each other, in that the teachers are 'mediating' between students and the examiner rather than appearing to identify primarily with the examiner's position or values, but whereas in the role of 'mediator' the teacher offers general principles of advice such as the following:

If you just scribble down what I say when you don't know the answer, or have it wrong, you may have my words, but still think the same, and will think that way on the exam. Therefore, you must take risks, and answer questions, and if it's wrong, we'll sort out why it's wrong and thereby help you get it right (Biology, October 17, 1984).

Steve: *When a question says "look at", does it mean "write about"?*

Ms. Elliott: *It means "look closely at" or "examine carefully". The chief examiner's aim is to set questions "do-able" in forty-five minutes, which isn't much thinking and writing time (English, March 19, 1985).*

Another feature about your answers to this essay question is that your essays contain the bulk of points you will need for the exam....some of the decisions you had to make when writing these essays were difficult...let the examiners know when decisions are hard to make (Geography, April 22, 1985),

in the role of 'tactician', the teacher gives very specific advice about the techniques of writing examinations:

On the exam, often it's not so much a question of knowledge, but a question of style, of how you put it down [The teacher then went over specific stylistic features of two MODEL ANSWERS to questions the students had been working on] (Geography, December 10, 1984).

Notice the mark allocations, and time yourself accordingly. Spend most time on the sections which will give you the most marks....Don't strain over a fancy conclusion, since you will probably have made

most of your points in the body of your essay. If you go over the time you've allotted yourself for the question, leave it, and go on to the next one (English, March 5, 1885).

There are shorthand ways of getting the examiner to know what you know without convoluted sentences and extra phrases...use brevity so you can write at length. Use precise vocabulary, the words the authorities use; then one word can do the work of five...sketch and diagram to replace lengthy explanations rather than say again what you've said (Geography, March 25, 1985).

Lecture on THE GREAT REFORM ACT. Miss Aird frames the entire lecture in terms of responding to possible examination questions (History, May 14, 1985).

In the role of 'shaper', the teachers actively intervene in the examination process. The five teachers in my study who are heads of their respective departments have the opportunity for direct intervention in the examination process in that they can select which examining board comes closest to examining the kinds of learning and thinking that is valued by their departments. For example, in the sociology department, the teachers were concerned that the examinations set by the previous board concentrated too much on memorizing textbook information. They searched for an alternative board, and found one which set examination questions requiring application of the basic sociological paradigms to real world situations. This intervention, in turn, influences the way in which the teachers in the sociology department assist students in composing written texts in preparation for the exam. In the English Department, the teachers have chosen the Cambridge examination for two reasons: first, it has a one-third course work component, which allows the teachers and students to use a greater variety of kinds of writing tasks in their engagement with different authors; secondly, many of the questions on the exam "genuinely want the students to express their own opinions, and are in that respect less phoney than some of the more traditional boards" (Ms. Elliott, March 27, 1985). In the biology department, the teachers have opted for the Nuffield syllabus, which encourages an inquiry-oriented mode of pedagogy over the more traditional information-transmission mode of pedagogy.

These four interpretations of roles teachers assume in their 'collaborative' relationship with their students are, in a sense, 'umbrella strategies', in that they extend over and influence the entire repertoire of interactive strategies they engage in with their students to help them transform information, knowledge, and understanding to written text. By assuming these 'collaborative' roles, these teachers attempt to reconcile the basic conflict inherent in the two major functions of writing as a taught process at A-level: as a heuristic to promote learning; and as a means of demonstrating learning. This reconciliation can be viewed in terms of teachers' goals or intentions with respect to their students' writing in the A-level context, and the strategies they use to enable their students to accomplish these goals or intentions.

Whenever any of the lessons focused on writing, I noted the area(s) of concern (both teacher-initiated concerns and student-initiated concerns), and the ways in which the teachers tried to assist their students with these concerns. Sorting through this collected information, I found **five major areas of concern addressed by teachers, which are listed below in order of classroom emphasis** (based on the amount of class time, and the number of references devoted to them):

1. Responding to a specific question
 - a) determining what the question is asking
 - b) drawing on tacit knowledge in order to
 - i. broaden their answer
 - ii. integrate new and known information
 - c) formulating and/or structuring an argument and line of argument in response to a specific question
2. Locating and assessing discipline-specific evidence
3. Improving "style"
 - a) using the terminology of the discipline
 - b) using the register appropriate to the discipline (or to academic writing in general)
 - c) acquiring confidence in one's own style
4. Coping with time constraints
5. Improving the surface features of the text
 - a) essay as form
 - b) spelling, usage, punctuation

c) appearance, handwriting

Although the above list of concerns represents the overall picture of the six classrooms, each of the different disciplines has slightly different emphases. In history of art, for example, "assessing discipline-specific evidence" is given priority, followed closely by "using the terminology of the discipline" and "using the register appropriate to the discipline", with "responding to a specific question" coming next. In English, very little attention is focused on "using the terminology of the discipline" or "using the register appropriate to the discipline", whereas "acquiring confidence in one's own style or voice" takes on more importance. In all six classes, however, with respect to the amount of class time devoted to discussing concerns about writing, the first three general areas listed above take precedence over the last two.

The students' concerns, however, differ in their emphasis. Based on interviews, journal entries, informal conversations, and questions asked during class time and during conferences with teachers, the following list of students' concerns has been generated. However, whereas it is relatively easy to determine a hierarchy of importance for the teachers' concerns, a correspondingly clear-cut pattern does not emerge from the students' concerns, other than the pattern I refer to in chapter four, when a focus on external resources in the writing task correlates with a concern for formal considerations of text on the part of the students, and a focus on internal resources in the writing task correlates with a concern for expressing clearly one's understanding in written text. **There are seven areas of concern referred to by all students**, but their order of importance varies from student to student. The following list is ordered according to my overall impression of the hierarchy of their concerns:

1. How to structure an 'argument'
 - a) generally
 - b) in response to a specific question
2. Extent of elaboration
3. The essay as a formal construct
4. How to express their understanding or "meaning"
 - clearly in written text

5. The need to improve their vocabulary
 - a) in general
 - b) in discipline-specific terminology
6. Surface features of the text - spelling, punctuation, grammar
7. The lack of opportunity for "creative" or more personal modes of writing

The most general (and probably most readily anticipatable) correlation between the students' list of concerns and the teachers' list is that, within particular classes, the concerns of the teacher are often reflected in the concerns of the students. For example, in biology, Mr. Fox emphasizes the need to use precise, accurate, discipline-specific vocabulary. Similarly, students studying biology focus on vocabulary in their journals and interviews. An exception to this general pattern is found in English. Whereas all six English students in the study express concern about their vocabulary, Ms. Elliott considers their vocabulary quite adequate, and focuses her attention on other concerns. Another discrepancy or area of dissonance revolves around "extent of elaboration", explicitly mentioned frequently by the students, but only implied in the teachers' expressed concern about "responding to a specific question". Teachers' written comments on students' completed texts, however, do focus on this area of difficulty, but primarily in response to specific areas of over- or under- elaboration in a particular text, rather than as a feature of written text which subscribes to generalizable principles. "The lack of opportunity for 'creative' or more personal modes of writing" is a major area of discrepancy between the two lists, and reflects, in part, the conflicting demands teachers experience with respect to class time, content-laden syllabuses, and preparation for final exams. Although this concern is not articulated in the classroom by either teachers or students (which is why it did not appear in the teachers' list, formulated on the basis of class time devoted to each area of concern), it is nonetheless perceived as an area of 'loss' by teachers as well as students. During our frequent informal chats, all six teachers mentioned that they would like to engage their students in writing tasks with more scope for personal interests and personal responses, or, in the case of English, wherein the coursework component already allows for more personal

responses, to engage their students in writing tasks "while they're still uncertain - while they're still working through their response" (March 27, 1985). The history and geography teachers spoke of recent innovative syllabuses at O-level, which allow for more coursework, more engagement with primary evidence, and more opportunity for students to respond to primary evidence as "apprentice historians" or "protogeomorphologists", and are looking forward to the time when similar syllabuses will be available at A-level. The history of art teacher spoke frequently of his aim to have students integrate their personal responses with "art historical" responses to works of art, but felt he had to concentrate his writing tasks, particularly towards the end of the year, more upon information gathering than on personal response, in order to complete the syllabus in preparation for the exam. It is neither lack of awareness nor lack of desire which inhibits these teachers from choosing to go beyond the transactional mode of writing, primarily at the analogic level, and primarily for teacher-as-examiner. It is the convergence of societal, institutional, and personal pressures to find the most efficient means of helping their students pass their A-level examinations with as high a mark as possible. But a considerable amount of learning occurs as students transform their engagement with new bodies of knowledge into written text composed in this predominant mode, learning which is enabled by the strategies teachers employ to help their students respond in writing to various kinds of tasks.

Since it is not strategies in themselves which result in 'learning', but rather the extent to which they are taken on board by the students, manifested in written text, and generalized into principles which can guide further formulations of concepts into written text which indicate learning, these strategies must be considered in both synchronic and diachronic contexts. This is the intention of the vignettes. Each one presents teacher and students engaged in producing written text within the constraints of the A-level educational context; each one indicates particular strategies employed by the teachers and taken up by the students in this interactive drama; each one shows how these interactions are manifested in written text; and each one shows how the particular event(s) of the vignette engender the three movements of the

polyphonic texture of the classroom described in the previous chapter. Each vignette is, in essence, a scene from the sixth-form drama of teachers and students teaching and learning, through writing, how to conceptualize the evidence of the specific disciplines in the manner most appropriate to demonstrating knowledge of the discipline to an unknown examiner. The drama is realized through the assumption of the 'collaborative' roles I referred to earlier, which enable the teachers to present the values of the examiner in different ways or at varying degrees of distance to the students, at the same time allowing themselves to retain their own personal relationship with their class as they interactively engage with the ideas and evidence of the discipline. For example, after exhorting her class in the following manner:

When answering the context question, don't embroider, just put down the facts. Don't be wordy, don't write too much - it's not a mini-essay, and try not to have too many crossings out...

Miss Aird can then lean back and, in a sense, distance herself from these demands, based on what her experience tells her is effective advice for scoring well on the examination, but not particularly relevant to either effective learning or effective writing about history, and say:

Just think of the examiner as one of those old-fashioned, middle-aged grammar school types, used to the traditional methods (May 22, 1985).

While we may grimace at this rather unfair, overly-generalized caricature of "the examiner", the comment serves its purpose of cueing the students that Miss Aird, having assumed the role of 'exhorter' in order to advise her students about effective ways of responding to a particular type of examination question, has now come 'out of role', or, depending upon what ensues, might take up a different role. The students respond with laughter, and the tone of the lesson warms up.

The situation, then, can be viewed in the following manner. Writing as a taught process in the A-level classroom is the site of two potentially conflicting functions: as a heuristic to promote learning; and as a means of demonstrating learning. Constraints of time and content-laden syllabuses, in addition to the traditional expectations of examining boards with respect to what constitutes written competency in

each discipline, militate against incorporating into the already crowded curriculum modes, functions, and audiences for writing beyond the analogic level of the transactional mode for the teacher-as-examiner. Consequently, teachers and students cope with the situation by conceptualizing discipline-specific information within the limitations and possibilities inherent in this transactional mode. A major strategy in their coping is to reconcile potential conflicts by engaging in a sort of "us-against-them" 'collaborative' relationship, wherein teachers and students work together to accomplish genuine learning while satisfying the perceived demands of the omnipresent "examiner". Teachers bring to bear on this collaborative relationship various combinations of four major interpretations of their roles, which I have termed 'the exhorter', 'the mediator', 'the tactician' and 'the shaper'. Within these roles, the teachers employ a number of strategies to assist their students to transform their understanding of discipline-specific evidence into written text in such a way that the writing process generates learning and the written text demonstrates it. We will now take a closer look at some of those strategies.

Bearing in mind James Britton's observation that "We classify at our peril",⁽⁴⁾ I have collated the various strategies employed by the six teachers throughout the year into twelve categories which pertain to the processes of writing from the formulating of the writing task to the use of completed texts:

CATEGORIES OF STRATEGIES

1. Wording of writing tasks
2. Collaborative use of talk
3. Conferences
 - a) pre-writing; while writing; post-writing
 - b) scheduled; informal
 - c) teacher-initiated; student-initiated
4. Oral comments to class - before, during, after
5. Use of background reading
6. Use of diagrams for planning
7. Use of varieties of writing tasks
8. Use of constraints in preparation for exam
9. Teachers' written comments
 - a) on final drafts
 - b) on interim drafts

10. Use of written texts as MODEL ANSWERS
 - a) texts written by former students
 - b) texts written by teachers
 - c) texts written by classmates
 - i. shared orally
 - ii. shared as written texts
11. Use of printed handouts
12. Use of generalizable heuristics

1. THE WORDING OF WRITING TASKS

As Dixon and Stratta observe in their article, "Unlocking Mind Forg'd Manacles?",⁽⁵⁾ the wording of examination questions indicates and influences the cognitive processes brought to bear on responding to the task. Similarly affective is the wording of classroom writing tasks. Extracts from the journals of Sian, Linda, and Barbara, previously quoted in the biology and English vignettes, indicate how the wording of questions can influence the composing of the response, affectively, in terms of giving them confidence that they are responding appropriately, and cognitively, in terms of specifying the activities the questions require. The wording of the writing tasks in the six classrooms functioned as catalysts to the students' writing experiences in four different ways:

- A. as a means of integrating their personal responses to discipline-specific evidence with conventionalized ways of responding
- B. as a means of understanding and discriminating among various examination 'codewords'
- C. as conceptual springboards to tapping students' tacit knowledge
- D. as macrostructural organizers for formulating written responses

A. Integrating personal and conventional responses

The task presented in the English vignette is the most explicit example of attempts to phrase questions in such a way that they use

terminology that students can expect to encounter on an examination at the same time that they specify activities which will encourage cognitive engagement with the evidence of the discipline beyond what has been discussed and 'pre-decided' or 'pre-formulated' in the classroom:

WRITE A LETTER TO VIRGINIA WOOLF IN WHICH YOU GIVE HER YOUR RESPONSE TO "A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN"

You ought to include in this comments on:
what you have like or found interesting in the book (or the opposite)
her arguments and the issues she raises
how these have been developed since she wrote the book and which of them are still relevant
your own position on the matters she discusses

This task invites the students to respond personally to the arguments of Woolf's discussion, at the same time locating their comments within conventionalized 'literary critical' responses. A further example of Ms. Elliott's 'mediating' between expectations of the examiner and opportunities for exploring personal responses by the manner in which she formulates her questions follows:

Write a critical appreciation of 'The Hollow Men'. You may find it helpful to consider some, or all, of the following aspects of the poem:

the relevance of the title to the whole poem
the mood and atmosphere, and the ways Eliot creates these
his use of repetitions and recurrent images
the ways the separate sections interconnect

BUT REMEMBER that your main aim is to explore the meanings which the poem conveys to you (the appreciation) and the ways in which Eliot expresses those meanings (the critical task).

The last line of the question contains, in essence, a microcosmic representation of the conflict inherent in the two major functions of writing, which Ms. Elliott, in the role of 'mediator', attempts to reconcile: the "critical task" required by the examining board, and the exploratory task of "appreciation" which can lead to a deeper personal as well as intellectual response to the poem. She elaborates her intentions for this particular writing task in an article, "Teaching T.S. Eliot: Travelling hopefully..."[in press]:

The wording of this [task] deliberately uses phrases which students can expect to meet in examination papers, but also tries to clarify the activities which those phrases require. The emphasis was on each student articulating as fully as possible her or his own reading of the poem, rather than reproducing a consensus version of class discussions. This was partly because I know that their final examinations will reward students who show that they can think for themselves, but also because I needed to find out how far each individual had managed to get with a poem which had produced some very sticky discussions and a lot of anxiety.⁽⁶⁾

She goes on to express her general satisfaction with the texts which were composed in response to the question - "...their essays were often fresh and original, and seemed written with confidence by candidates of all levels of ability".⁽⁷⁾ An excerpt from Barbara's text illustrates how she successfully combines the disparate demands of the task:

Throughout the poem the hollow men are desperate to escape the inevitability of death and its kingdoms. 'Let me be no nearer'. They are fighting a hopeless battle against mortality, desperately clinging on to life. 'In this last of meeting places

*We grope together
And avoid speech'*

I found this verse in section iv particularly affecting. It really gives out a strong image of desperation. People are frantically clutching each other before being parted forever. The silence makes it even more dramatic, as if nothing else can be said. The inevitable will happen.

B. Understanding Examination Codewords

In geography, Mr. Moore, also in the role of 'mediator', has made up a printed list of many of the problematic or vague 'codewords', such as "discuss", "explain", "analyse", "outline", and goes over with his class what examiners might expect in written response to these directives. Throughout the year, he attempts to employ as wide a range as possible of these different codewords, drawing his students' attention to the idea that the word 'discuss' opens a wider set of options than, for example, the words 'analyze' or 'compare' (February 25, 1985). That students find these examination 'codewords' vague and confusing is indicated when Steve asks:

When a question says "look at", does it mean "write about"?

and when Elaine, in history, insists that there is really no difference between the phrase "Estimate the contribution of Parnell" and "Discuss the contribution of Parnell", even though Miss Aird has emphasized the requirement of the task to make an assessment of his contribution rather than simply to say what it was.

C. Tasks as Conceptual Springboards

Another strategy employed by Mr. Moore, and most of the other teachers, with respect to the wording of questions, is to show the students how to use them as conceptual springboards to tapping their tacit knowledge. The geography vignette documents one of Mr. Moore's techniques for enabling students in this aspect of writing in an educational context, although all six teachers address this problem in somewhat similar ways. The problem is perceived by the teachers in my study as a two-pronged process: first, zeroing in on precisely what the question is asking; secondly, tapping one's reserves of tacit knowledge in what might have been learned as disparate 'categories' of knowledge or 'topics', in order to draw upon as broad a base of knowledge and understanding as possible. To assist his students with narrowing and then widening their focus, Mr. Moore has them first underline key words or phrases in the question, and then independently brainstorm for related ideas and concepts. He then has them work collaboratively in small groups to compare their lists of ideas and determine, together, a possible outline or, preferably, a macrostructure for a response. He hopes that students will not only realize the extent of knowledge they have which can be brought to bear on responding to writing tasks, but also that there are many possible ways of integrating this knowledge and organizing it in the process of composing a written response.

This pedagogical strategy may seem far removed from the arena of conflicting demands I describe earlier, but its context places it firmly in the centre. The particular writing tasks in the geography vignette have been taken from previous examinations, where they were originally intended to be responded to in a thirty-five to forty minute time

period, with no opportunity to refer to source material. The "slopes" task was written in simulated examination conditions to give students practice in drawing upon their reserves of knowledge to respond to a question within examination time constraints. The "marine erosion" task was a deliberate strategy, in response to how the students performed on the "slopes" task, to assist students in the 'narrowing' and 'broadening' processes referred to above. Mr. Moore, assuming the combined roles of 'tactician' and 'mediator', is using this strategy as a means of reconciling the conflicting functions of writing as a taught process at A-level. His task provides students the opportunity to use writing as a heuristic to promote learning at the same time that it provides practice in using writing to demonstrate learning. This particular strategy, or rather set of strategies, is the more valuable to the students because it offers them a way of responding to a specific task generalizable to responding to a variety of tasks.

D. Tasks as Macrostructural Organizers

A concern of the London Writing Research Group was that

attention was directed towards classificatory writing which reflects information in the form in which both teacher and textbook traditionally present it.⁽⁸⁾

All six teachers consciously and explicitly caution their students against this dependency on the presentational organization of 'received knowledge', emphasizing that many (although not all) of the questions they will encounter on the examination will require cognitive processes such as selection, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation beyond the formulations of information they have already received through reading and lectures. Although several strategies and factors are involved in fostering these processes of independent thinking, the wording of questions is a key factor for several reasons. The most obvious is that when teachers are conscious of formulating their questions in such a way that the response is not begged in the same form as the information is presented, then answering the question as it is asked will require processes of independent thinking to influence students' written text.

Other than a few of the study guide questions in biology, the end-of-term information-gathering assignments in history of art, and some of the 'context' questions in history, the written tasks given by the teachers require engagement with the evidence or information of the discipline in forms other than the manner in which it is presented in textbooks and lectures. In history, for example, questions such as

Did Disraeli have any consistent political principles?

and

Estimate the contribution of Parnell to the cause of Irish Nationalism

require the students to sift through the information they have gathered from lectures, textbooks, and wider reading, synthesize it, and make judgements, particularly when sources disagree, as they do in the above questions, in order to compose a response. In geography, questions such as

Why do rates of marine erosion vary from time to time and from place to place?

and

What processes have shaped valley-side slopes in humid temperate zones?

require students to draw on their knowledge of meteorology, geomorphology, and geology, and to select, analyze, synthesize, and organize this information into a line of argument in response to the question, presenting and, if possible, reconciling conflicting viewpoints. Similarly, the wording of most of the writing tasks in the other subjects requires not just a re-organization, but a re-conceptualization of received information.

However, wording a question in such a way that it requires independent thinking does not guarantee that students will take up that opportunity. In fact, "responding to a particular question", specifically, "determining what the question is asking", is listed as the most emphasized area of concern in the teachers' list of concerns about writing, and occupies a similar position in the students' list. The biology vignette illustrates how problematic it can be to understand from the way a question is worded precisely what it is asking, and how to go about answering it. Mr. Fox's recommended strategy is first of

all, as Mr. Moore also suggests, to read it carefully and "pick out the important bits", then to interrogate the question, and then to jot main ideas or a diagram on a piece of paper:

...you must read everything carefully, you must read it slowly, and you must learn how to pick out the important bits of it...now the question doesn't tell you that bit about the dark. It leaves it for you to add in. So when you read a question, you've got to ask, 'How much is it telling me and how much have I got to give?'...In other words, when you do a question like this, you've really got to think things out...like if you can't imagine everything ...I can't...what I often do is I scribble little things down...so I know what's coming from where. Now some of you may have the ability to picture that in your mind. I find it easier to put it on a piece of paper, so it's actually in front of me...it's a process...a bit like maths...you've got to work it out...

As the vignette continues, however, we find that some students still experience difficulty with the wording of questions:

Alan: ...people find not so much the question itself hard but the way it's worded, and I think more effort could be made to -

Mr. Fox: ...that's what science is like...science works in this way. Now if we start writing in simple language, then I won't train you as scientists because when you leave school and you go to university and you get a book in front of you, you're going to have to read scientific text and it's not going to mean the foggiest to you. You won't be a scientist, because I do the work for you, translating the language down. A scientist has got to be able to understand scientific jargon, the scientific language...if you can't speak and write scientific language not one of you will ever become a scientist -

Sian: But the question's not about scientific jargon - that's not the problem - it's the English - the way it's worded...I didn't misinterpret the scientific jargon, I misinterpreted the English.

Mr. Fox: That's just plain English - formal English - which is what scientists tend to write in...the graphs, the questions - it's all a language, and without understanding the language, you can't take part in the game.

In the above excerpt, two issues have become conflated in the one problem: the difficulty that some students experience with the wording

of questions. Whereas Mr. Fox interprets the issue as one involving scientific terminology, Sian and Alan see the problem as unclear wording. As students and teacher negotiate their different interpretations through talk, we find (in the vignette) a number of significant issues raised, but none resolved. It is not until almost two months later, after many more classroom discussions, disagreements, and talk, Sian mentions to me that she has much less difficulty interpreting what biology questions are asking. In response to my "Why?", she says:

Sian: I hear Mr. Fox's voice saying over and over again: "Read it slowly and carefully, pick out the main words, and sort it out on paper". Really, I think it's just the practice of doing so many and listening to Mr. Fox go on about it (May 22, 1985).

In the role of 'exhorter', Mr. Fox has helped these students with a complex and difficult problem, a problem not just concerning scientific terminology but also concerning the often ambiguous wording of questions on examinations. The issue begs for more attention, by researchers, teachers, and examiners; this brief inclusion just brushes the tip of a very thorny problem with writing in an educational context.

2. THE COLLABORATIVE USE OF TALK

The potential of collaborative talk, either in small groups or in the whole class group, to contribute to learning has been a popular and productive topic of research for the past twenty years. Talk is the most versatile, powerful, and accessible heuristic students can draw upon to tap their inner resources of tacit knowledge, to share that knowledge with their colleagues and teachers, and, through the process of that sharing, to arrive at a deeper understanding of the concept they wish to formulate. The English and geography vignettes give evidence of the importance of the collaborative use of talk as an enabling strategy for tapping inner resources of tacit knowledge and for transforming this knowledge into written text. As Barbara and Linda, in the English vignette, negotiate their way through chapter six of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf" in relation to the assigned writing task, we can trace a development from a mutual acknowledgement of the complexity of the text to a tentative exploring of the shape and meaning of the text,

particularly with respect to the symbol of the taxi, through to an emerging awareness that Woolf might possibly be engaging in a sort of mirror chauvinism even as she criticizes male writers of literary domination. These ideas, germinated in class discussions, begin to bloom in this sharing of ideas between Barbara and Linda, and come to fruition in their written texts. Particularly interesting is the manner in which Linda keeps Barbara digging deeper into the text each time Barbara tries to admit defeat:

Linda: How about when she brings in people and she says, "And Mary Beaton speaks" and this sort of thing?

Barbara: She brings so many people in.

Linda: Don't worry about -

Barbara: The more I think about it, the more I dislike this book.

Linda: Alright, what's it's good points?

Barbara: It hasn't got any [laughs]. No - uh -I think if we were to understand it, we'd see that it was very well structured, but at the moment, we can't really tell.

Linda: Yeah.

Barbara: If I knew it a lot better, I could see the structure.

Linda: Yeah.

Barbara: I can see the things, that they follow a pattern and that sort of thing, but I can't see the pattern.

Linda: Well, as you said earlier, at the moment, until we understand it better, it doesn't seem logical, does it?

This snippet of dialogue fairly crackles with friendly support as the two girls struggle with the assigned task and help each other to gain confidence in their ability to arrive at some degree of insight which, as the vignette illustrates, is ultimately transformed into written text. In similar fashion, the geography vignette documents a group of three girls sharing their ideas about possible ways of developing a topic,

negotiating their way among these possibilities to decide, together, what they perceive as the 'best' way as they narrow the focus to the particular demands of the question, and then broaden it to incorporate the wealth of ideas generated by drawing from their corporate tacit knowledge. Extracts from students' journals presented in the vignettes give evidence that students find this kind of collaborative talk of significant value in helping them to articulate ideas which are only partially formed, and in hearing different ways of perceiving discipline-specific concepts and evidence.

The roles which teachers take on during these collaborative sessions vary not only from teacher to teacher, but with each teacher as each session progresses. For most of the sessions I observed, the teachers tried, generally, to be as inobtrusive as possible. To this extent, these times appear to escape for a while the ghostly presence of "the examiner" as students become engaged in exploring ideas and articulating these ideas to their peers, not for evaluative comment, but for negotiating their way to further understanding. And, as the extract from the transcript of Barbara's and Linda's discussion shows, 'learning', in the sense of coming to a fuller understanding, occurs as the girls explore issues they consider important in relation to the task. These sessions, however, do not occur decontextualized from task and teacher. During both the geography and English sessions dramatized in the vignettes, after having given the students approximately ten minutes to get their ideas flowing and, possibly, to encounter some problems and raise some questions, the teachers moved from group to group to "try to pre-empt some of the problems as they arise, before they go down on paper" (Ms. Elliott). In the course of these teacher interventions, from time to time Mr. Moore and Ms. Elliott would take on one of the 'collaborative' roles I have described, but sometimes they responded not in any of these roles, particularly when students presented them with questions or problems to which no ready solution was available, and which therefore cast them in the role of fellow learner. At these times, Ms. Elliott would make comments such as:

Well, I've been having problems with that bit of the text as well. Sometimes it seems to mean..., but then, when I go back to it later, I think....(March 26, 1985)

and Mr. Moore would say something in the nature of:

Mmm. That's a good question. I don't honestly know the answer. Let's have a go at it together (April 22, 1985).

Although in both of the above instances, the teachers direct the shape and content of the ensuing discussions more than the students, primarily because of their greater experience in dealing with the evidence of their respective subjects, the students respond to the cue that they are working through a problem together, not just receiving information from one 'in the know'. Another form of intervention which does not fit any of the four roles I have described is characteristic of these collaborative sessions. As the teachers move from group to group and listen or observe or read, they occasionally will interrupt with a question such as, "How did you arrive at that?" or "Tell me about this connection" (in the case of diagrams), in a sense reversing the usual roles, and putting the students into a genuinely communicative, in the sense of informative, relationship with the teacher.

To a large extent, the nature and purpose of the task determine which roles are most appropriate. The situation in the geography vignette, for example, is a strategy to enable students to realize the extent of their tacit knowledge, to realize how collaborative talk can help them draw upon this knowledge, to realize that there are many possible ways of organizing responses to a particular question, and to practice the narrowing and then deepening of focus necessary to respond accurately and fully to a particular question. The specific task is to produce, as a group, an outline or propositional macrostructure of a response to the question. The process is fundamentally an exploratory one, but the task has an additional function to perform, a function which complements the heuristic process of talking through a composing problem in small groups in order to collaboratively produce a written text (the outline or macrostructure). Ultimately, as with virtually all written assignments in the A-level classroom, this one functions in relation to the examination, in that it is intended to develop cognitive

skills necessary for responding competently to specific examination questions. When the outlines produced by each group are presented by the teacher to the whole class, this shift in the function of the text from one representative of an exploratory process to one which demonstrates knowledge or information appropriate to responding to a specific question is accompanied by a shift in the role of the teacher, as he assumes the role of 'mediator' while discussing the outline with the class. In this role of 'mediator', he explains how the outline *might* be realized differently in an essay written under examination constraints from an essay written as a genuine exploration of the topic.

What occurs during this class is a considerable achievement with respect to reconciling the contradictions inherent in writing as a taught process in the A-level classroom. Using collaborative talk in small groups as a catalytic procedure, Mr. Moore has created a situation which the students have taken up as a genuine learning process, not just in relation to the specific task, but as a cognitive process they can apply to the composing of future texts. He then completes the process by showing how a text which originally functions as a heuristic to promote learning might function in relation to an examination situation, where there is no opportunity for collaborative talk.

In the classes where collaborative talk is a frequent strategy for exploring and clarifying ideas preparatory to writing about them, students acknowledge the benefits of this procedure in their journals and interviews:

Writing in English Literature is important, expressing ideas in a particular way, though writing is not enough. I think it's very important to have discussions in order to hear others' viewpoints (Susan, September 24, 1984).

In history [lower sixth] we sometimes have seminars, where we talk about an essay assignment, and get others' points of view. I find it interesting, and helpful...we usually just talk about a specific essay question after it's been done. I think it would be more helpful to talk about it more first (Elaine, June, 1984).

In history of art there's a lot of talk. Mr. Christopher shows us slides and we talk about our responses to them. It's very helpful when you come to writing your essays, besides being a lot of fun...In English, we talk most of the time. I find it really helpful. Apart from bringing you out of yourself, everyone exchanges ideas and brings different things to it (Julia, June, 1984).

Linda's comment during our March interview effectively illustrates how the exploratory sharing of ideas which occurs in collaborative talk functions in relation to the examination system, particularly with respect to developing confidence in the ability to think independently:

'A' essays - they're written by those who can explore beyond what is done in class and who have original ideas...I'm not sure how to have 'original' ideas...look at Virginia - she's the sort of person who gets 'A' because she questions what is said...most of us are happy to sit back and let what's obvious be said. It's difficult to question what's being said...Virginia has lots of confidence, so she feels comfortable disagreeing - I think it must be connected to personality - I don't understand why not more people disagree - I guess it's because we're encouraged so much to conform. You need confidence to speak out - I think that's why discussions are good in English They help to build that confidence. Here, everyone speaks out and disagrees from time to time.

3. CONFERENCES

Conferences in all their varied forms are a part of the teachers' repertoires of strategies in all six classrooms in my study. Taking the six classes together, conferences occur at all stages of the writing process; many are formally scheduled and conducted in the comparative privacy of the teacher's office or the department office; many are informal, on-the-spot collaborations about an immediate problem; most of the former are teacher-initiated, whereas most of the latter are student-initiated. During these conferences, the teachers once again take up a variety of roles in relation to the purpose of the conference and the nature of the particular writing task.

A. Pre-Writing Conferences

The only pre-writing conferences I observed are those documented in the English and sociology vignettes, although scheduled pre-writing conferences also occurred in biology and geography in relation to the students' major writing projects, and student-initiated pre-writing conferences occasionally occurred in history and history of art when students experienced difficulty either with locating information or with figuring out a line of argument in response to a specific question. In the sociology pre-writing conferences, Mr. Goodman wants to see how his students have integrated the background reading of the previous week with their already internalized discipline-specific knowledge to begin to organize a response to a specific question:

Next week I'll see you individually and see what you've done and what you're doing, what material you've read, what notes you've extracted, what things you don't understand, what your confusions are. I want to take the process nice and slow, so that you know what you've got to do.

Upon finding during the course of the first few conferences that most of the students express confusion about how to organize the available material in response to the question, Mr. Goodman focuses the conferences on a method of structuring an argument, not just in response to the particular question, but a method or heuristic which can be generalized as a rhetorical structure and applied to other similar questions in sociology, and other subjects. In class the previous week, Mr. Goodman, in the role of 'mediator', had emphasized the need to "mount a coherent argument":

What they're [the examiners] are looking for is the ability for you to apply the knowledge that you have. What they're looking for is your power of analysis, your ability, having analyzed the problem, to mount a coherent argenment in order to answer it. That's what's being tested at A-level.

At the moment, because you're in a nice and calm, cool, calm and collected situation, you should be able to do that. You should be able to give time to analyzing the question and you should be able to give time to the way you are going to answer the question, and you should become so thoroughly used to doing that, that

when you are actually in a position of having to do it under time pressure, you can do it very quickly. That is the skill you are trying to develop...once you begin to see how to use your material to build an answer, then you're there.

He takes up the roles of 'mediator' and 'tactician' in his interactions with the four students whose conferences are documented in the vignettes, with both teacher and students imbuing the advice with its significance in relation to the upcoming examination:

Mr. Goodman: You should be thinking to use them [Marx and Weber] to argue against each other, yeah? Rather than just a straight description [of what each says]...

Sian: It's hard

Mr. Goodman: It's hard, yes. Of course, that's what you're rewarded for - that is showing your analytical powers.....Let's say you're basing it on Marx's notion of a two-class system. Okay. You then say something like, "although there is agreement between Marx and Weber concerning the ownership of the means of production, Weber would disagree with Marx..." - you know, you actually say, "Weber would disagree with Marx" and "Contrary to what Weber says, Marx thinks..."

Sian: Yeah, but when I do things like that I get so confused. It's better if I just write it all out, but then I've got to get the marks, don't I?

Mr. Goodman: You won't get as much credit for putting it down in prose fashion. You will get much more credit if you can utilize the theories in an integrated way.

Sian: Okay.

He then goes on, as the vignette illustrates, to give Sian strategic advice on how to "utilize the theories in an integrated way". Following Mr. Goodman's advice will necessitate Sian's employing a number of cognitive procedures to transform the information she will gather into the kind of argument Mr. Goodman outlines; by developing her essay along the thesis-antithesis-synthesis rhetorical structure Mr. Goodman recommends as appropriate for this kind of question, she is at the same time engaging in a method of investigating 'received information' which can be applied not only to other similar questions in sociology but also to other subject areas. From the extracts of Sian's and the three other

students' texts offered in the vignette, it is evident that they take Mr. Goodman's advice about integrating the evidence in the argument-counterargument pattern he recommends. However, it is equally evident that Sian follows his suggestion to

just take one particular bit - like that - and try to deal with it in an integrated way

in that she does not go beyond his specific suggestions for integration in this text and apply them to other sections of the text. Whether or not she and the other three students, John, Steve, and Susan do, in fact, internalize and generalize the rhetorical structure into an organizing principle which can be used as a heuristic in other writing situations is an important question, and one to which the answer varies with the student. Since these variations are the result of so many factors, both personal and academic, it would be foolhardy for me to hypothesize a direct correlation beyond the text to which the strategy is most immediately applied. At best, I can say that Susan, who, at the beginning of the school year expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of her writing, particularly with respect to organization, and a strong determination to improve it, does appear to respond to this and other strategies employed by both Mr. Goodman in sociology and Ms. Elliott in English, to the extent that some of her later texts in both subjects give evidence of this, and other, rhetorical patterns which were not present in her earlier texts.

These pre-writing conferences in sociology are seeded with issues, techniques, points of emphases, and corresponding variations in the relationships between students and teacher, and the roles the teacher assumes. Although these are of interest and importance, limitations of space preclude their inclusion in the discussion; there is however, one important point I will briefly dwell upon. If the sociology vignette reveals anything, it reveals a tremendous amount of thought and energy directed to the process of writing in an educational context. It reveals a teacher and his students struggling with the problem of conceptualizing in writing discipline-specific information in response to a specific question. As such, it is truly a representative example of how writing emerges within its particular educational contexts. There

are features of these interviews which can potentially enable students in their composing of written text, and, as the extracts from the students' journals and from their subsequent texts indicate, do enable them. There are also features which might potentially inhibit the development of independent thinking, as Steve's conclusion to the subsequent text (sociology vignette), written bearing in mind Mr. Goodman's exhortation to avoid strong conclusions which could be considered naive, indicates, and as John implies in the following comment during our March interview:

That sociology essay on social stratification...I only half finished it. I did the reading, had the conference - it was really good - but I didn't finish it. Not sure why, really. Didn't seem much point. He tells you what to put in them and how to do it and then you just do it (March 14, 1985).

The factors which influence the extent to which students take on board the advice or techniques offered by their teachers form a further dimension of the interactive process of teachers' enabling students to transform knowledge, information, and understanding into written text, a dimension which calls out for further research.

The conference presented in the English vignette differs from the sociology conferences in function, degree of formality, and development. Its purpose is twofold: to go over the students' coursework folders preparatory to having them evaluated internally and externally, and to see how each student has progressed in his or her thinking about the writing task on Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own". It therefore functions at all stages of the writing process: at the pre-writing or incubation stage for those students who have not yet begun their Virginia Woolf essays; in the midst of formulating their ideas for those who have begun; at the post-writing or reflective stage as teacher and student review the student's folder and decide which texts should be included, and which might benefit from revision. Instead of being pre-arranged and conducted in private in the teacher's office with the teacher behind his desk and the student opposite him in a comfortable but somewhat smaller chair, here, the teacher moves from student to student as they work, either singly or in small groups, on their folders

and essays, and sits beside the student at the student's table. What develops is a dialogue between student and teacher in which they negotiate the direction of the discussion according to the concerns of the student in relation to the agenda set by the teacher.

Ms. Elliott's conference with Steve is significant with respect to the view of writing at A-level as the site of conflicting demands which teachers and students struggle to reconcile. At one point in the conference, Steve is trying relate how essays are formulated to how they are evaluated:

Steve: You know what would be really helpful to me would be to know how people mark these essays. I mean in other subjects...when you make a point in a paragraph, they make a tick and then count up the ticks at the end.

Ms. Elliott: It can't be done like that because...well, for example, I could have just ticked off each point and if the essay was worth thirty points, totalled the ticks for a mark out of thirty, but it doesn't work that way...the problem with marking English is that because the essay represents a cognitive process of your demonstrating your knowledge of what you've read, your understanding of it, your ideas about it, your ability to write about those thoroughly and share what you think with a reader, your ability to use a text in support of what you say, your ability to shape an answer, to argue a point, and arrive at a conclusion of your own - you can't start off with a list of things and use that to tick things off. You have to take it all into consideration and sort of juggle...

Steve: But it's difficult to know how to structure it. I don't know just what you have to do. A little paragraph to get your point out - and get a little tick, and then another paragraph to develop it - might be worth another tick - I don't know...if you haven't been told or ever shown what should go in - how to structure an essay or what should be in the introduction...I'm still not satisfied I know how to write an essay. I don't think it's human instinct.

Ms. Elliott: I'm not suggesting it's human instinct, I'm saying actually that it's your problem and you have to sort it out. All one can say is it's got to have an introduction, a middle which expands on the introduction, and a conclusion which ties the ends together - that's about as much use as a hole in the

head, because it's only when you sit down with a question and a text and your ideas about it that you can start to put it in operation...there isn't a simple way. If there were, we'd be doing it...

This snippet of dialogue raises a number of issues concerning writing as a taught process in an educational context, not just in the subject, English, but in all subjects. The three most germane to this discussion have to do with assessment, function, and authorial responsibility. Because the catalyst for this portion of the conference is Steve's consternation over a mark lower than he anticipated on a writing task, I will begin with assessment.

Since, as Eagleton writes:

The text does not allow the reader to see how the facts it contains were selected, what was excluded, why the facts were organized in this particular way, what assumptions governed this process, what forms of work went into the making of the text, and how all of this might have been different⁽⁹⁾

assessment is fundamentally fraught with mystery, particularly in a situation where the text must stand as a representation of what the student knows or understands about a given topic. With Steve, for example, when Ms. Elliott is speculating later in the year about how he might fare on the examination, she states:

there is a horrible mismatch between what goes on in his head and what he actually gets on paper (March 27, 1985).

As the sociology and English vignettes illustrate, Steve could be considered an embodiment of the conflict created by the contradictory demands of an educational context wherein writing must function primarily as a means of demonstrating learning while teachers and students would also wish it to function in broader terms as a heuristic to promote learning. On the one hand, as the above snippet shows, Steve seems to want an almost algorithmic strategy for making "points" which are rewarded with "ticks", which translate into "marks", an understandable desire when writing is the means by which knowledge is assessed on future-determining examinations. On the other hand, he

reveals to us his awareness that writing has, for him, far more excitement and potential for exploration and insight when he is caught up in the cognitive effort of having to find his own path to meaning through his writing, rather than having it laid out in a pre-constructed 'yellow brick road'. Early in the year he tells me:

My essays have been poor during the course so far but I (arrogantly) claim that the reason again is lack of interest and motivation. I find it hard to put down on paper what I know already, have discussed in detail, and know that my teacher knows more about than me. I also find it hard to attach significance to the exam at the end of the course - it all seems so distant (September 20, 1984).

The following journal entry midway through the year indicates his excitement when the writing task requires a deeper cognitive engagement:

*Finished at last. This one took ages, but I quite enjoyed it. We studied TROTL ["The Rape of the Lock"] all last term but I didn't actually have any interest in it until the last week we spent on it...The fact that we hadn't actually got to the crux of the poem in class helped enormously with the essay. It was a **voyage of discovery** and I had nothing much to regurgitate from my classwork (January 10, 1985).*

This last journal entry, written within a month of the conference in the English vignette, hardly seems written by the same student who wants "ticks" for "points" and who assumes that some rigid, all-purpose rhetorical pattern exists which will provide an appropriate container for these points, an assumption once again understandable in an educational context where the social assumptions and expectations which foster written examinations as the prime means of determining understanding of a way of ordering knowledge necessitate a strong degree of standardization of the means of demonstrating this understanding. Ms. Elliott's response to Steve, although framed in the context of "marking English", is applicable to writing in all subject areas, indicating very clearly how **writing is the problematic site of complex cognitive demands not readily amenable to convergent standards of assessment.**

At the same time, it locates the function of writing firmly in its educational context as "a cognitive process of your **demonstrating** your

knowledge". Yet Ms. Elliott expresses doubts about limiting writing to that one principle function, doubts which are shared by most of the six teachers in my study. The problem epitomizes the dilemma of the sixth form classroom, wherein teachers and students struggle to reconcile the conflicting demands made by these two major functions of writing. In "arriving at a conclusion of [our] own", we make many false starts, travel down blind alleys, encounter rival thoughts in conflict, find ourselves in twisting, tortuous side streets, lured by the possibility of a more interesting journey which takes us away from our main direction, and we take in these adventures, and we learn from them. Yet the text appears as a straight cognitive journey, revealing few, if any, traces of the many changes of direction which were made during the discursion. In fact, when the prime function of writing is to demonstrate knowledge, traces of cognitive meanderings and explorations are often considered 'irrelevant', or indications of 'incoherence'. Although Ms. Elliott's following comment refers to essays in English, it applies equally well to writing in all six subjects:

Most essays...genuinely want [the students'] opinion, but it does assume that it will be a considered, thought through opinion, formed from standing at the far side of the book [or information or evidence] and looking back over it and thinking about the whole thing (March 27, 1985).

Although all six teachers would agree that this is a function of writing which has an important position, in fact an essential position, in the A-level educational context, many would also agree with Ms. Elliott's following comment:

Perhaps we don't give them enough time - give them the essay while they're still uncertain - while they're still working their way through their response (March 27, 1985).

We see in the history of art vignette that Mr. Christopher tries to have his students write and share responses to the evidence of the discipline while they are in the process of actually forming their responses, so that the written articulation can actually trace a path of cognitive meanderings. Julia's text which introduces this chapter offers an interesting example:

The Iron

Once upon a time there lived an iron.

The Gift could be a gift given to someone to hurt them but there seems to be no relevance here.

Perhaps the artist has made the gift a decorative item (like a painted road cone) to give to the public, thereby confusing them, making statements about the receiving of his work, etc.

The symbol that 'iron' gives is a useful one. Iron - Ironing - housework?? = housewife??? equals non-creature consumer goods = functionalism.

Metaphorical ironing?? taking the creases out of things but contradicting by putting nails in it. Perhaps this is how that artist sees the public (March 22, 1985).

We can see verbal traces of Julia's mind racing in several directions, trying to find her way into a meaningful response to Man Ray's "The Gift". This text does not function as a **demonstration** of learning, but as a **way into** or **means of** learning. Yet Mr. Christopher, despite his occasional attempts to incorporate this function of writing into the writing repertoires of his students, is reluctant to engage them in this sort of writing task more often. His reasons are similar to those expressed by other teachers in the study: **it is not the function of writing which is valued by examiners or which is required on examinations; it is not a function of writing which formed a part of their educational background and which they feel comfortable using; under pressures of time, it is not seen to be the most efficient means of processing information in writing; it takes time away from other activities which are important with respect to completing the syllabus.** These reasons, in the context of the pressures of the A-level classroom, reinforce the notion of writing as the site of conflicting demands and pedagogical intentions.

Authorial responsibility is the third issue of the extract from Ms. Elliott's conference with Steve that relates to this discussion. Steve wants some sort of formula or rhetorical pattern which he can apply in a general way to writing essays. His first journal entry indicates his assumption that such a 'formula' exists:

It would help to have lessons in study skills and essay technique. The way I have tried to learn is through trial and error, not knowing the simple 'formula' for essays until well into last year (September 24, 1984).

Yet "well into" the following year, he is still searching for this "simple formula", a rhetorical pattern of textual organization which represents for him **the structure** of essays. As journal extracts in the vignettes illustrate, his search is shared by several of his fellow students, though not all (Linda and Virginia both tell me that one of the complexities of writing essays is that each one requires a different 'structure', depending on the nature and wording of the writing task). Ms. Elliott is faced with the task of trying to guide Steve to an understanding that an essay's 'structure' is not an arbitrary, pre-fabricated form into which he will pour the content of his ideas, but a form that will grow organically with his ideas as they germinate, develop, and ripen to fruition: he, as author, creates the structure even as he formulates his ideas, a concept which Linda and Virginia have already internalized. Ms. Elliott's strategy here is to advise Steve of his authorial responsibility with respect to creating essay 'structures' as part of the process of articulating his ideas:

*I'm saying actually that it's **your problem and you have to sort it out**. All one can say is that it's got to have an introduction, a middle which expands on that introduction, and a conclusion which ties the ends together - that's about as much use as a hole on the head...because it's only when you sit down with a question and a text and your ideas about it that you can start to put it in operation...there isn't a simple way. If there were, we'd be doing it.*

It is a quite different strategy from the one Mr. Goodman uses in the sociology conference, wherein he does offer the students a particular rhetorical pattern. This difference might be seen as contradictory, but in reality the two strategies are not mutually exclusive, but rather different approaches to reconciling the contradictory demands of writing as a taught process in the A-level classroom. Both teachers are trying to encourage critical cognitive activities in their students' written articulation, but the different disciplines, and differing natures of the writing tasks, dictate differing techniques. Mr. Goodman is

trying to offer his students an example of a rhetorical strategy which will enable them to present differing opinions directly and dramatically, a strategy which they can apply to other similar situations when they arise, but not a "simple formula" which can be applied to all situations. Ms. Elliott, working within the nebulous genre of critical analysis, and trying to have students develop confidence in formulating and articulating their own responses, wants to avoid rhetorical patterns which might inhibit their getting in touch with their intuitions. Her emphasis, then, is on sorting out the ideas in relation to the text and in relation to a question, and having her students discover that the arrangement or structure grows with the ideas. Because Mr. Goodman and his students are working with a question students could encounter on an examination, he therefore takes on the role of 'mediator' as he frames his instructions in relation to what will be "rewarded" by the examiner; Ms. Elliott and her students, on the other hand, are working with a question unlikely to appear on an examination (although not an impossibility with the changing nature of questions on the AEB), and much of her advice is aimed towards helping Steve to realize the importance of formulating and articulating his ideas more fully. However, the shadow of the examination colours this conference also, as we see when Ms. Elliott, in the role of 'mediator', positions her advice on the Virginia Woolf essay in relation to the examining board's requirements for their writing folders:

Ms. Elliott: I think what you want, what you say, is "What I find interesting is the way you say...; I don't agree because..." and that would actually do it -

Steve: Yeah, if I justify it.

Ms. Elliott: That would place the bit you selected in a context that would at least show why you selected it and would also satisfy the folder requirement that the essay gives evidence that you studied the text and that you know it and so you're actually firming up your folder.

Although coursework folders are not currently a general feature of the A-level classroom, their possible inclusion in several subject areas in the new GCSE guidelines for 16+ would seem to indicate a move in

this direction in subjects other than English at A-level. The second purpose of these English conferences, then, to review the students' folders, has significance for writing in an educational context beyond the boundaries of the English classroom. Ms. Elliott is very much in the combined roles of 'mediator' and 'tactician' as she and her students negotiate which texts to include and which texts to revise. Several factors influence these negotiations: there are the requirements laid down by the board for nine texts: two from the lower sixth, one Shakespeare other than the set text, one non-fiction, six of the eight essays to be on set texts, in addition to an extended essay of 3500 words on a topic, author(s), and text(s) of the candidate's choosing; there is the factor of demonstrating as much development as possible over the two year span; there is the factor of showing the ability to re-think a topic and task, and formulate the response in a more effective way, balanced by the consideration that too many revised essays will demand more of the examiner's time; there is the factor of showing a balance in the forms or modes of written texts; and there is the factor of selecting which essays best demonstrate the students' written competence in the discipline. These factors indicate values and assumptions placed by the AEB and by the Tiara Glen English Department on writing as a representation of thinking in relation to literary texts:

1. students' ability to articulate ideas in written text continues as a developmental process throughout their two years in A-level
2. written text is neither ephemeral nor indelible; students can rethink and revise their responses to writing tasks several months later, if they wish; revisions are considered in relation to original versions, to see what changes and growth have occurred in the interim
3. personal response to literary text is valued (a change from the more traditional boards which favor a 'literary criticism' response to literature); a greater area on the expressive-transactional continuum can therefore be included in the functional mode of written text
4. an acknowledgement that writing requires time for reflection, that composing under time constraints

without sharing ideas is not the only, and not necessarily the best, way to demonstrate in writing the extent to which one has learned to engage with literary text.

These are values and assumptions which are on their way towards reconciling at least part of the conflict generated by the two major interdependent activities of the A-level classroom: engaging with new and complex bodies of knowledge, and preparing for a final examination in which students must demonstrate the results of their engagement with these bodies of knowledge.

B. In-Process Conferences

Not many conferences occur in these six classrooms while the students are actually writing, primarily because much of the in-class writing attempts to simulate examination conditions; writing extended over a period of time is generally done at home. However, in English, geography, and biology, their respective syllabuses require an extended independent inquiry into some aspect of the discipline of the candidate's own choosing. Student-initiated conferences occur at all stages of this process: at the beginning, when students want help with formulating their topic; throughout their work on the study when problems arise; towards the end, if they are having specific problems interpreting their observations. Teacher-initiated conferences vary from department to department. The English department schedules conferences at discrete 'stages' in the process of composing the extended essay: close to the beginning to explore the possibilities of the student-formulated topic; and after each draft (the students in my study wrote from three to six drafts). The biology department does not initiate any conferences unless the teacher feels that a particular student is not progressing with the study. The teachers in the geography department confer with their students on an informal basis, during spare moments in regularly scheduled class time. When these conferences do not deal with a specific problem, they generally serve as an opportunity for the students to talk about their ideas, speculations, fieldwork discoveries, and/or plan of project development with their teacher. During our interviews, all twelve students tell me that it is not difficult to make appointments with their teachers to discuss problems related to writing

or to other features of their coursework. During my time at Tiara Glen School, it was evident that many of the teachers' lunch hours, unscheduled periods, and hours immediately after school were devoted to conferring with students.

C. Post-Writing Conferences

Individual post-writing conferences are a regular feature of the writing strategies employed by the history teacher. After speaking to the whole class about each recently completed and evaluated text, she talks to each student individually, going over his or her paper, primarily in relation to how it would rate in an examination situation. For example, taking up an 'exhortative' role with John, she tells him in reference to a timed essay she has just returned:

You just don't have enough down on paper. You must get down more information in the time allotted, or you will fail. You must think faster and write faster in order to pass the examination (January 8, 1985).

However, these conferences are potentially far more helpful than the above comment would appear to indicate. They are intended to perform several functions:

1. they enable the teacher to expand on her written responses to the students' texts
2. they enable her students to discuss comments either that they might disagree with or that they don't understand
3. they provide the opportunity for teacher and student to discuss how specific problem areas might be improved upon in subsequent texts
4. they provide students the opportunity to articulate why they made some of the choices they did while composing their response

Since the agenda of each conference is determined by concerns generated by individual texts, few generalizations can be made concerning their content. For the most part, however, they focus not so much on 'course content' as on the difficulties students experience articulating their understanding of historical evidence in written text in response to a specific question. "Developing a coherent line of argument" (January 8)

is the problem receiving the most attention, and because the discussion bears directly on the student's own attempt at developing a coherent line of argument, the teacher's comments are uniquely relevant to the student's original way of perceiving and developing the line of argument. Most of the comments, however, are offered in the role of either 'exhorter' or 'mediator', in that they are positioned in relation to demonstrating knowledge and understanding of history in an examination situation. That the students find these post-writing conferences helpful is indicated in their reaction to the different strategy Miss Aird twice employs as an alternative (documented in the history vignette), after which they concur that whatever other post-writing strategy she employs, she should also retain their individual conferences.

4. ORAL COMMENTS TO THE WHOLE CLASS IN RELATION TO WRITING TASKS

It is primarily on the basis of the six teachers' comments to the whole class prior to writing, while they are writing, and after texts have been evaluated, that I generated the hierarchy of teachers' concerns about writing at A-level listed earlier in this chapter. I will therefore use this broad and virtually universal category of pedagogical strategy as an opportunity to expand on these concerns in relation to more specific strategies and techniques employed by teachers. Based on the amount of class discussion devoted to it, the problem which concerns both teachers and students the most is as follows:

Responding to a specific question

- a) determining what the question is asking
- b) drawing on tacit knowledge in order to
 - i. broaden their answer
 - ii. integrate new and known information
- c) formulating and/or structuring an argument and line of argument in response to a specific question

A. Responding to a Specific Question

1. DETERMINING WHAT THE QUESTION IS ASKING

All six teachers spend a considerable amount of class time working through with their students the problem of determining what the question

is asking, most of them perceiving it as a reading problem as much as a writing problem. In efforts to avoid the 'classificatory writing' that the London Writing Research Group found to be so prevalent, wherein students formulate their answers in conceptual frameworks similar to those in their textbooks or teachers' lectures, the teachers' concern is to have the students identify and use 'key words' in the writing task, not as code words to 'key' into just one area of knowledge on the topic, but as 'keys' to open doors to several related bodies of knowledge. Most of the time, prior to a writing task, the teachers exhort their students to read the question slowly once, then go back and underline the 'key words'. Two of the teachers, during our interviews or during class sessions, express their awareness that even this fairly straightforward technique makes assumptions that the students can hone in on key words, and translate them into modes of conceptualizing the evidence of the discipline, at the same time acknowledging the complexity of the cognitive task when they say:

you must read everything carefully, you must read it slowly, and you must learn to pick out the important bits of it. Now, I don't know how I'm supposed to teach you how to pick out the important bits because to me it seems to be intuition... (Biology, March 1, 1985).

or

They need to understand not just the words, but the implications behind the words. I really don't know how to teach them how to do that. We try. A geography teacher is really a reading teacher and a writing teacher in addition to being a geography teacher (Geography, Informal chat, March 18, 1985).

Getting from underlined 'key words' to an understanding of what the question is asking is perceived generally, but not always, in relation to an examination situation, where decisions must be made quickly. This situation presumes that students can understand the implications of a topic before they actually begin to write about it, a presumption consistent with the function of writing as a means of demonstrating knowledge. What often results in these timed situations is a seemingly linear process of composing, during which students underline 'key words', construct an outline, then begin to write. However, few of the twelve

students in my study follow their outlines. When I observed them composing in simulated examination conditions, their activities varied within the following general parameters:

1. most of them did underline 'key words' in the question, with, predictably, a fair degree of uniformity
2. most of them wrote some form of outline, ranging from four words [the minimum I observed] to a full-fledged detailed outline; some began to write without any outline. Those who wrote full outlines tended to do this fairly consistently; those who wrote sketchy outlines one time might write none the next
3. when they paused from writing, they would
 - i. consult their outlines, or
 - ii. consult the question, or
 - iii. re-read part of what they had already written, or
 - iv. think [or appear to think]

When I asked those who either did not follow their outline or consulted the question more frequently than their outline why they decided not to follow their outline, the most common response was that the outline served to get them started, but as their writing progressed, they began to see further possibilities than were immediately apparent when they constructed their outlines (other responses were that they didn't know enough about some of the sub-topics on the outline, or that they became sidetracked while writing). Julia, for example, told me:

Plans are simple, but when I come to writing, all sorts of other ideas come to my head...I do plan, but my plan changes to what's going on in my head - it seems to become only half-relevant...(March 14, 1985).

This 're-viewing' of the implications of the question belies the apparent linearity I refer to above, showing that the meaning of what the question is asking is not fully ascertained at the outset, but, for many students, unfolds as the writing occurs. I checked to see if I could discover any correlation between following outlines and extent of writing competence, or between following outlines and different disciplines, but my data revealed none. That is not, of course, to say that none exist. I would speculate that this process of constructing

and then following or rejecting an outline offers a rich source of insight into students' written articulation. For example, some outlines were basically what van Dijk calls "superstructures", giving general categories to be elaborated, but with very little propositional content. Others were predominantly "macrostructures", giving the major propositions of the argument.⁽¹⁰⁾ Many were a combination of both. This observation makes, I think, an interesting starting point for further research into how students organize their knowledge in response to specific questions.

2. DRAWING ON TACIT KNOWLEDGE

The encouragement of all six teachers to draw upon broader areas of background and/or tacit knowledge might possibly account for the students being drawn beyond the boundaries of their initial outlines as they compose. As I mention above, the teachers want the students to use the 'key' words and concepts in writing tasks to open doors to as many diverse but related categories of knowledge or understanding as possible, to allow for the greater integration of these seemingly disparate bodies of knowledge. Mr. Moore frequently emphasizes in his geography classes that geography or meteorology or geomorphology or biology or mathematics are all man-inspired, arbitrary ways of perceiving phenomena, often the same phenomena. The task in the vignette is an attempt to get them to see that for a question on marine erosion, for example, they should not limit themselves to what they know about 'erosion', but bring in information from other categories or arbitrary arrangements of knowledge, such as geomorphology, meteorology, human intervention, and so on, as well as tap their reserves of world knowledge in order to conceptualize what possibilities for response are implied within the question. In sociology, Mr. Goodman also talks to his students frequently about the need to integrate seemingly disparate arrangements of sociological constructs of information when responding to writing tasks, agreeing with Mr. Moore in geography that

*the problem is not just in knowing what points to include, but what **kind** of points to bring in (Geography, April 22, 1985).*

During one of our interviews, Mr. Moore talks of the difficulty of trying to get students away from formulating their responses on a topic with basically the same conceptual organization of the topic that their textbooks and/or reference books have. He tells of trying during class discussions to give them the confidence to realize that they have within themselves the knowledge of broader bases of information which can be brought to bear on responding to a question. The course has been organized according to three major sociological concepts: social order, social change, and social differentiation, through the focus of three major perspectives: symbolic interactionism, functionalism, and Marxism. The difficulty is to have the students conceptualize these disparate ways of organizing knowledge as a whole system from which they can draw whatever ideas or information they need, rather than confine themselves to the compartments in which the material is presented. He says:

If you could stand over their shoulder and remind them of what they know, their writing would be so much better (March 28, 1985).

This is one of the most critical and perhaps least understood problematic aspects of writing in all areas of the curriculum. Students are bombarded with information through reading, listening, seeing, and experiencing. Some (and possibly much more than we realize) is 'stored', either in the same form, still as 'information', or in a broader conceptual framework which we might call 'knowledge', or in a form more integrated with a variety of conceptual frameworks, which we might call 'understanding'. Assuming these 'stored files' were never again called upon, they might perhaps remain as originally stored. However, in the processes of writing and speaking (as well as continually taking in more information), these 'files' of information, knowledge, and understanding are not only drawn upon, their contents are shuffled about through the procedures of intervention in the formation of concepts I refer to in the previous chapter, and they are thereby changed. The cognitive activities required to transform information, knowledge, and understanding into written text responding to a particular question play an active role in this 'file shuffling', particularly when the question requires students to draw upon and

integrate different 'files'. The problem articulated by Mr. Moore in geography and Mr. Goodman in sociology, as well as by the other four teachers in the study, is basically how to encourage students to 'muck about' with their tidy files, rearrange them and shuffle them about, to consciously duplicate cognitive activities which are already done virtually automatically as they learn. Strategies such as the ones described in the vignettes, particularly the geography, history of art, and English vignettes, which have students consciously draw upon their tacit reserves of information, knowledge, and understanding, would appear to enable students to integrate these broader areas of knowledge when they formulate their responses. Wording questions in such a way that students are required to draw upon disparate areas of knowledge and having them articulate their ideas in oral collaboration with their fellow students are two other strategies already mentioned which can foster students' ability to integrate broader areas of knowledge when formulating responses to specific writing tasks.

3. FORMULATING AN ARGUMENT IN RESPONSE TO A SPECIFIC TOPIC

The third feature of responding to a specific question, formulating and/or structuring an argument and line of argument in response to the question, is the feature of writing mentioned most frequently throughout the year of my observation by all six teachers and all twelve students, and a feature of writing which is addressed in all six vignettes. Mr. Goodman mentions his concern in words which echo the expressed concerns of the other teachers in the study:

It's a particular style of academic writing you're after...it requires an ability to structure an argument around a theme so that there is a sense of moving through an argument...most can't do it...really, it's the main skill you're trying to teach...few achieve it by the end of A-level....Do you want an honest answer? I don't know how to teach it...(Sociology, March 28, 1985).

The other teachers talk of similar discomfort over their apparent lack of success in this particular area, as do the students over their own apparent lack of success, yet both persevere throughout the year, at times with noticeable results. Susan, for example, came to our March

interview with a lot more confidence in this particular area than she had felt at the beginning of the year:

I find getting the essay together the most difficult - organizing it into a pattern, structuring an argument...I seem to be using the same basic structure for both sociology and English (September, 1984).

Looking back, my essays used to be so disorganized, and had so little content they weren't much help for revision. All I really did was translate the text into my own words - I had just a very basic understanding - I didn't re-organize the information in the text....Now I re-order my ideas, and structure my argument according to what the question is really asking (March 20, 1985).

When I asked her how she accomplished this growth in her ability to organize her essays and structure an argument, she replied:

Mostly it was just the teachers' comments about organization - the comments they would make in class as well as the ones they wrote on my papers. Over a period of time I just came to understand what they meant (March 20, 1985).

In the teachers' statements of what constitutes written competence in their respective subject areas listed in the previous chapter, the word 'argument' appears in five of them, and the phrase "to argue a point" in the sixth. Although the word is used in a general sense by all six teachers and all twelve students in the study to refer to a theme or chain of reasoning, each teacher articulates a slightly different construction of the concept, in relation to how the evidence of their respective disciplines is to be presented in written text. Mr. Goodman, in sociology, as we have already seen, urges a thesis-antithesis-synthesis rhetorical pattern as the most appropriate way of organizing the subject matter of sociology in response to a specific question:

...the student offers a particular view and supports that view and uses alternative views for discussion, then comes to some conclusion...(March 28, 1985).

In biology, Mr. Fox differentiates between the kind of written argument a "real scientist" might compose, and what is required as written argument from an A-level student:

To write in science, you've got to be able to write accurately, concisely, isolate the main points, be clear about what you're writing, and put forward a logical argument...the whole basis of science is that you have to be clear about what you're looking for. The scientific approach we teach is basically an hypothesis-method approach - that's the way it portrays itself. Now in actual fact, we know it doesn't work that way, that scientists' journals show that they aren't always certain of what they are looking for or what they will find, and that there is not a defined method for every hypothesis, but that's how it's taught (March 20, 1985).

Mr. Moore, the geography teacher, elaborates for his students (and for me) quite fully what he means by a well-structured argument:

...[it] is relevant to the title, shows a logical development and is closely argued, contains an abundance of relevant examples as supporting evidence for the argument, and exhibits wider reading around the subject...[it] will have an opening paragraph that has impact and captures the reader's attention. This may well be a quote or a striking example....The style will be lucid and flowing and demonstrate an absence of padding and unnecessary phrases. Geographical terminology will be used...an argument is not simply an assemblage of facts but some realization of controversy and disagreement, particularly when referring to the origin and development of landforms, where so much controversy exists. Even if concrete research has been quoted, one might look for words and phrases like "however", "perhaps", "some would argue that", "on the other hand"...I'm a great believer in "maybe" and "possibly"...it implies that a lot of thinking about landforms is conjecture and hypothesis, that there is room for more research, alternative explanations, doubts, interpretations - kids should be aware of that, and indicate their awareness in their writing (Interview, March 26, 1985).

Mr. Christopher, in history of art, speaks of structuring an argument in the following terms:

They need to be able to hang their ideas on a central core to achieve consistency of argument...it needs an internal structure which presents a logical, reasoned analysis of a stance and which integrates the philosophy of the movement with the actual work...it should lead from the topic and make six major points or more - no less than six major points about the topic...it's a logical process - a mathematical process - a rational statement (Interview, March 26, 1985).

How to structure an argument is a frequent topic of discussion in history. According to Miss Aird, there seem to be two major areas of difficulty: 'classificatory writing' which details information basically in the same organizational format as the lecture notes and/or textbook; 'narrative writing', which settles in to telling a story (at the 'report' level of the London Writing Research Group's function categories)'' rather than responding to the specific implications of the writing task. Stating frankly that "in this exam-ridden system...our main function is to get them through the exam" (March 20, 1985), Miss Aird emphasizes the following attributes of a well-structured argument:

...clarity of argument makes the essay strong or weak...they need to use supporting evidence with judgement - choose specific details from a variety of alternatives to make a pointed argument which answers the question being asked. It helps if they can use their background reading to show differing viewpoints (Interview, March 20, 1985).

Ms. Elliott, in English, does not directly address the issue of structuring an argument, other than to say that

*when you teach practical criticism, there is nothing more stultifying than trying to give people a recipe, a checklist of things to do, so they crutch along on it - so they do first what you put first - but the question might not dictate that as a priority...they need flexibility, and the confidence to function...they need a variety of strategies, for example the structure of a response to a question requiring analysis and selection will differ from one which wants a more fluid, more personal response...the essay can be the right shape, but the content absolute crap...having said all that,...the **attack** is very important - where the essay is going when it starts, and that it actually continues to go there...(Interview, March 27, 1985).*

That the students have taken on board their teachers' articulated concerns about structuring arguments can be seen in the following extracts from their journals and interviews. This extract from Cora's journal illustrates, from a student's perspective, writing in the sixth-form context as the site of conflicting demands:

For my most recent history essay I think I have improved in the last year. I have learned that even

when you are asked for someone's progression, the essay should not be written chronologically, but picking on 4 or 5 major points. The same goes for an English essay, in which points should be picked out and illustrated one at a time rather than working through the book and repeatedly picking up points as they come up....The timed essays in history are quite difficult - I tend not to bother planning them, but only reading and taking notes before, so that **although I have lots of ideas I cannot get them down in a coherent argument, but just a jumble of relevant facts. However, they are good practice for the exam when we will have to form a basic argument in a very short time (October 16, 1984).**

John also writes about the importance of structure in history essays:

History requires a very carefully structured and argued essay: Intro, line of argument, main body, and conclusion. Facts have to be sifted, collected, and put down in a precise, orderly way. My lack of planning often loses me marks. Interpretation of the question is a crucial factor in history essays. The relevant information has to be solid throughout the whole essay. Any irrelevant information is glaringly obvious and loses me marks. I can't write as I'd like to because any flowery, English literature, descriptive type of writing detracts from the factual essay (October 16, 1984).

Concern about structure of argument, particularly in relation to the examination, dominates Christine's journal entries, further reinforcing the notion of writing as the site of conflicting demands:

I think perhaps I hit the wrong note by over-emphasizing one strand of the essay, leaving out the other....Probably tried too intricate an essay plan, aiming it 'journalese' rather than good exam essay technique...(September 18, 1984).

Feel triumphant! I've just finished a marathon essay...I think the structure is really quite good. But it remains to be seen if it does me any good (October 7, 1984).

*My writing has actually regressed in the last couple of months or so as I've put less intensive work into structuring my essays...Possibly I'm fussing too much about trying to adopt an interesting style, when **at this stage I should just have a structure and try to stick all the facts into it as quickly and as neatly as I can (February 18, 1985).***

Elaine's entry tells how concern about structuring an argument is emphasized much more in the sixth form than in previous years:

In the fourth and fifth years, we got lots of notes on structure, on how to structure an essay, but it wasn't until sixth form that we were told we had to have an argument...sixth form questions are more aimed at what you think, so the argument is more important. I didn't really know how to put an argument in, so the teacher went through it, what should go in it. Now I can look at the facts, and analyze them, and say, "Right, that's my point of view, that's my argument" (March 19, 1985).

I could continue with more examples from other students in other subjects, but most of them have already been included in the vignettes, and the above, are, I think, sufficient to make the point that **students do take on board the expressed concerns of their teachers, and do perceive inherent conflict in writing in the different subject areas when its dominant function is to demonstrate learning in an exam situation.**

A further interesting feature of these journal extracts is how they reveal their authors' perceptions of the relationships among structure, argument, and subject concepts and/or content. It is evident that structure is perceived, not as something integral or organic with what they are trying to articulate, but rather some textual entity that they must impose on their ideas for more effective organization. And, as Elaine's extract would appear to indicate, an argument represents a point of view which can be 'added in' to an already structured essay. I will speculate that Cora's extract might imply at least part of an explanation for these perceptions. When responding to a writing task in a timed situation, there is very limited opportunity to roll ideas around, play with them, and see a variety of possibilities of relationships among them. An organizational structure must be decided upon very quickly. Because this cognitive activity of perceiving information hierarchically is thrust into the forefront of consciousness in such a situation, it might appear to the student to be 'external' to the concepts rather than 'integral' to them, and therefore manifests itself to them as an imposition on the information.

Since "oral comments to the class" is not a specific strategy, except insofar as it raises students' consciousness of teachers' concerns, the particular techniques or procedures that the teachers use to enable their students to understand the concept of structuring an argument will appear in ensuing discussions of other major strategies. I continue now with the second most frequently mentioned concern of the teachers in relation to composing written text in the A-level classroom, locating and assessing discipline-specific evidence.

B. Locating and Assessing Discipline-Specific Evidence

Of the many possible ways of classifying discipline-specific evidence, the one which seems most helpful to this discussion is in relation to the students' experience with it. **Primary evidence** refers, therefore, to evidence which the students experience without benefit of a mediator, even though the experience itself can be said to be socio-culturally mediated by the students' academic background: viewing works of art at an exhibition, carrying out an experiment, engaging in fieldwork would all involve students with the primary evidence of the respective disciplines. **Secondary evidence** is once removed from the direct experience of the students, for example, slides of works of art in history of art instead of the originals, or published reports of actual case studies in sociology, of experiments in biology, and of fieldwork in geography. **Tertiary evidence** is that which has been mediated through a number of interpreters: most textbooks, reference books, and teachers' lectures could be classified as 'tertiary evidence'.

In the previous chapter, I introduce some of the relationships and problems between the nature of evidence and writing in the different disciplines, using a different but complementary classification system: external sources of information and internal sources of information. The purpose in that chapter is to show the interrelationship among the three major movements in the polyphony of the classroom by pointing out a perceived correlation between the nature of the evidence focused upon in the presentation of the discipline, and the concerns students express about their writing in the respective disciplines. In this chapter I

want to focus on the concerns teachers and students express about the nature of evidence of the disciplines in relation primarily to the second movement of the classroom polyphony, the enabling strategies teachers employ with their students to assist them in transforming their knowledge of the evidence into written text.

In history of art, students contend with all three classifications of evidence in their written text: original works of art (when they attend exhibitions); slides or pictures of works of art; art-historical and art-critical reference books and textbooks; notes from their teacher which mediate the three previous forms of evidence. Each form of evidence creates special problems for students as they transform their engagement with the evidence into written text. Original works of art and slides or pictures of works of art engender the problem of having to translate from the visual into the verbal. As Mr. Christopher says:

The written piece itself contains no sample of the visual. It stands as a substitute of the experience of the painting (March 26, 1985).

The transformation involves all three aspects of what, in the previous chapter, I call 'intuitive knowledge', in that it draws upon subjective aspects of personal knowledge, requires the construction of contrastive hierarchies of response in order to evaluate the response, and utilizes many of the procedures of intervention in the formation of concepts during the process of composing. When students have to combine all three forms of evidence in a writing task which requires them to integrate their personal response with the authorized 'art-critical' response, or to locate their personal response in the context of 'art-historical philosophy', they have the additional problem of having to judge or assess the validity of their own responses in relation to the 'authorized' response. It is another area which illustrates the conflict engendered by the two major activities of the A-level classroom: engaging with new bodies of information, and demonstrating for an examiner the extent of that engagement in writing. Mr. Christopher addresses the issue in one of our interviews:

On the exam there is an expectation of the nature of the sort of criticism required...in many cases, there is an absolute involved - a right and a wrong - although

there is some opportunity for individual interpretation in the contemporary context on the exam...But can a student be honest in their personal reaction? It's partly a question of whether you allow for individual interpretation or demand a common understanding, particularly for a classical reference...we try to move toward a common understanding...the student can have their own reading, but they'll get a lower mark if it's out of line with the artist's expressed intention...we're restricted by trying to get them to pass an examination (March 26, 1985).

Julia expresses a similar sentiment, from a student's point of view:

...I feel as though I'm not sure what to do, to ignore all personal contradicting feeling and learn, parrot fashion, what the examiners require does seem a little soul less but to try, with what little experience I have to argue around a point only conducted on a personal inner feeling seems a little stupid (October 18, 1984).

The third major area of difficulty in locating and assessing evidence in history of art in response to a writing task relates primarily to tertiary forms of evidence. Mr. Christopher expresses his awareness and concern about the problem during our March interview:

The literature assumes a reader with more knowledge than they have...if you try to assume a particular body of knowledge superior to your own, it's difficult to write, to take chances...students end up using expressions they don't really understand, without explaining or qualifying them, because they need to on the exam...(March 26, 1985).

Julia talks about problems she experiences with locating and assessing the evidence of the discipline in reference materials also during our March interview:

I don't do as much reading as I should...the reading has so much detail - it's difficult to get through...the essays demand a lot of reading, but there's so much detail, I can't take it in, and I lose interest. Once I read one chapter sixteen times. I take notes because I can't remember all the details, but then I take too many notes (March 14, 1985).

Julia employs two strategies to enable her to gather the necessary information:

I try to write one sentence per paragraph - I either try to get the gist of the paragraph in my own words

- I actually think that's better - or, if that's too difficult, I copy down a good phrase from the original (March 14, 1985).

Although this difficulty with locating and assessing evidence in the literature of the discipline is most compellingly articulated in history of art, recent research indicates that it is a problem in all areas of the curriculum.⁽¹²⁾ Mr. Christopher and Mr. Moore both make the point that:

...really, all teachers are reading comprehension teachers (Mr. Moore, March 26, 1985).

The primary evidence of geography presents students with a somewhat different problem. Whenever a writing task draws upon sources of knowledge students have gained from their fieldwork in addition to the secondary and tertiary sources of their reference material, Mr. Moore urges them to draw as much as possible on their own experience with the evidence of the discipline, telling me that when they do, their writing is much more detailed, and concretely bound to an experiential construct of geographical reality rather than to an abstract mental construct. Yet, without direct urging, they rarely refer to their own fieldwork, preferring to cite the authorized examples from their reference books and textbooks. When speculating why, Mr. Moore suggests that:

Perhaps it's because most of their schooling reinforces the sanctity of the printed word. If someone in authority has written about it, what he says must be better than what the student has to say, particularly if there is some discrepancy between what the student experiences and what his reading has led him to expect.

Dissonance among the authorities in the discipline, however, is more readily integrated into the students' written text than dissonance between the evidence of their experience and that cited by the authorities. As I mention above, Mr. Moore emphasizes "possibly" and "maybe" in his approach to the evidence of the discipline, and the students respond to this focus on controversial interpretations:

In geography, you can write so much...nothing is definite, so much is interpretation, and you can become involved in so much controversy when writing about

land formation...it's much more interesting, because there are still no final, definite answers...(Vernon, March 14, 1985).

Controversial interpretations abound in the tertiary evidence of the discipline, history, as well, and therefore play a role in the writing of A-level history. Christine tells me during our first interview:

It is much easier and much more interesting to structure an argument when there is controversy, when there is more than one way to perceive the problem. In history, the questions elicit controversy...(June, 1984).

The relationship between the writing task, the nature of the evidence it draws upon, and the evolution of the structure of the argument as the evidence is considered is implied in the following extract from the same interview. She is referring to an essay written in response to a writing task which does not, in her eyes, elicit controversy:

*This essay is very bad. It doesn't have an argument, because I didn't know how to structure it - to bring it from one place to another - I couldn't see both sides - I couldn't see that there were two sides. Look, this is what I wrote on the back:
"It is hard to construct an essay here that is never critical of its own line of argument, because I can't think of any counterargument, so it runs the danger of becoming a chronology of examples, each saying 'Yes, he was, yes, yes'. Very boring,"
(June, 1984).*

What the above illustrates is that **the evidence of the discipline is not an absolute entity decontextualized from how it is presented and drawn upon in the context of the A-level classroom, particularly in relation to the demands made upon evidence in specific writing tasks.** The evidence of history, whether primary, secondary, or tertiary, can be drawn upon and interpreted and utilized in a variety of ways, of which writing essays to demonstrate to an examiner the extent of one's engagement with predominantly tertiary evidence is possibly the most limiting. Miss Aird tells of her struggle with the conflicting demands of the A-level classroom:

In the fifth year, we use the O-level Schools Council Project...students are put into the role of historians. They handle original evidence [mostly print: copies of

documents, newspaper clippings, diary and journal entries, letters, etc] and draw their own conclusions. They seem to enjoy it much more, and their writing is much more interesting to read. There is also a good carryover into the sixth form, in that students who come from this program tend not to organize their ideas in purely chronological fashion, as students coming in from other programs do... (October 1, 1984).

Ideally, they [students] should have access to original sources, but we don't as much as we should...time, I would say, is the most crucial factor. **Our main function is to get them through the exam...**we are looking into one board which gives students the opportunity to do research on their own [the AEB]...but so far the O-level is far ahead of the A-level (March 20, 1985).

The A-level classroom as a site of teachers' conflicting hopes and intentions is reinforced in the above extracts from two interviews with Miss Aird. She goes on to say, "Yes, I do feel constrained, having to spend most of the class time preparing for the exam", but maintains that in the current "exam-ridden system", that is her first obligation to her students. She does, however, try to engage her students in assessing controversial features of the evidence of the discipline, by means of strategies which I shall refer to later in the chapter.

The evidence of sociology presents yet another problem for students when responding to writing tasks. Since the primary evidence is basically human behaviour in social contexts, and they are humans behaving in a social contexts, they are *prima facie* 'experts' in relation to some categories of this primary evidence. The arbitrary classificatory constructs of the evidence of the discipline into social order, social differentiation, and social change seen through the different perspectives of symbolic interactionism, functionalism, and Marxism seem, therefore, even more arbitrary than the classificatory constructs of evidence in other disciplines. What results in their writing is a blurring of what could be termed their 'knowledge of the world' and their knowledge of sociological theory and evidence. In a classroom where the primary function is to have students engage with new bodies of knowledge in order to broaden their personal construct of the world, this 'blurring', which might also be considered 'integration'

of what Mr. Goodman calls "common sense" with the authorized evidence of the discipline, would not present a problem. When the aforementioned function is paired with the function of having to demonstrate this engagement effectively in writing to an examiner, however, students must be very careful to assess the evidence of their experience in relation to the concrete evidence of the discipline and the sociological constructs which organize that evidence. What frequently happens in an examination situation, says Mr. Goodman, is that students draw from their knowledge of the world, from their experience, from their "common sense" in response to a question, but neglect to articulate the implications of what they write in terms of the sociological constructs. The examiner then assumes that they do not know the appropriate sociological theory, and the students are subsequently penalized, even though it is their knowledge of sociological theory which has, in many cases, provided the sub-structure of their response, and the basis for their selection of experiential evidence.

Locating and assessing evidence in biology also presents the students with discipline-specific problems in transforming their encounters with the evidence into written text, again primarily because of constraints inherent in the A-level final examination context. The biology department has chosen the Nuffield Foundation Biology syllabus as the basis for their program. This syllabus, designed in reaction against more traditional syllabuses which emphasize memory skills and information-transmission, encourages an inquiry-based approach to biology, wherein specific topics are investigated within the larger context of scientific principles. Writing therefore assumes importance in this syllabus as the means of students' demonstrating their understanding of the evidence of the discipline in relation to the fundamental principles of the discipline. Yet despite the undisputably sound intentions of the Nuffield program, Mr. Fox and his students struggle with the problems which almost inevitably result when writing functions primarily to demonstrate learning. Time in relation to heavy content demands of the syllabus once again appears as a key factor. Nuffield, based on an exploratory, inquiry-oriented approach to learning, assumes an extensive amount of fieldwork and experimentation. One

might therefore anticipate two consequent conditions: that allowance be made in the syllabus for the time required to conduct experiments, possibly by making some topics or areas optional; that opportunity for choice be a major feature of the exam, particularly since memory and information-transmission are intended to take second place to inductive reasoning, again, a time-consuming process. Such is not the case, with two consequences which influence students' writing in relation to the evidence of the discipline. The first is that, even though Mr. Fox has an extra class a week during the winter and spring terms, there is insufficient time for the class to complete more than four experiments during the year of my observation. Students are therefore dealing with secondary and tertiary evidence rather than primary, and therefore engaging with the evidence in more of a deductive (i.e. why did this occur?) than inductive (let's see what might happen if..?) fashion. The second concerns the aspects of written text which, according to Mr. Fox, are valued by the examiners - precision and conciseness. When the students are faced with questions requiring inductive reasoning relating to principles they have engaged with, not experientially as was intended, but abstractly, through the mediated print of a textbook, they sometimes need to "write themselves into it" (Sian, March 12, 1985). This is frequently considered "waffle" and is penalized even if what follows is correct. Vernon talks of this problem during our March interview:

It's difficult not to waffle, because when you write, before you introduce the idea you have to write what it relates to and how you came to think of it, but if the examiner thinks it's irrelevant, you lose marks. In scientific writing, you have to keep to the point (March 21, 1985).

The evidence of English presents a different set of problems for composing written text, although similar, in some respects, to the problem students encounter when writing about primary and secondary evidence in history of art. In both subjects, students need to articulate in writing their response to a created 'work': in history of art, a response to a visual medium; in English, a response to a verbal medium. And just as Mr. Christopher says, in history of art:

How do you put into words the dynamics of the relationship between a large black square and a tiny red square? The essential experience is much greater than language can convey... (June 19, 1984),

Linda echoes his sentiments with reference to English:

To account for the different impressions that you gain from a poem is very difficult, because how can you explain what the poem makes you feel? It's just an overall image.

She proceeds to elaborate with a specific example:

This is the case with "The Hollow Men". To label different parts of the poem and pinpoint exactly what they mean is almost impossible. Each little part has little significance of its own but goes together to create an image and atmosphere. This is perhaps why I had so many problems in writing about it (Journal, November, 1984).

The difficulty is compounded in English, because there is no prescribed generic way to respond in writing to literary text, although what is sometimes referred to as traditional "literary criticism" appears to portray itself as a kind of generic model. Ms. Elliott, however, has deliberately selected an examination board which has moved beyond that position, and which is looking for written response which is individual, but, at the same time, bound in certain ways to the text which engenders the response. Consequently, she avoids having the students read critical analyses of the works they study until they are well along in forming and articulating their own responses. At the same time she thinks that perhaps if they read some models of practical criticism which are "clearly and simply done - just to see someone actually doing it" (March 27, 1985), they might see their way through the complexities to a more manageable way of articulating their responses.

These, then, are the problems with locating and/or assessing evidence most frequently mentioned by students and teachers, and receiving most attention in the teachers' oral comments to the class about writing. When I return to the specific strategies employed by teachers, I shall describe some techniques they use to enable students to transform their engagement with discipline-specific evidence to written text.

C. Style

'Style' is the third concern of teachers which also receives a significant amount of oral comment prior to, during, and after writing tasks. What the teachers refer to as 'style' I have, for convenience of discussion, separated into three categories:

1. using the terminology of the discipline
2. using the register appropriate to the discipline (or to academic writing in general)
3. acquiring confidence and flexibility with one's own style or voice

These categories are not discrete, but rather indicate areas on a language register continuum moving from more formalized to less formalized language. All six subjects in the study move up and down the entire length of the continuum with respect to the total discourse of the classroom language environment, but written text in each subject seems to settle predominantly into its own particular area of formality, causing particular problems for students' writing.

1. USING THE TERMINOLOGY OF THE DISCIPLINE

The terminology of each discipline sits on the most formal end of the language register continuum, its authority virtually unquestioned and seemingly unquestionable. It is the language which carries the conceptual burden of the discipline, the signifiers which organize the particular body of knowledge in such a way that it is discrete from other bodies of knowledge. As Mr. Fox says:

...if there were no biological language, there would be no biology (June, 1984).

Biology and geography are the two subject areas where discipline-specific terminology assumes the most importance, in terms of explicit attention being given to it in oral comments about writing. 'Accuracy' and 'conciseness' are the values most frequently associated with using this most formal register to carry the burden of the idea students are trying to articulate. Mr. Moore, in geography, tells his class:

Use precise vocabulary - the words the authorities use - the proper geographical terminology. You'll often find that one word, the proper geographical term, will do the work of five words - again, the idea of brevity so you can write at length (March 25, 1985).

Mr. Fox also emphasizes accuracy and conciseness, relating them to the scientist's need for precise communication for purposes of replication and verification. Vernon expresses a student's difficulty with writing in this most formal of registers:

Above all, in Biology essays it is essential to be specific in the terms used - apart from reducing the number of words, these can mean something completely different from an [unscientific] explanation of a term. For instance, it is no use saying "The particles pass through the holes in the membrane"; you have to say, "the molecules diffuse across the semi-permeable cell wall". The first sentence is too vague and apparently open to misinterpretation even though I personally would understand exactly what I was trying to say (October 3, 1985).

The problem here is one which arises in the context of the A-level classroom, wherein communication is not for other scientists, or peers in the role of other scientists, but for an examiner who knows both the concept the student is trying to articulate, and the precise terminology in which it should be articulated. Students are therefore put in the position of having to converge on a response in almost the precise language anticipated by their reader, which may or may not coincide with the language of "inner speech" or thought by means of which they formulated and articulated their response. Their teacher plays a difficult role in this drama of potentially conflicting language demands. While acknowledging his students' understanding of the biological concepts, he must push them that bit further to articulate these concepts in the language which will be rewarded on the examination. To accomplish that, Mr. Fox frequently takes up the exhortative role in his oral comments to the class, attempting to imbue his students with the language values of the examiner, who will expect the most precise, most formal register of the discipline on the exam. The following snippet from a lesson on the concentration gradients of salt and water in the transport system of saltwater fish shows Mr. Fox taking up this role in order to impress upon Barbara the importance of not just using, but also demonstrating the understanding of, precise terminology in an examination situation:

Barbara [in response to a question]: The fish diffuses salt into -

Mr. Fox: No! No! No! A fish cannot diffuse salt into itself. Rather salt diffuses...Your statement is biologically wrong. The way I worded it expresses a physical principle: salt diffuses...You get your answers wrong not because you don't understand the concept but because you get the language wrong. Is your understanding different depending on whether you use your statement or mine? The examiner will think so. If you say, "The fish diffuses salt", he will assume that you do not understand the process of diffusion....You must use scientific terms, such as 'limiting factor', which is a general principle, rather than 'slows down', which is a particular type or description of a limiting factor...you must be able to predict what the examiner wants...and don't just name the term, but describe and explain how the term functions to show your understanding (October 10, 1984).

The following extract from an interview with Linda indicates, to some extent, the efficacy of his ploy:

You hear his voice in your head - over and over again - "be precise! - use the proper terminology", and so you do (March 15, 1985).

Despite the co-operative interaction between student and teacher, the difficulties students experience in taking on board the formal registers of the language of a discipline are evident. When employing precise terminology within the somewhat less formal, but still formalized registers of the philosophical or theoretical concepts which inform or organize the evidence of the discipline, the difficulties are compounded, as the next section will illustrate.

2. USING THE REGISTER APPROPRIATE TO THE DISCIPLINE (OR TO ACADEMIC WRITING IN GENERAL):

This second category obviously overlaps the first, but embraces a much broader range on two related dimensions: formal to informal; and ratio of appropriate signifiers to what is signified. Whereas biological terminology, for example, portrays itself as aiming for the precision of one correct signifier for what is being signified (although, of course, that is not the case, as we can see in changes of terminology for the same process, such as 'osmotic pressure' [old term] and 'osmotic potential' [new term] for determining changes in water potential), the formalized register of academic writing in biology will accommodate

several ways, within the limits of appropriate academic discourse, of articulating the same idea. It is in history of art, history, and, to some extent, sociology, that students experience difficulties using the register appropriate to the discipline.

There is also a third dimension which often can differentiate the terminology of a discipline from the general register of the discipline, but its discreteness is not so tidy as the two dimensions referred to above. Nonetheless, since it contributes to the students' difficulties, it requires consideration. History of art is perhaps the discipline wherein it manifests itself most influentially. Whereas the terminology of history of art refers primarily to concrete techniques of artists and to particular attributes of sculpture and architecture, the formalized register of the discipline embraces philosophical and theoretical abstractions which are imbued with complex networks of logical, historical, psychological, and sociological assumptions. Although the concept of a one-to-one ratio between signifier and signified is purely illusory, there is, nonetheless, a considerable difference in the cognitive activity involved in understanding the term 'chiaroscuro', for example, than in understanding the concept 'functionalism'. Vygotsky addresses the difficulty when he writes:

certain thoughts cannot be communicated to children even if they are familiar with the necessary words. The adequately generalized concept that alone ensures full understanding may still be lacking. Tolstoy, in his educational writings, says that children often have difficulty learning a new word not because of its sound but because of the concept to which the word refers. There is a word available nearly always when the concept has matured....every idea contains a transmuted affective attitude toward the bit of reality to which it refers.⁽¹³⁾

Yet writing in the formalized register of history of art is "central to the study of the discipline", says Mr. Christopher:

They need to know the particular specialist words which have critical meaning within the context of art history...each movement has its own language, its own esoteric definitions which are different from their use in commonplace language. For example, there are fine differences between 'naturalism' and 'realism' which they have to appreciate....They need the language in

order to integrate the philosophy with the actual work....Often they take in the language before they really understand it, and use expressions without explaining or qualifying, but they need to, for the exam, to demonstrate their knowledge of art history, and so they're forced to use them before they really understand them (March 26, 1985).

Julia tells me how she tries to use the register of the discipline to help her assume the role of "art historian" in her writing:

I try to take the air of an art historian - a detached view - I like writing like that...the teacher tends to speak and direct lessons on a very high level, so I try to write like that - detached, like an expert [she laughs] which I'm not. It's a knack you pick up - it's not just being an expert, but being flowery - if you pick up the phrases, you pick up the attitude, you seem to know what you're talking about. If you give the impression that you know what you're talking about, other people will think that you do....In history of art, all the books are written in flowery phrases, all the books I read are written that way (March 14, 1985).

Julia gives us some interesting insight here into the unwritten curriculum of the A-level classroom: using the code words which they think will impress an examiner before they fully understand what they mean, while still perceiving them as "flowery language" rather than as signposts leading the way to realms of meaning. Mr. Christopher describes this (mis)use of the register of history of art as a "fairly common phenomenon", comparing it to the students' sartorial manifestations of their playing the role of 'artist': as many of them dress the way they think an artist or art historian might dress, so many of them use language the way they think an artist or art historian might use language. In many ways, their role-playing with the discourse of the discipline replicates the developmental stages of early language acquisition, and if it were to occur in a context where written text functioned as a means to learning, it would be an effective strategy for taking on board and learning to use effectively the formalized registers of the discipline. When written text functions as a demonstration of learning, however, the 'hypocrisy'⁽¹⁴⁾ is exposed through unqualified, unexplained, inappropriate uses of language. What Mr. Christopher does

to help his students write within the appropriate register with as much understanding of the difficult concepts as possible is to immerse them in the discourse of the discipline. He addresses the class most of the time in the formal registers of history of art, orienting the major terms in the larger socio-political, cultural, historical, philosophical, and theoretical contexts of which they are a part. He hopes that through constant exposure over their two years in the sixth form, they will become fluent in the register of the discipline. At the same time, he is aware that he is being forced by an examination system which focuses on writing as a means of demonstrating knowledge to impose a conceptually complex mode of discourse on students as the prime means of carrying the burden of the concepts of the discipline. It is a situation similar to the one James Britton is referring to when he says:

...if you hobble around in someone else's language long enough, eventually you may be able to walk in it.⁽¹⁵⁾

In history, the formalized register of the discipline is predominantly the traditionally authorized academic prose style which, by A-level, most students "hobble" about in without too much difficulty. Where the problems arise in the particular class I observed, which is nineteenth century British history, is in discriminating between terms and concepts which are appropriate to the nineteenth century, or exclusive to the twentieth century. The 'dole', for example, signifies a twentieth century approach to poverty and unemployment, and is therefore inappropriate in an essay about nineteenth century social welfare. 'Leftist tendencies' and 'Conservatives' (instead of Tories) are twentieth century signifiers for kinds of human activities or behavior which have existed in some form throughout human history. Compared to the complexity of the formalized register in history of art, this particular problem is much more localized within the register, and more immediately responsive to strategies which heighten the students' awareness. Whereas at the beginning of the year, Miss Aird directed oral comments to this area of difficulty before and after each written task, by the end of the year, she rarely needed to.

3. DEVELOPING CONFIDENCE IN AND FLEXIBILITY WITH ONE'S OWN STYLE

'One's own style' is a slippery concept to grapple with in an educational context, particularly in this very specialized sixth-form context. Considering 'style' in terms of 'register', with its helpful Hallidayan dimensions of *field of discourse* (the subject matter), *mode of discourse* (spoken or written), and *tenor of discourse* (the relationship between speaker and hearer or writer and reader),⁽¹⁶⁾ provides a basic foothold from which to negotiate this elusive notion. With respect to the formalized registers of each discipline, *field of discourse* is, for the purposes of this study, the principle variable. In a very important way, that is true also of one's own (writing) style, or voice, in the A-level context, in that in most cases, the relationship of writer to reader is primarily one of apprentice to expert or student to examiner or teacher-as-examiner. Nonetheless, within these limitations, opportunities exist for students to vary their roles within this predominant relationship, particularly when students perform and write-up investigative research on a topic of their own choosing, or respond to a writing task which "genuinely wants their opinion" (Ms. Elliott). The vignettes document how tasks of this nature, which thrust students (temporarily) into a genuine communication situation where they are informing someone of their findings and/or insights, affect their 'style' of writing.

Developing confidence and flexibility, within each subject's *field of discourse*, in written text, in the roles available within the predominant relationship of student to teacher, is an articulated concern of all six teachers. Confidence, in particular, is a 'goal' most students and all teachers mention during interviews, in class, and in journals. One student, already confident that she can handle the "traditional A-level style of academic discourse" is actively searching on her own to develop a more individual style:

I would like to be a very good writer. I do try to tailor paragraphs, etc., but it doesn't always come off... (September 18, 1984).

I'm trying for a different style...trying to make it interesting...for A-level, I need a plainer, more economical style, more emphasis on content, fewer

diverting details...for my Oxford entrance exams, it's more important to construct an interesting argument in good style than to have a lot of facts - it's quality of thought that counts more than facts...I try for a punchy beginning - seven words or less...I got that idea from A.J.P. Taylor's The Origins of the Second World War - it's a good piece of long term advice, but too time consuming on an exam to spend time on a snappy beginning (Christine, March 20, 1985).

Linda also expresses her ideas about developing confidence in her own style, seeing it, as does Christine, more of a personal responsibility rather than one which can be enabled by a teacher:

The teachers' comments are helpful for particular problems on particular essays, and to keep you from making the same mistakes, but they don't really help you develop your own style - it takes practice - just doing it, and asking myself questions about why I'm doing it this way instead of another way - and becoming confident in the way I've decided to do it (March 15, 1985).

Mr. Goodman, in sociology, mentions confidence in one's own way of expressing an idea as a kind of watershed in students' intellectual growth:

It's a real breakthrough - when they have the confidence to take the material from the book and say, "All this is saying is...", and put it into their own words. Most of their writing is very close to the text. I want them to read a chapter, interpret it in their own language, and have the confidence to write about it in their own language - but how do you teach that? Other than just encouraging them, what can you do? (March 28, 1985).

The problem is one which grows directly out of the two interdependent, but potentially conflicting activities of the A-level classroom: engaging with new bodies of information, and demonstrating the extent or quality of that engagement on an examination. Mr. Christopher, in history of art, indicates his awareness of the problem when he says:

If you try to assume a particular body of knowledge superior to your own, it's difficult to write, to take chances...they end up using expressions without explaining or qualifying, because they need to demonstrate their knowledge of them on the exam (March 26, 1985).

It is a predicament born out of the emphasis on writing as a means of demonstrating knowledge, which allows little opportunity for "taking chances" unless, like Christine and Linda, one already has the confidence resulting from a degree of success within the system.

Yet each student has, since beginning to speak and then to write, been developing and employing his or her own style. If we consider responses written even in the most traditional academic prose, the three introductory paragraphs to the question on Parnell offered in the history vignette, for example, we see considerable variation in style among the three students. It is not so much an individual 'style' which is at issue here as the development of an individual 'voice' capable, as is our speaking voice, of many subtle variations of 'style' according to what is required and appropriate. Ms. Elliott addresses this issue when she speaks of the "voice" of the "typical public school [student's written work] - resplendent with surface polish and nothing underneath". She goes on to say:

What they [her students] want is a grasp of ideas and a voice of their own which they can employ according to the dictates of a particular question - a personal style, which is adaptable...they need strategies, a variety of ways of using their personal voice...a question requiring analysis and selection demands a different approach, a different style, from a question which wants a more fluid, more personal view...they need a more fluid style....But how do you teach when to use which tactics - other than to point out that when the question says, "How do you find...", to be more personal? (March 27, 1985).

When we consider the views of style articulated by teachers and students, an intricate picture of the sixth form universe of discourse emerges, an interlacing of teachers' hopes and intentions, students' needs and ambitions, and the demands of formal and formalized discipline-specific registers. To some extent, I have indicated how teachers and students try to cope, particularly when the teachers' method of coping is through the use of oral comments to the class. As the discussion progresses through other strategies, a more complete

picture of influences upon students' 'style' of writing in the A-level educational context will emerge.

D. Coping with Time Constraints

Coping with time constraints is the next most frequently mentioned concern in the teachers' oral comments to their classes. It is a concern which very much focuses attention on the predominant function of writing as a means of demonstrating learning in the A-level classroom. Because there is really no need to write under time constraints (by which I mean an essay response written in forty minutes, not over a period of a few days or a week or two) except as practice for an examination situation, the teachers' comments are almost all made in the role of 'mediator' or 'tactician':

It took many of you a side of writing to get down to answering the question...but on the exam you're going to be desperately short of time. Some of you are not able to write under time constraints...and some of you actually do better - your writing is more concentrated, more focused...(History, September 18, 1984).

*Nuffield is designed to make you think, but on the exam you're not going to have time to think through every little question, so you have **know** enough to write down your answers very quickly (Biology, December 5, 1984).*

What they're [the examiners] are looking for is the ability for you to apply the knowledge that you have...your power of analysis, your ability, having analyzed the problem, to mount a coherent argument in order to answer it. That's what's being tested at A-level. At the moment, because you're in a nice and calm, cool, calm and collected situation, you should be able to do that. You should be able to give time to analyzing the question and you should be able to give time to the way you are going to answer the question, and you should become so thoroughly used to doing that, that when you are actually in a position of having to do it under time pressure, you can do it very quickly. That is the skill you are trying to develop (Sociology, October 11, 1984).

Now some of you got very involved in answering this question, and wrote five or six sides. I wouldn't want to discourage you from being as thorough as you would like to be, but remember, you have only thirty-five to

forty minutes per question on the exam, long enough for three or four sides at the most (Geography, March 18, 1985).

The strategy employed by most of the teachers is to assign timed essays to be done in class, and I will be elaborating that particular strategy as I progress through the taxonomy of teachers' major strategies. In addition to employing the strategy of the simulated examination situation, Ms. Elliott in English takes on the role of 'tactician' as she instructs her students in the problem of writing to time during the examination:

Look at the mark allocation within each question. Obviously if one part is worth ten marks, and the others five each, you apportion your time accordingly....If you find yourself going over your allotted time for a question, don't bother to write a fancy conclusion - you've probably made all the points you're going to make in the body of your essay. Leave it, and start the next. Two excellent, complete answers and one barely begun will not net you as many marks as three fairly full answers. Aim at two and a half to three sides for each answer (April 30, 1985).

If we compare these instructions to the advice she gives Steve in the vignette, to "develop [his ideas] thoroughly" and "arrive at a conclusion of [his] own", we have an idea of how writing to time on an examination influences the nature of advice about writing that teachers offer to their students. In chapter two, I mention that there were times throughout the year when teachers were more conscious of my presence than at other times. In English, in the class sessions immediately prior to the exam, when Ms. Elliott more frequently than at other times during the year took on the role of 'tactician' in relation to the examination, I became aware of feelings of discomfort at my constant presence in her classroom. Eventually we spoke about it, confirming my speculation that it was the conflicting demands of her wanting students to engage with literary text in writing situations which elicit a full and rigorous encounter with the text, their responses, and their ideas about these responses, and at the same time requiring students to engage in writing about literary texts under constraints which limit this encounter. The conflict was familiar, but dealing with it in the presence of an observer heightened her awareness of it to the point of

discomfort. I mention this now in the discussion to reinforce the idea that written text, **that 85% transactional - 58% of which is for an examining audience - written text which emerges from the A-level classroom, must be seen in the context of the conflicts which dominate writing as a taught process, and the interactive struggle of students and teachers to reconcile these conflicts.**

E. Improving Surface Features of the Text

Improving surface features of the text is an expressed concern of the teachers, but one which occupies much less of the time devoted to commenting on writing than any of the other concerns. Part of the reason is that most of the students who opt for sixth form have a basic level of literacy which assumes competence in spelling, punctuation, usage, and the essay as form. Having said that, I must add that idiosyncracies in spelling, usage, punctuation, and the general appearance of the written text elicit comments from teachers in all six subjects. Ms. Elliott suspects that some of her students consider such mechanical concerns not worth troubling themselves about any longer:

They come into A-level with all the basic competencies, all the skills they need to get an O-level pass, but then they abandon the technicalities....It would be charitable to say that because they're grappling with a more difficult level of concepts and ideas, they're focusing all of their attention on that, but I think they've pigeon-holed it as something for O-level language (March 27, 1985).

Mr. Fox frames his comments about surface features of the text in relation not only to the scientist's need for precision and accuracy, but also the more general area of employment:

Neatness, punctuation, and spelling - these are important in scientific writing. You must be able to replicate experiments, to verify results, to know exactly what the other scientist did.... Actually, these are skills that are important in any job...(June 18, 1984).

Miss Aird, having just received a report from the examining board regarding a student's examination, assumes the role of 'mediator' and 'exhorter' in presenting the examiner's point of view about surface features of text:

I've just received this report from the examiner on Alison's paper. In it, he makes specific reference to the presentation of the paper, the grammar, the spelling, and so on...these things can bring your mark down...I'm telling you, these things really do matter (May 8, 1985).

The following sentence, taken from an examiner's report on a paper which was submitted for reconsideration by Ms. Elliott on behalf of Barbara, who fared worse than expected on the exam, amplifies Miss Aird's comment:

The rather general stance she adopts...leads to some woolly generalisations which, stated as they are with spelling and punctuation 'idiosyncracies', verge on the naive.⁽¹⁷⁾

Most of the twelve students in my study are concerned about the surface features of their written text, and take pains to hand in papers that are relatively free of what Janet Emig calls "the accidents of discourse".⁽¹⁸⁾ Steve is the exception: his handwriting is very difficult to read, his spelling at times erratic and eccentric, his punctuation bordering on the idiosyncratic. At our first interview, he says:

In preparing [the essay] I learn it...writing it out neatly, in proper paragraphs, proper spelling - I suppose that's a part of learning, but I really think it's more for the benefit of the teacher than for the learner (June, 1984).

In one very important way, Steve is right. The proprieties of spelling, punctuation, and usage are primarily for the benefit of the reader. Possibly if the writing which is composed in the A-level context were to perform a more truly communicative function, instead of a predominantly demonstrative function, students might concern themselves more with these surface features of text.

5. USE OF BACKGROUND READING

The complex interrelationships between reading and writing have been the subject of much current research, although not as much as is needed in subjects at the secondary level other than English language and literature. To label the relationship a 'strategic' one is to reduce this complexity to a gross oversimplification, and yet to explore fully how students' reading influences their writing in the sixth form would

necessitate another study. I want therefore to limit this discussion of 'background reading' primarily to the explicitly articulated relationships which teachers make use of in their classes to assist written composition.

Mr. Moore, in geography, is the teacher who expresses his ideas most definitively about the contribution which background reading can offer to his students' writing. In the response he prepared in anticipation of our March interview, he writes:

I encourage wider reading in the subject but also in other areas. The best way to learn how to use language economically but to fulfill a purpose is to see how other (good) writers have done it. Vocabulary will also be enhanced (March 26, 1985).

The purpose to which his students put their reading, other than its most obvious one of broadening their knowledge of the subject matter, is integral with Mr. Moore's conjectural, speculative approach to physical geography, particularly geomorphology. The more they read, the more they encounter differing interpretations, and the more they can incorporate these into their writing. Vernon writes about his use of background reading for composing essays in geography:

Out of my A-level subjects [biology, mathematics, geography], writing is undoubtedly most important in geography....My research [for each essay] involves reading from between 5 and 8 different books...at the end of which I have fixed in my mind which books deal best with the particular topics that need to be dealt with in this essay....Because of the controversy surrounding many geomorphological features and their formation it is difficult to write about these features without going into details of different interpretations about the variety of ways in which they might be formed (October 3, 1984).

The manner in which this background reading enters the students' written text in geography relates very much to how the readings are utilized generally in the classroom. As I mention in the geography vignette, students come to class frequently with two or three reference books on the topic to be discussed. As the discussion or lecture proceeds, Mr. Moore incorporates differing interpretations into the presentation of the material, first by eliciting them from the students, who may refer to

the books they have with them for these differing views, and then by fleshing out their offerings with other interpretations. In their written text, even in timed situations where they cannot consult references, they have internalized some of these references to the extent that they can use them as a basis upon which to structure an argument, as a viewpoint with which to differ, or as the source of definitions to start a discussion. The following excerpts from the "Slopes" essay referred to in the geography vignette give an indication of two ways in which students use their reading in their writing. Vernon's text reveals probably the most common use: to provide a catalytic definition to start the flow of discussion:

Bowen has defined a slope as any geometric element of the earth's surface that may be formed by erosion, transportation, and depositional processes. The role of transportation in shaping valley side-slopes is perhaps the most important for it actually changes the valley profile...

Christine's text reveals another way in which students' background reading enters their written composition in geography: as an interpretation with which to agree in part, but then to go on further by adding another perspective to the issue:

It may be seen that valley side-slopes are the result of processes adjusted in the past to past conditions. For example, the low, rounded chalk hills of the South Downs in S.E. England might have been regarded by W. H. Davies as adjustment to past drainage conditions, tending towards 'old age' equilibrium...

But equally, valley slopes may be seen as a dynamic system, from watershed to river, in which the drainage pattern, vegetation cover, availability of weathered material, weathering and erosional activities and man's activities are active processes shaping the valley-slopes.

It would be foolish to ignore past processes which have had a vital impact on the shaping of valley-slopes in humid-temperate climates, but present processes are an important influence too, and may hold the key to past developments.

In history, background reading is encouraged primarily to broaden students' exposure to the discipline. Students are given a suggested

reading list at the beginning of the year, and, at various times throughout the year, Miss Aird brings a number of new or controversial or difficult to obtain publications to distribute to interested members of the class. These readings enter the students' texts predominantly in the form of quotations which have impressed the student writer for one reason or another. Occasionally, they enter the students' text in such a way as to shape their line of argument, as the history vignette illustrates in its discussion of the Parnell essays. Christine, as indicated in an earlier extract from one of our interviews, uses her reading as guides to writing in history, but this is something she has taken upon herself, in her preparation for Oxford entrance, rather than something she has been specifically directed to do by the teacher. In fact, when I asked her whether she found her reading helpful as a model for writing A-level essays, she replied:

Oh no. Never. The books I read are totally opposite from the essays I write, particularly the A-level ones. In books, the authors have the opportunity to develop their arguments more fully, more theoretically or intellectually. In essays, you have one line of argument and lots of supporting details, lots of facts. That's what you need to do well on the examination. The ratio of argument to fact is completely the opposite in the books I read and in the essays I write (March 20, 1985).

English is the only subject in which background reading is used as a deliberate strategy for a particular purpose. The specified purpose is more directly related to reading than to writing, but there is an implicit purpose which relates to writing. After they discuss Eliot's "The Preludes", "The Hollow Men", "The Fire Sermon" from "The Wasteland", and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", and the students have formulated some general and specific responses to Eliot's poetry, and have composed a written response to "The Hollow Men", Ms. Elliott has them read some published criticism of the works. She explains:

At this stage in an A-level course I think it is time that students begin to read some criticism of the works they are studying, **but only after they have formed their own views, so that they can attempt to evaluate what they read.** In the lesson set aside to follow up 'The Hollow Men' essays I therefore made

copies of Helen Gardner's 'The Art of T. S. Eliot' and the Casebooks on the Shorter Poems and 'The Waste Land' available.⁽¹⁹⁾

This stated purpose of helping them "to evaluate what they read" will quite possibly influence their written responses, primarily because the recommended works provide **models** of how it's done. Ms. Elliott says:

They need the confidence, the flexibility and confidence to function. Sometimes I think that I don't use models enough, for example, Leavis on Hopkins, or Gardner on Eliot - something clearly and simply done, just to have them see someone doing it (March 27, 1985).

As in history, background reading in history of art and in sociology is used primarily as a further source of course content. In sociology, however, an interesting development occurred among three of the students in my study in relation to the reading they were required to do throughout the year in preparation for written assignments. In order to ease their reading load, yet still 'know' what each of the assigned books had to offer in relation to the various writing tasks, Sian, Steve, and John developed their own strategy: they formed a Sunday afternoon sociology club, during which they each talked about one of the reference books, and then compared approaches, ideas, and so on. According to Sian:

I really enjoy it. We get to hear what the others think about the ideas in the book, and we cover three books a week instead of one, and we have fun doing it. Then when it comes time to write the essay, we know more people's ideas on the topic (May 2, 1985).

This next bit of the discussion is even more lateral to the topic than my mention of the sociology club, but nonetheless merits attention. Reading becomes a significant issue in relation to writing for the examination in biology. Twenty per cent of one of the final papers is devoted to a comprehension question, wherein the written responses are derivable from the passage printed on the examination paper. Although their written responses are what appear to be evaluated, it is really a test of how 'at home' students are in the

formal and formalized registers of the discipline, both in their reading and in their writing. The results of the Christmas 'mock' exams would suggest that the students are far from 'at home': only four of the eighteen students received ten marks or more of the twenty allotted. There appeared to be two main problems: first, understanding the passage, which was heavily laced with unfamiliar biological terminology; secondly, phrasing the responses to the questions they did understand with sufficient precision. Mr. Fox, dismayed at their results, takes two measures. He recommends background reading in the subject as a strategy by means of which the students could become increasingly familiar with the terminology and formalized register of the discipline; and he spends a considerable amount of time the next term trying to make his students more consciously aware of the kind of reading that is required for scientific text by emphasizing such aspects as the following:

What's written down often tells you something not written down. For example, $a=b$ and $b=c$ implies $a=c$. Look for the implications of what is written.

When you see a detailed formula, how do you get to understand the gist of what it's trying to tell you? What cognitive procedures do you go through? You ask it questions. You keep asking and answering questions until you muddle it through.

You can't read scientific writing the same way you read a novel. Reading in science requires active engagement. You have to take it in small bits, and pause, and close your eyes - at least, I close my eyes - and say to yourself, "Now, what is this bit telling me? Why is it important?" and you try to visualize what is going on. It takes time. It's a slow process...of course, you don't have much time on the exam, so you should practice now, while you do have the time, and you'll become faster (January 11, 1985).

As I mention at the beginning of this section, the interrelationships between reading and writing are too complex for me to do justice to them in this brief section allotted to background reading. What I have tried to do is isolate the particular times that reading, particularly background reading, is used by teachers in relation to a particular concern with writing in order to help students with their

writing. Generally speaking, background reading plays a much broader role in all six classrooms than the very limited roles I have accorded it here.

6. PLANNING AND THE USE OF DIAGRAMS

The use of diagrams as a means of discovering relationships among the ideas generated in response to a given topic, so that a line of argument can be perceived and developed, is a common strategy among the teachers and students in my study. For Mr. Goodman in sociology, who finds helping students learn how to "structure an argument" to be a difficult and somewhat mystifying task, schematic representations of the relevant concepts of an assigned topic offer a readily accessible path to developing an argument. Once the students have determined exactly what the question is asking, he says, their next problem is one of planning:

Even when they know the material, they find it difficult to develop a theme throughout their answer. They find it difficult to structure an argument, to develop a theme, to give a sense of moving through an argument. Most can't do it. It's the main skill you're trying to teach, yet few achieve it by the end of A-level....Do you want an honest answer? I don't know how to teach it. Personally, I do it diagrammatically, and look for the links...so it's the main strategy I recommend for them, because it's the one I know. Often we do it together on the board. We identify the essence of the question, then put down schematically anything that's relevant, then look for links to discover or make some more logical arrangement. The diagram provides the roots. Then they have to trace a logical path through those roots (March 28, 1985).

The sociology vignette illustrates how this strategy is carried out in class session, and how it relates to other strategies Mr. Goodman employs at other stages in the writing process.

In geography, diagramming performs two strategic functions, both elaborated in the geography vignette. One is similar to the function in sociology: arranging the ideas generated by the key words in the question and trying to find relationships and patterns of relationships in these ideas. I should mention that in neither subject area are these

diagrams formalized into 'tree' diagrams or 'venn' diagrams, although they are occasionally referred to in a general sense as 'star' diagrams. The shape of the diagram - its form and pattern - grows according to the arrangement of the words on the board or page; words are not written down to accommodate any particular generic form of diagram. Having said that, however, I must add that once the students do trace a path or pattern of relationships, forming the first 'crude' lines of their diagram, they are then instructed to find hierarchies or levels of concepts. At this stage, if the class is collaborating to produce a diagram which the teacher puts on the board, he can erase and rearrange according to the perceived hierarchies. If the students are working individually or in small groups, their diagrams can become quite intricate, at which point, they might choose to work within a particular diagrammatic form or switch to an outline. The second strategic function of diagrams concerns their role in the finished text. Mr. Moore urges his students to use diagrams:

*not to say again what you've already said, but to **replace** a lengthy explanation where it would be simpler to do so...then you have the time to write what needs to be written (March 25, 1985).*

In biology, as we might anticipate, illustrative diagramming is used frequently in written text, because the properties of diagrams enable them to represent physical relationships and processes more concisely than discursive prose. However, Mr. Fox also urges the strategic use of diagrams at the earliest stages of responding to a written task. As the biology vignette indicates, determining what the question is asking is frequently a difficult hurdle for students to clear before they can even begin to think of composing a response. A frequent tactic Mr. Fox employs is to have his students try to

visualize what is happening in the words of the question. Jot down what you see...make it into a little diagram, so you can see how it all fits together. Then you can work out what you need to know to get your answer (January 31, 1985).

The cognitive activities which transform a verbally-evoked mental image to a diagram, and the cognitive activities which find and trace paths or

patterns in a group of words are at once different and similar. Both processes involve first constructing a whole, one visually, the other verbally, and then perceiving relations of the parts within the whole, but whereas in the former, the 'whole' represents relationships actually given in the question, in the latter, the 'whole' is generated by the student in response to the question, and relationships are implicit, and need still to be 'discovered'. This process of discovering the relationships implicit in the 'whole' engenders the conception and development of the 'argument' or 'line of argument' which the students may use as the basis for their written responses.

In English, Ms. Elliott's intention is to use diagrams to unite the above complementary sets of cognitive activities, so that students envision a pattern of relationships in the literary text, schematize these on paper, play around with the schematization to see what other patterns are suggested by the basic image, and develop a diagram of these relationships. These activities are generally done collaboratively, in small groups of two or three, and the final diagrammatic illustration put onto large poster paper and explained, by the students, to the rest of the class. The groups are encouraged to explain not just the diagram on the poster, but the process of arriving at it, the approaches they started but rejected, the catalyst for the idea, and how it changed during their discussions. In her journal, Linda writes:

To account for the different impressions that you gain from a poem is very difficult, because how can you explain what the poem makes you feel? (November, 1984).

It is this difficulty in trying to gather together and write about the impressions and felt responses to literary text that Ms. Elliott is trying to ameliorate through her strategic use of diagrams, combined with having the students work collaboratively to find and negotiate meanings in the text, and then explain these negotiations to other groups, who are similarly struggling to find and articulate feelings and meanings. These discussions and negotiations are time-consuming, a slow, spiralling process of working towards meaning, but, in Ms. Elliott's view, and her students, worthwhile. Concerning the time spent

on constructing diagrams of Eliot's "Little Gidding", just one of several literary texts for which collaborative diagrams were constructed, she writes:

Developing and presenting the diagrams took a further week, but their variety was exciting : a web within a circle, concentric circles, a spiral, a mirror image, and a remarkable 3D effect which attempted (successfully) to convey Eliot's preoccupation with levels of experience by using a series of circles all intersecting through Little Gidding itself...I am well aware that this scheme of work, which relies so heavily on ephemeral discussions and personal interpretations, may be judged quite inadequate as preparation for traditional examinations. Yet...I feel that at 17 or 18 people are only just developing their understanding of demanding texts, and this must have room to change as they grow.⁽²⁰⁾

Possibly the truest measure of the success of a "strategy" is the extent to which students take it on board, and use it themselves when not specifically directed to do so by the teacher. I noticed during the writing of their timed essays that some of the students quickly constructed a 'star diagram', which they used instead of an outline for guiding the development of their argument. Some of the students gave me their 'on paper' response to written tasks from start to finish; often these include diagrams at a very early stage in the process, prior to their formulating an outline or written plan. Steve offers probably the most explicitly articulated statement about how students internalize and apply this strategy on their own. During our March interview, he says:

How do you know how to go about writing an answer? I don't know. You don't consciously learn....The first thing I might do - I usually do - is a star plan. I start with the title, or words from the title, or a subject, or a character - and write down what I know, branching out, and then interlinking....I do that in both sociology and English, but in sociology, I have notes which help to direct the structure of the plan. In English, the star plan is essential, because I have to get it all out of my brain (March 12, 1985).

7. USE OF VARIETIES OF WRITING TASKS

Virtually all of the assigned writing in the six classes falls into the 'transactional writing for an examining audience' category, although a few pieces could be said to be written with a 'teacher as trusted adult' audience in mind. Despite these limitations of function and audience, there is a considerable amount of variety in the writing tasks assigned to the students. Variety can be viewed along many different kinds of dimensions; the two which emerge most prominently from the particular focus of this study are as follows:

a) the social relations taken up by the writer towards the reader [or implied reader] in relation to the role in which the task casts the student. I suggest that variation in role and variation in social relations with a reader or implied reader correlate with other important variables, such as the nature of the evidence of the discipline drawn upon in the response and the degree of integration between the new and the known.

b) the deliberate, strategic variations teachers employ in their assigned writing tasks: how these are taken up by students, and manifested in their written text.

The writing tasks in these sixth form classrooms invite the students to take up one of two principle roles in their written text: novice to expert or 'protoexpert' to expert. In most instances, the assumed role is novice to expert, where the students are in the position of having to demonstrate knowledge or understanding to someone who already has that knowledge and or understanding. However, in instances where the writing task is based on a personal investigation of primary evidence of the discipline, such as the major fieldwork project in geography, the major investigative project in biology, the extended essay on authors, texts and a topic of the students' own choosing in English, and personal response tasks in English and in history of art, the students are invited to assume the role of 'expert', and present an understanding or a perspective not necessarily previously apprehended by their teacher-reader. Writing tasks can also impose a dual role on the students, such as in history of art, when the students are asked to locate their personal response to a work of art in relation to

authorized "art historical" responses. Regardless of which roles the students assume, their texts exhibit, implicitly or explicitly, a variety of social relationships, either with the known teacher-reader, or with some other reader, as with the Virginia Woolf assignment in the English vignette, wherein the teacher-reader 'listens in' on what the students 'say' to Virginia Woolf. In the novice-to-expert texts, there is frequently little discernible relationship between writer and reader, no 'voice' reaching out for agreement, confrontation, approval, or other reaction, but a safer, politely indicative presentation of information. Consider, for example, the three excerpts from the Parnell essays quoted in the history vignette. The first two would be typical of this almost 'voiceless', politely indicative text:

Charles Stewart Parnell brought Irish nationalists and the call for Home Rule and Irish problems to the forefront of British politics from 1875 onwards. Ireland had been united with England in 1801 with the Act of Union but Westminster were no nearer solving Ireland's problems by 1870 when Parnell appeared on the scene (Elaine).

Parnell's major contributions to the cause of Irish nationalism were his unifying the Irish in their demand for home rule and his bringing the Irish problem to the forefront of British politics. Although home rule did not pass the commons during his life time, the fact that it was put forward at all as a serious consideration was a great achievement (Cora).

In the third response, however, we do 'hear' a voice, stating a firm position, assuming the need to support this position almost immediately to retain credibility with her reader, and proceeding with this awareness in mind:

Parnell is one of the great figures in the history of Irish nationalism. It was he who made the Irish party a major force in the House of Commons throughout the 1870's and 1880's. Not only in Parliament, but also in Ireland itself, he managed to unite many causes of discontent and many shades of opinion into a cohesive nationalist movement ... (Christine).

I chose these examples from history because, at the outset, they render my [implied] hypothesis, which is that the writing task itself is

largely responsible for the social relationships which students enter into with their readers, problematic. The writing task, to a large extent, determines the **role** that the students assume, novice-to-expert or expert-to-expert, but social relationships in written text, as in the 'real' world, are influenced by often unpredictable combinations of convention and idiosyncrasy. In the text from which the above example is extracted, Christine writes predominantly in the conventional 'politely indicative' voice of the novice-to-expert, but, possibly because of being more widely read, and more confident in her knowledge of the subject matter than the other two, she feels she can take some risks within the convention, and make a bold assertion, so long as she keeps her teacher-reader in mind, and supports her assertion. We also know, from journal extracts, that Christine makes a conscious effort, whenever possible, to write a "punchy beginning". The point I wish to make is that, concerning varieties of task and text, there are generalizations that researchers with large samples can make that I cannot make. However, there are statements of a potentially generalizable nature that I can make about correlations among task, text, and context which I could not make had I not spent a year in these six classrooms.

Every writing task, regardless of the role it imposes on the students, invites them to engage in certain cognitive activities, such as selecting, arranging hierarchically, analyzing, synthesizing, exploring, speculating, evaluating, drawing conclusions, and so on. Since demonstrating knowledge requires precision, texts composed with that function in mind are more likely to feature the first four cognitive activities, since they involve less risk taking than the latter four. However, all six teachers concur that exploring, speculating, evaluating, and drawing conclusions are essential cognitive activities for engaging with the evidence of their respective disciplines in written text. Herein, once again, lies the conflict generated by the two interdependent activities of the A-level classroom: engaging with new, discipline-specific bodies of knowledge, and demonstrating that engagement in written text for an unknown examiner. How can teachers encourage their students to take risks - to speculate, explore, evaluate, and draw even tentative conclusions - when their written text functions primarily to

show what students **know** rather than what they can, during the process of composing, discover? One answer is to provide writing tasks which put the students in the role of explorer within the discipline, which invite them to investigate the primary evidence of the discipline, which invite them to take risks, but in a situation where they are not novices trying to impress an expert, but where they are fellow 'experts' informing another expert about a personal encounter with the evidence of the discipline. The vignettes give evidence that this kind of writing task does draw upon different sources and resources of information, understanding and knowledge, does present problems of a different nature in transforming the new insight into written text, and leads to syntactic and semantic differences in the finished text. The question which must be asked, however, is whether there is a carryover of willingness to speculate, explore, and take risks from tasks which explicitly invite such cognitive activities to tasks which seem more traditional. The answer, in general terms, is dependent upon a variety of factors, the most significant of which would appear to be, within the limitations of my sample, the frequency with which students are invited to assume the role of explorer, or the role of expert. Although all six teachers value the cognitive activities involved in composing exploratory, speculative, or investigative texts, those whose syllabuses allow for coursework, fieldwork, and investigative projects have greater opportunity to engage their students in this kind of writing task. In these classes, wherein students have some opportunity to write as expert-to-expert, the novice-to-expert texts do contain slightly more examples of risk taking, slightly more varieties of social relations with their readers, and slightly more examples of speculation. There are a number of problems with making such a generalization about the writing of sixth formers. One is that their texts are so lengthy, it is difficult to provide sufficient examples within this thesis to prove the point. Another problem is that the carryover is not necessarily limited to within the class; it is possible (indeed, to be hoped), for example, that a student who has taken up a variety of kinds of roles in writing in one class may therefore feel more confident to take risks in another class, where the writing tasks might be more limited in variety. The other is that by sixth form, these students have

experienced such tremendous variations in instruction, home influences, and personal development that the idiosyncratic factor is highly significant in the degree of confidence they will have in composing written text. A way out of the difficulty might be to give the kaleidoscope of variables a turn to a different pattern or way of perceiving the same factors of students and teachers, task, text and context.

This turn leads to a pattern which has as its center the deliberate ways that teachers vary their writing tasks, and which expands to indicate how the students respond to these variations in their written text. I have classified the variations I observed in the six classes into five major categories, which, since classifications are by nature arbitrary, and few aspects of writing are by nature discrete, overlap with categories already discussed or yet to be discussed. These categories are as follows:

- A. The wording of tasks to focus on different cognitive activities
- B. The length of tasks
- C. Variations in students' relationships with the evidence of the discipline
- D. Variations in actual writing conditions/constraints
- E. Variations in intended functions [in a pragmatic sense] of the texts

A. Variations in the Wording of Tasks to Focus on Different Cognitive Activities

The wording of tasks has already been discussed as the first strategy in the overarching taxonomy of this chapter, so my elaboration here will be brief. In their article, "Unlocking Mind Forg'd Manacles", John Dixon and Leslie Stratta investigate how the wording of questions can 'lock' students into imposed generalizations of knowledge which is presumed to be definitive and consensual, or how the wording of questions can open the door to more reflective, more analytic forms of response.⁽²²⁾ Although their paper is concerned with questions related

to character in English literature, their perceptions are equally valid for other disciplines. We have seen how, in geography, Mr. Moore differentiates among the 'code' words 'discuss', 'compare', 'analyze', 'outline', 'account for' - words which are frequently assumed by students to be virtually interchangeable in inviting the same sort of response. He also takes care to clarify what certain phrasing of tasks requires in the way of cognitive activities:

*The wording of the question is very important. Now when you get a question that begins, for example, with the words, "How far is it possible to say that...", you need to **draw out distinctions** in a discursive manner. There is no absolute need to come to an 'a' or 'b' conclusion. It is enough in the body of the essay to **show awareness of the major arguments**, and to **draw out the salient points** (November 5, 1984),*

and makes a conscious attempt throughout the year to vary the wording of his tasks so that each one does focus on a slightly different way of perceiving the evidence. He carries out this strategy primarily in the role of 'mediator', in that he frames his comments in relation to the expectations of the examiner:

If the question says "compare", then the examiner will expect you to structure your argument according to salient features which are similar, and which are contrasting. If it says "discuss", then he will not have such a specific way of structuring the argument in mind, and you are freer to develop your discussion according to what you consider important (November 5, 1984).

It is difficult for me to say whether or not there is a one-to-one correlation between this strategy and resultant geography texts, in that, as we have already seen in the vignettes and in earlier parts of the discussion, many factors are involved in the way students are enabled to structure their arguments in response to a specific task.

The other subject in which the wording of tasks figures strongly as a deliberate strategy is in English, but since I have already discussed the cognitive procedures explicitly suggested or urged in writing tasks in English, and how they are taken up by the students, I will move on to the next category. It remains to be said, however, that this variable can be particularly effective in reconciling the

potentially conflicting interdependent activities of the A-level classroom, in that careful and varied wording of questions can invite students to employ a greater variety of specifically directed cognitive activities as they engage with the evidence of the discipline.

B. Variations in the Length of Task

Length of task is another teacher-controlled variable which influences written text, although, once again, it operates in conjunction with a host of other variables. Teachers' comments previously mentioned have indicated that three to four sides of A4 is the 'standard' length of written response, since that is approximately the length that can be written in the thirty-five to forty minutes that the students can apportion to particular examination questions. In texts of this length, conciseness is an important textual value, emphasized most particularly in geography and biology, but to varying extents in the other subjects as well. What frequently happens is described by Ms. Elliott:

Virginia's whole approach to the exam is appropriate...her writing is concise, she has a good, clear mind which can spot off the points, but I would say that in her course work, the best thing is her long essay. It's much more exploratory and expansive. The rest of her writing [written to the standard three to four page length] is quite tight and cramped, not nearly so exciting (March 27, 1985).

Longer assignments offer further opportunities to reconcile the conflicts in writing as a taught process in the A-level classroom, by allowing the students to probe their ideas more thoroughly. The following entry from Vernon's journal implies the frustration students sometimes feel at the pressures of having to be constantly concise in their writing:

The main problem I find with essays is keeping them as short as possible. If I feel the topic has not been covered very well in lessons, or I don't understand it, or I haven't been listening as I should, then I find I have to write more to take everything in properly. However, to write a really good short essay I find very demanding, unless under exam pressure, when I am forced to cut down on what I write, and I would be grateful of any advice that would enable me to write shorter essays (October 3, 1984).

The use of shorter writing tasks is another strategy employed by teachers in their attempts to try to stimulate a variety of ways of cognitively engaging with the evidence of the discipline. The text which introduces this chapter, "The Iron", which I refer to earlier, is representative of one type of shorter writing task, where the teacher wants his students to articulate in writing the cognitive connections evoked by Man Ray's "The Gift". The collaborative brainstorming and outlining in geography, if we consider them as tasks complete within themselves, offer further examples of shorter writing tasks which exercise specific cognitive activities in relationship to the evidence of the discipline. In biology, the Nuffield study guide has many short questions which require students to speculate, to assess, to explore, to think of alternative explanations, in other words, to think about biology laterally and divergently, rather than the more traditional convergent thinking with which science has often been (erroneously) imbued for years in the educational context. In English, Ms. Elliott involves her students in a variety of shorter writing tasks, which she refers to as

...lists, jottings, and bits...I want to make sure they've started to ply their mind into whatever we're going to talk about (March 27, 1985).

These tasks focus the students' engagement with the literary text in a particular way, which might be perceiving relationships among seemingly diverse elements, tracing patterns of imagery or symbolism, seeing correlations between character and syntactic elements of dialogue, exploring the richness of the text by speculating on future developments, and the list could continue for a long time. These shorter tasks are, in a sense, similar to isolated muscle exercises, in that they concentrate their attention on a particular cognitive activity, with the ultimate goal of toning up the students' whole cognitive engagement with the evidence of the discipline.

C. Variations in Students' Engagement with the Evidence of the Discipline

This leads directly into the next major category of task variation: having the students engage with the evidence of the discipline in different ways. I have already mentioned that when students engage with

the primary evidence of the discipline, their composing problems differ from the ones they experience when they engage with secondary and tertiary evidence. In the former case, the problems center around transforming the essential experience of the engagement into written text; in the latter, the problems center around organizing information gained from primarily external sources into a line of argument. Rarely, however, does a written task require students to deal with only one form of evidence, except in history, where virtually all of the evidence that the students encounter in this particular classroom is tertiary. But within these variations of the nature of the evidence, further task variations are possible, based primarily on the extent to which the task invites students or allows students to integrate their evidence with personal response. For example, in writing up a biology experiment, the engagement has been with primary evidence, but the task of writing up that engagement is highly formalized and draws upon essentially convergent cognitive activities. In composing an experimental design, however, where the students are given a problem to solve or an hypothesis to prove, they are dealing with primary evidence of the discipline, perhaps concretely, perhaps abstractly, but the cognitive procedures activated by this task are vastly more complex, more divergent, more dependent on what we might call "imaginative" or 'lateral' thinking. Although there will be differences at both the syntactic and semantic levels of discourse when the students write up a biology experiment, the informational content and the formal structure will be basically similar. When students compose an experimental design, their responses are likely to be quite different. Vernon explains during an interview:

In experimental design, there are no hard and fast rules about how to get marks, except that they're so picky about how you word things. It's a bit mystical. It would be nice if they could give a check list of what every experimental design should have, but of course that's not possible. The basic guide I use is to write it down so that it can be replicated. The problem is, you feel you've written down everything you need to, but then you find out you haven't. It's not so difficult thinking up the experiment; it's writing all around it that presents the challenge (March 21, 1985).

In history of art, if the students are asked to respond to a particular work of art, the written text will be "freer, less formal, and often more interesting" (Mr. Christopher, March 26, 1985):

Matisse Exhibition - personal reaction

The exhibition was larger than I expected and fell into 2 categories (for me) - 2D and 3D work.

The first drawing I encountered was entitled "L'Homme Academic" which I was impressed with (much to the dismay of a certain colleague). The subject was a seated male, seen almost in profile, occupying a central position in the paper. It was done in pencil and shading was used, though not extremely or harshly. It seemed quite delicate, with its lightness and softness, but there was also, I felt, an underlying structure and solid strength in it. Overall, it seemed perhaps the most controlled drawing I remember experiencing at the exhibition...(Julia).

If they are asked to integrate this response with what they know of the authorized "art historical" and "art critical" responses, the texts become more formalized but still manifest the 'voice' of the person writing the text:

*Select one or more of van Gogh's paintings from each of the three periods, **describe the qualities and feelings of each painting**, and compare the treatment with the Japanese prints, realism, and impressionism.*

"The Loom" (1884) is a good example of van Gogh's dutch period. It incorporates very dark colours (browns and blacks) and an off white for the lighter tones to create a very sharp contrast between the loom and the background..."These looms will cost me a lot of hard work yet, but in reality they are such splendid things, all that oak wood against a greyish wall". The subject of the picture is primarily the loom which becomes almost fantastic in its importance to the viewer and the peasant sitting at it, weaving, indeed it is the peasant's life and I, personally, feel van Gogh has tried to illustrate this. I think the painting is very sombre and serious in color and application of paint, as well as the expression on the weaver's face, but it also seems to have an indescribable sophistication and serenity about it, perhaps due to the stillness and use of color...(Julia).

If they are asked to write about particular works of art within the framework of the philosophical ideals of the movement within which they were created, the texts become most formal, and personal response is not invited:

Compare the Proto-functionalist and the Historicist

There were two basic forms of architecture rising in the nineteenth century in Britain. One was concerned with a new, revolutionary idea and used new materials, was devoid of any unnecessary detail and was labelled proto-functionalist and the other contrived to use the ideas of the past to create decorative and expensive buildings with a traditional flavor. This was called historicist (Julia).

As the above extracts, all written by the same student, illustrate, by varying the nature of the tasks within the required content of the syllabus, teachers invite the students to take on different roles, assume different social relations with their reader or implied reader, engage in different ways with the evidence of the discipline, and further reconcile the conflicting functions of writing at A-level.

D. Variations in Writing Conditions/Constraints

The fourth major category of task variation involves the conditions in which the students compose their responses. Since this is the next major classification in the taxonomy of strategies employed by the teachers, I will be elaborating the variations and their influences on student text more completely very soon. In general terms, teachers vary the conditions primarily in their role as 'mediator', in preparation for the students' final examinations. In some cases, these situational changes, usually to a simulated examination situation, are merely practice sessions for the exam, but in other cases, the teachers carry out a program of progressively constraining contexts, and try to work at a variety of composing problems throughout this contextualizing program.

E. Variations in Function

Varying the function of writing tasks is the last major category of variation which I perceived during my year of observation. Although the predominant function of writing is demonstrating knowledge to the

teacher-as-examiner, the vignettes document a number of other functions for written text, some determined by the teachers, and a few others by the students. Similarly to the previous form of task variation, the teachers vary the function primarily in relationship to the exam. Sometimes the texts function as straight practice for the exam; the students appreciate this tactic, and, as the examination time approaches, several ask their teachers in history, English, and geography for more practice in simulated examination conditions. Sometimes the texts function as revision for the exam in two major ways: in preparing the essay, the students revisit and reflect upon a major theme or topic on the syllabus; once the essay is written, it serves as a condensed, focused version of that theme or topic, and may be used as a source of revision in preparation for the examination. A third function is simply the gathering together of information which is required by the syllabus, a strategy used primarily by the history of art teacher. The fourth function, often working in conjunction with one or more of the above three is universal in the sixth form classroom: writing is used as a means of having the students engage cognitively with the specific evidence of the discipline in a particular way, through the particular focus suggested by a particular question. These teachers do not use writing only to demonstrate learning, although they do look at all writing from that perspective. This fourth function is frequently overlooked, because it appears to be superceded by the others. From the evidence in the vignettes, and from all that I have written so far, the point, I think, is being made that **all six teachers in this study, although working within a system which dictates that writing be the principle means of demonstrating knowledge, use writing as a major means of cognitive engagement with new bodies of knowledge.** I will give the final word in this section to Ms. Elliott:

*I don't know whether we make them do enough writing - enough writing of different kinds, and at different stages in the process of coming to an understanding of the concepts they're dealing with, because I worry a bit - it's not until you get things down on paper that you get your mind clear, and force yourself to come to conclusions, so that **what they write is useful for me to see what they understand, and the doing is useful for them to sort their ideas out** (March 27, 1985).*

8. THE USE OF CONSTRAINTS

The use of constraints is a strategy which appears to be used by the teachers almost totally in relation to the exam. I write 'appears' and 'almost', because several of the teachers feel that, regardless of the prevailing view that simulating examination conditions is good practice for the A-level examinations, having to prepare a topic and write on it within a given length of time requires a concentration and intensification of cognitive activities which have their own intrinsic value in the overall repertoire of students' composing skills. There are four basic constraining variables in the simulation of examination conditions: limitations on advance knowledge of the topic; limitations on time; limitations on the use of reference material; limitations on the opportunity to talk, either with the teacher or with colleagues, about the writing. Rarely, except during the actual examination, are all these constraints imposed, an observation which first alerted me to the realization that the teachers have more on their pedagogical agenda in their use of this strategy than just practising for the examination. As I mention earlier, the texts composed under these constraints function, in addition to rehearsal for the examination, as a means of informing both teacher and students of the degree of competence with which the students can demonstrate in written text their engagement with the evidence of the discipline (in examination conditions), so that the teachers know what additional teaching is required, and the students know their areas of strength and weakness; they function as a source of condensed information on a major topic of the course, a source which can be consulted during examination revision; they function as a stimulus to have the students revisit and reflect upon a major topic of the course; and they function to have the students engage with the evidence of the discipline in an intense and concentrated way, possibly enabling them to see how they can draw upon their reserves of tacit and intuitive knowledge under pressure.

That some of the students appreciate this particular strategy is indicated in the following extracts from Christine's and Cora's journals:

Incidentally, I think timed essays, as we have in history, are a great idea; they ought all to be like that. They have shown me my two greatest weaknesses:

1) I don't always cover all aspects of a question, especially when writing to time. I must learn to put the right amount of emphasis into each part of my argument/study.

2) I can't produce a rounded essay in the right time. In other words, I have a tendency to waffle now which I never had at O'level, when I could always fit X facts for X marks into Y minutes (Christine, February 18, 1985).

The timed essays in history are quite difficult ...However, they are good practice for the exam when we will have to form a basic argument in a very short time (Cora, October 16, 1984).

According to Miss Aird, some of her students actually write better essays under timed conditions. Generally, these seem to be the students who generate a plan in response to the question, and keep to it while composing their essay.

One of the most rigidly constraining experiences, wherein all four variables are controlled, is the 'mock' exams which take place in all A-level subjects in December. Although this cannot be considered a strategy of teachers in itself, since it is a traditional requirement imposed on teachers and students, most of the teachers try to turn it into a teaching/learning situation by going over the students' performances in class and in individual conferences, and addressing themselves, as I have indicated earlier, to specific writing problems which emerge as a consequence of the constraining conditions. Students' reactions to these mock exams as genuine indicators of their knowledge or their ability to demonstrate that knowledge in writing are mixed:

My mock results surprised me. In history I did better than I thought I had because I knew I had not done enough revision. I was also uneasy with the questions that came up...I did not have a problem with time, except that I ran out of things to say. Miss Aird did point out that I sometimes made important points without going into them, suggesting that my plans were not organised so that I forgot what I was saying.

My English results were even more surprising. One essay which I spent the right amount of time on, and had a proper introduction, argument all the way through, and a conclusion, got less than one which I

did in a frantic rush with no plan in fifteen minutes at the end. I think what was wrong with the first essay, however, was not its style but more its content and that I thought I understood a character but actually it was a very superficial understanding. I can't see how to avoid doing the same thing again though (Cora, December, 1984).

Cora has made at least two important discoveries from writing these mock exams: first, that depth of understanding is more important than formal concerns of structure, and secondly, that, between herself and her English teacher, there is a problem that needs to be worked out in relation to "superficial understanding". Barbara also learns from the mock exams, as well as offering some interesting reactions to the wording of questions on examinations:

I just wanted to write a few things about the mocks I have just taken. Firstly I found them rather frightening, especially the Biology ones! However, I am glad they took place, because it has given me a taste of the "real thing" and I know now that I must work a lot harder if I want to get a decent grade!

The most important thing about the mocks, (the English one), was that I found I was stuck for words. I found it very difficult to write down what I felt and meant. It was clear in my mind, but I couldn't express it on paper. The time limit had a lot to do with this, I feel.

I was quite surprised to find the wording of the questions in English very easy to understand and clear. This was a great help and somehow gave me more confidence in writing the essays. I found it particularly helpful when the examiner gave a list of things to look for and help you go about tackling the question.

Biology, however, was a different matter entirely! Those two exams were the worst I have ever done in my life! I think they were so bad because I did not do nearly enough revision for the exam as I should have done. Apart from that, the wording of the questions was very difficult to understand, especially under the time limit and exam conditions. I found that I would have to read some of the questions at least three times before I could make any sense out of them, and of course this took up a lot of time and made me even more rushed (Barbara, December, 1984).

Susan's comment, with its self-contradiction, would appear to indicate an attitude of confusion about what the exams attempt to measure:

The mock exams did not reflect my knowledge or understanding of the material - sometimes I write too vaguely and don't elaborate enough (perhaps it is because at this stage I don't know enough!) (December 8, 1984).

Linda offers some interesting insight, from a student's perspective, of written examinations, particularly in English:

In the case of Biology in general, the exams are not testing what we know, but how we use what we know. The mock exam tended to reflect back to very basic knowledge and tested how we could use and think about what we know....

I think that the exams have little significance in testing our understanding of a piece of work in English. For someone who is less capable in writing a coherent essay, the point of the exam is futile. This is because they may fully understand the work but not be able to express their understanding to other people (although I suppose this is being tested itself). However, I think an examination carried out in conversation would be much more revealing of understanding (November, 1984).

Although there is a general intensification of writing under constraints in preparation for the exam in almost all subjects in the summer term, in geography, Mr. Moore designs what might be called a contextualizing program of progressively increasing constraints to assist his students' competence in composing during the examination. On March 11, he begins, for example, by discussing the topic to be tested thoroughly the lesson before, allowing the students to talk among themselves about the question before they begin to answer it, and allowing ninety minutes for them to compose a response. The main purpose or function of this writing event is, he tells them, "I would like to know what you know". He reiterates the importance of using "proper geographical terminology". He makes reference to the "seamless robe of knowledge", encouraging his students to transfer and integrate what they know from discrete topical areas to other areas:

...see how all these things link together...because we're really looking at a whole system and just breaking into it at different points for the convenience of analysis.

Some of his students, Christine among them, feel uncomfortable at this first attempt at simulated examination conditions, saying that she does not "feel in control of the question". She writes at the end of her essay:

I know that this is waffle and a lot of it is rubbish. I had tried to read up on it a bit before but I think that glacial drainage patterns are a topic I'm better off leaving - can I count on a glaciation question in which I don't have to mention them?

Mr. Moore writes his response in the combined roles of 'mediator' and 'tactician':

Much of what you have written seems perfectly reasonable although it is not always supported by real world examples. If you look at the sheet of past questions you will see the way in which glaciation questions have come up in the past and will be able to plan your revision topics accordingly. Play to your strengths but don't revise too few topics or you will be caught out.

Between March 11 and April 29, he carries out his program of gradual escalation of constraints and advice, much of which has been documented in the geography vignette, which is extracted from this period in the year. By April 29, the students are writing in full simulation of examination conditions, and after they finish, Mr. Moore, again in the role of 'mediator' gives his final advice on writing for an examiner, a discriminating reconciliation of the two major functions of writing:

*I'm going to show you a **technique** of **how** to go about answering a question - a way of getting in touch with what you know. Ask yourselves: what do you know about this topic? what comes immediately to mind? can you use fieldwork examples? have you read differing viewpoints?...*

He proceeds to lead the class through a variety of experiences in tapping their tacit and intuitive knowledge, so that they can feel comfortable applying this technique, even under the time limitations of the examination. He then distributes and goes over some 'model' answers, a strategy which I will be discussing later in this chapter.

9. USE OF WRITTEN COMMENTS

Writing comments on students' texts is a virtually universal teaching strategy, offering potentially rich opportunities for reinforcing what students have done well, and advising them of areas which warrant attention or improvement, either specifically in reference to features peculiar to a particular response to a particular question, or in reference to more generally applicable writing concerns. In the A-level situation, comments frequently perform a further function of advising students of the quality of their response in relation to A-level standard expectations of written competence in the respective disciplines. Since the vignettes document examples of the above kinds of written comments, particularly the English vignette, rather than duplicate what they offer, I would like to make use of this section of the discussion to elaborate two other aspects of written comments: first, the written comments composed by teachers of the English department in response to students' answers on the mock examinations; second, the manner in which students react to their teachers' written comments, for example, the extent to which the comments enable (or, in some cases, inhibit) their writing.

In addition to the comments written on each student's paper relating to the four functions of comments mentioned above, the English department extends the simulated examination conditions to issue a written 'examiner's report' on each question, so that the students can see how their individual problems or strengths in responding to the question correspond to those of other A-level students. In pairs, the A-level teachers evaluate specific questions on the exam, so that each question is read by two teachers, and each student's paper, containing three essays, may be read by as many as six different teachers. The pairs of teachers then collaborate to decide what features should go into the report, and one member of each pair writes it. To give an example of the kind of enabling advice offered in these reports, primarily in the role of 'mediator', here is Ms. Elliott's report on one of the questions from the Practical Criticism paper:

Paper 1. Qn 3 - Beckett

I am glad that so many people felt confident enough to have a go at this question...Difficult material makes people say basic things about it at the beginning of their answers to fix for their reader what line they are going to take, whereas they tend to think that such comments on easier material are too obvious to be worth making. They aren't.

As it says on the Paper, there are no 'right' answers - so I couldn't possibly mark this against a checklist of points you should have included even if I had one! What is being tested in this question (and all the other questions on the Practical Criticism paper) is how good a reader you are, and how much you have learnt during your A-level course about how to find ways of getting into unfamiliar material and offering your views on it. So I was looking to see whether people could do all (or some) of the following:

- i) grasp the content
- ii) speculate usefully about meaning - i.e. raise questions and offer possible answers, rather than just fire off a lot of questions and then cop out of suggesting solutions
- iii) use evidence from the passage to illustrate their points and support their views
- iv) perceive 'movements' in the passage - development of ideas, mood, feelings + evidence
- v) observe features of style: some relevant ones in this passage are
 - a) idiosyncracies of punctuation (all those commas)
 - b) choice of vocabulary to achieve specific effects (here the words are very simple, the ideas are extremely complicated)
 - c) use of contrasts:
 - d) use of rhythm and pace - the variations and their effects
 - e) use of repetitions - single words and longer phrases, their placing and effect (other passages will have quite different features)
- vi) comment on the contribution which the features of style you have noticed make to the effect of the whole passage
- vii) look at a number of different aspects of the passage, rather than getting stuck repetitively on one aspect only. (I say repetitively, because some good answers restricted themselves to one or two aspects, but explored them so thoroughly and interestingly, that they were better than answers which hopped from one point to another but never really developed any of them.)

People's answers to the question 'Who is saying What to Who Where?' were broadly similar, showing that although this text is very open to individual interpretations of mood and feeling, there are boundaries laid down by the writer within which it works. It was generally agreed that 'I' is the spirit, or soul, or perhaps conscience, considering the birth, life and coming death of the body - 'He'. People attributed a range of feelings to 'I' - frustration, panic, irritation, hostility, superiority - I was prepared to accept whatever was convincingly supported by textual reference, provided answers showed an awareness that the moods are not fixed and simple. The least good answers on this section were those which asserted their points as 'obvious' facts, rather than adopting a tentative and exploratory tone (December 12, 1984).

Ms. Elliott's pedagogical intentions, implicit within the above text, are that it perform the following functions:

1. be **supportive** of the students' attempts to come to grips with a difficult literary text (there was an 'easier' option)
2. **de-mystify** the marking procedure
3. give **procedures of practical criticism** applicable to this particular text, but also generalizable to other texts.
4. use the students' own responses to **illustrate range and criteria of individual interpretations**
5. emphasize the **exploratory** and **tentative** nature of practical criticism

Functions of written comments, however, do not lie in their intentions, but in how they are taken on board by the students, and used to assist their composing of written text. Several of the twelve students in my study make reference, both in their journals and during our interviews, to teachers' written comments, most of them finding them helpful for a variety of reasons, but some of them finding them confusing or contradictory or otherwise problematic. Susan, in particular, credits the improvement she has achieved over the past year primarily to the written comments teachers have made on her written texts. During our March interview, she tells me:

Looking back, I can see I was disorganized, and my essays had insufficient content for revision. All I did, basically, was translate the text into my own words. I didn't re-organize it according to what the question was asking. Now I know how to do that. On each essay, the teachers would write comments about my organization, and how to improve it. At first, I had difficulty in applying their advice, but over a period of time, it all started to make sense, as they kept writing extensive notes and advice, and I came to understand what they meant (March 20, 1985).

Vernon credits Mr. Moore's written comments with helping him to see the importance of probing further:

He would write on my paper: "Do you think that's a reasonable explanation? Discuss why 'yes'; why 'no'. Give alternatives." That challenged me to think more (March 21, 1985).

John attributes his change in attitude, his increased effort to improve his written work in history, to Miss Aird's comments:

She wrote on my mock exam, "If you don't change, you'll fail. This work is simply no good. You'll fail." She would have talked to me about it, she would have helped me if I wanted, but I wasn't interested enough. When she wrote that, though, it really made me sit up and think, so I've been working harder on my essays, reading more, spending more time on them. And the last one was better, too (March 14, 1985).

Organization is the main theme of Cora's references to teachers' comments:

In history, I find it difficult to refer back to what I've said in my conclusion without repeating. The teacher's comments have been very helpful in pointing out in particular essays how I might have done it. Now I'm starting to find it easier. I'm starting to understand how to do it (June, 1984).

Miss Aird did point out that I sometimes make important points without going into them, suggesting that my plans were not organized so that I forgot what I was saying (December, 1984).

The next few references are interesting, because, although they indicate ways in which they find the teachers' comments helpful, later references will show that their reactions are somewhat mixed. Christine's journal entry indicates the extent to which she uses her teacher's comment as an enabling strategy:

Got back my Gladstone essay from Miss Aird today. Felt quite dispirited because it was not well reviewed! She said that on first reading it, she thought it was "appalling", but when she read it again, she didn't think it was "quite so bad".

I think perhaps I hit the wrong note by over-emphasizing one strand of the essay, leaving out the other. At least I'll know what to emphasize next time (September 18, 1984).

Steve, who earlier in the year tells me that he doesn't pay too much attention to the comments teachers write on his papers, writes the following in his journal, showing that he does gain at least a modicum of reassurance from them:

I've just had my long essay back with comments. My fears about it were wrong, the teacher said the material was OK, but the structure was dodgy (April, 1985).

Finally, Julia, who, as we shall soon see, struggles to apply her teachers' comments, not always with success, nonetheless credits them with helping her learn how to write better:

In English, I learn most about how to improve my writing from the teachers' comments. She always writes extensive comments on my work, and they help me (March 14, 1985).

Four days after the interview in which she makes the above remark, Julia writes the following journal entry, which I quote in its entirety because it is completely structured around Ms. Elliott's written comments on her paper:

I was disappointed with my grade (E) in the essay I got back today, also embarrassed! and felt very confused, I can sort of see where I went wrong in so much as repeating myself, but, as far as being vague is concerned I felt (when writing) that I wasn't being vague but exploring as many possibilities as possible. I didn't put my own view at the end of the essay - 1) because I didn't feel the question required it and 2) I didn't really have a definite view and didn't want to write one just for the convenience of it. Perhaps that is what I'll have to do in the future, I don't know. I had, roughly, 3 alternatives and wanted to explore them all, Ms. Elliott said that my knowledge of the book suggested I should have found an answer to the possibilities why Lear responded the way he did, I

didn't really know why or I wouldn't have included other possibilities. I feel that I can never get my essays right, either they don't explain points that I feel are obvious, or they waffle when I am grappling with an explanation. I received the comment 'waste of time' beside one of my quotes and yet we are always being told to back up our statements with references from the text, I only end up a little confused (moreso, I think, than when I am writing the essay)!

Anyway, I'll have to try harder to 'organize' myself next time, obviously my approach is wrong, or I wouldn't have got such a low mark, however I was very disappointed, I thought I really had improved this time (March 18, 1985).

Earlier in the year, Julia had told me that she found Ms. Elliott's extensive comments "very helpful, but occasionally soul destroying" (June, 1984). This, obviously, refers to one of the "soul destroying" occasions. Fortunately, neither of them leave the important issues referred to unresolved. The comments provoke Julia to ask Ms. Elliott for further clarification, which she gives, and Julia happily tells me the following week:

I think we have it all sorted out. Ms. Elliott knows what I was trying to do, and I understand what she was getting at, especially in terms of what's needed for our answers on the exam (March 26, 1985).

Conflicting advice is the most common complaint that students have to make about their teachers' written comments, possibly because they seem to be searching for a standard way of writing an essay.

*I look at the comments of the teacher and try not to make the same mistakes with my next essay. But sometimes the advice is contradictory from subject to subject. I've always written short sentences instead of long, complex sentences, and I've never been able to change that. The English teacher complains, but in history they like short, precise sentences. **It's hard to know what's best for what** (Elaine, June, 1984).*

*I learn a lot from the teachers' comments...but sometimes you get conflicting advice and you get muddled. You're not supposed to give it all away in your introduction, and yet you're supposed to introduce all your main points. **It's difficult to know what's right when** (Virginia, March 4, 1985).*

I don't know that I paid much attention to teachers' comments directly....on my long essay...I rushed the first draft and the comment written on it was that it was naive. It wasn't an adequate representation of what I can do, but I was still angry to be told it was naive. But looking back, I suppose she was right. Though I believed what I wrote then, I can see now that it was naive...

I've been told so many things about how to do it. One teacher writes, "Why don't you conclude with a question?" Another teacher writes, "Don't end with a question. Make it nice and concise." One says to write four sides, another two and a half sides. It's all different, so I just do what I'm doing (Steve, March 12, 1985).

Christine seems to have learned to use what she finds helpful, and to disregard what she disagrees with:

I get a lot of help from the teacher's advice, especially in history, and I try to use it. I don't always agree with her comments about style, but since I respect her experience with the exam, and with knowing what the examiners want, I pay attention to what she says....sometimes you get contradictory advice from different teachers...this year's advice is more in line with what I feel comfortable with, so I work within that. My writing has changed incredibly since the start of the course, and I credit Miss Aird's comments for that (March 20, 1985).

This last quotation from my interview with Christine indicates an intellectual independence that many teachers would like to see in relation to their advice:

I follow their advice because I respect their experience with getting students through the exam. But I don't use it as a measuring stick to evaluate my writing. I need to certify my own work...(March 20, 1985).

10. THE USE OF WRITTEN TEXT AS MODEL ANSWERS

Three of the six teachers make use of what Mr. Moore calls 'model answers' as a strategy to assist their students' written encounters with the evidence of the discipline: geography, most frequently; history, less frequently; and English, only occasionally. Because it appears to

influence their degree of impact on the students, a crude general impression based solely on students' reactions to the proffered 'models', I have classified them according to authorship:

- a) texts written by former students
- b) texts written by teachers
 - i. shared orally
 - ii. shared as written text
- c) texts written by classmates
 - i. shared orally
 - ii. shared as written text

After evaluating and commenting on their first written assignment in upper sixth history, Miss Aird distributes two texts written by students in a previous year in response to the same writing task, saying:

Although these are marked 'Model Answer A' and 'Model Answer B', they are not model essays. Each does some things well and each has its weak points, but there are certain things you can learn from them (September 18, 1984).

She then proceeds to use these essays to illustrate the points she has been making about their texts written in response to the same task, for example, points concerning structure and organization:

Look at 'B', at the final paragraph on the first page. Read it to yourselves, and think about the way it is organized [pauses]. Look at the first sentence, "Gladstone's travels in Europe were of undoubted importance in propelling him towards Liberalism". Then see how all the rest of the sentences in that paragraph develop and support that idea...The final sentence concludes, but it also does something else - it prepares us for the next idea...

She also uses these two texts to exemplify comments she has made about terminology, style, and incorporating quotations effectively into the text. It is the only time during the year that she uses texts written by other students to illustrate her advice about writing, feeling that it is better to use the students' own texts as sources of examples. However, she wants to build up sufficient rapport with her students before putting them 'at risk' in front of their classmates by using their texts as references concerning structure and style, and so uses these 'model answers' at the start of the year.

'Model Answers' written by the teacher are frequently used in geography class, for two reasons: to show the students "one approach to how an answer can be organized, although many other approaches are possible and equally valid" (Mr. Moore, February 25); to give the students information and sources they may have left out in their own answers, and might want to have for future reference. They are usually given out after the students have already written on the topic and had their texts evaluated. Occasionally, however, he has them talk about a topic in groups and work out a possible way of going about answering it, then distributes the 'model answer' (which he sometimes, perhaps more accurately, refers to as 'sample answer') for them to discuss in relation to how they have already looked at the question. Twice during the year, he used model answers to generate comments about the use of terminology and organizational structure, in order to heighten students' awareness of these features of written text. I should emphasize that never were these 'model answers' offered to students as **the best** or **the only** way to respond in writing to a particular question.

Only once did Miss Aird use an answer written by herself, and even then, it was not offered as a 'model answer' so much as a sharing of the writing experience, which was one of the first essays of the year written under time constraints. Miss Aird wrote along with her students, taking care to base her answer mostly on material available in the students' texts and her lecture notes. After going over her students' papers in class, she then read hers to them, partly to exemplify some of the points she had been making, and partly to invite comments and questions on her line of argument (January 29, 1985). Possibly because of the novelty of the situation, few comments or questions were forthcoming.

In English, Ms. Elliott does not write what would be termed a 'model answer' or even a 'sample answer', both of which imply a response which could be used with any group of students working on the topic addressed by the answers. Mrs. Elliott's text is less formal as an essay response, indicating rather an **approach** to answering the question,

framed in reference to how her students actually did answer the question:

QUESTION 5. (a) The speech 'sheds light' on Aston in 2 ways: i) we learn facts about his past, his job, his social life...ii) it also sheds light on his reactions to these parts of his life, and his feelings of (e.g.) victimization, pain, helplessness...(There are plenty more feelings you can detect too).

(b) Pinter gains our sympathy for Aston by enabling us to know A. as a person and by making us share his emotions. The content of the speech is painful and distressing, and the difficulty he has in articulating his experiences, as well as the more fluent narrative of his most traumatic memories both increase our sympathy for him. (You can actually **see** these variations in the speed with which he speaks reflected on the page, in the density of broken sentences, interspersed with complete ones.) Although the question does not necessarily have to take you outside Aston's speech itself, **several people rightly said that the fact that later in the play we see Davies take cruel advantage of all this painful personal story and use it against Aston, makes us even more sympathetic towards a man we have come to understand and pity.**

As far as planning your answer goes - (a) could be dealt with quite briefly, and might take 1/3rd of your essay. Exploring ways of developing our sympathy would need much more reference to the text, and should probably be the main body of the essay.

This is a bare outline of a possible approach, but **anyone who answered the question along these lines, supporting their points from the text, couldn't have got less than a C+.** People who got D's and E's did so because they didn't illustrate 'sheds light' clearly enough. (It won't do just to say "In this speech we get to know A. better" without saying HOW) or they didn't offer a range of ways in which Pinter gains our sympathy for Aston. **Many answers lacked a clear method of attack, so that plenty of material was touched on, but not explored in sufficient detail to transform it from what your Chief Examiner calls 'notions' (by which he means brief, unsupported comments) into 'Points' (which are statements, backed up by reference to or illustration and quotation from the text, and an explanatory comment of your own (March 14, 1985).**

This strategy employs a variety of tactics. It begins by offering a type of model - "a possible approach" to the question, moves outward to

the responses of the students, then moves into the role of 'mediator' (and occasionally 'exhorter', when she writes "it won't do...") when she frames her criticisms and comments in relation to the examiner, whom she personalizes with the descriptor "**your** Chief Examiner". She goes on to conclude with a "Special Note" of advice about how the examiners and she expect them to engage with the evidence of the discipline in written text:

In marking any of the essays you write in your exam papers the examiners will NOT be using a pre-determined mark scheme, and expecting you to produce points in your essay which match up with it. They will be ready to accept any essay which focusses on the question asked, answers it fully, uses relevant material from the text for illustration, and shows you have a full and confident knowledge of the text, whether or not they personally agree with your views.

Finally, she relates this general advice to the particular question:

This is especially important to remember when writing about 'The Caretaker'. Because it is a text which is open to a variety of different readings, it is essential that you develop your ideas really thoroughly, showing why you think as you do by referring to the text. In several cases I was glad to give credit for interpretations of Aston...which I don't personally hold, simply because the writers took me so carefully and clearly through the reasons why they thought as they did, and so convinced me that their opinion was a sound one.

Texts written by classmates and shared orally seem, understandably, to elicit the most comments from students, although they are offered, not as 'model' answers, but more as sample answers. The history vignette describes two of these occurrences, in which the written texts function as catalysts to provoke students to air and share their views on what they consider to be important features of written text generally in the discipline, and specifically in relation to a particular question. As the vignette indicates, the students' comments predominantly reflect their teachers' concerns about structuring a clear line of argument with sufficient, relevant supporting detail, particularly the first time the strategy is tried. The second time, however, the comments flow more smoothly and readily, and move beyond structural concerns to problems

with interpreting the question and difficulties with assessing evidence. Possibly because it is the second time, possibly because it is the last history class, possibly because the room is set up this day in seminar style rather than traditional classroom style, or perhaps for all these reasons, the students really do use this strategy as an opportunity to engage in discussion with each other about writing in history, rather than reservedly issuing their comments through the teacher as mediator, as they did the first time.

Mr. Moore, in geography, is the only teacher who uses students' own written text as models in printed out form, and even then, the models comprise a synthesis of the best parts of several student texts. In that sense, the texts really do function as 'model answers', and are used to illustrate the best of what students can do by means of what they have done.

It is difficult for me to assess the extent to which students are influenced by this particular strategy, since few of them make reference to it in their journals or during our interviews. Since, like most of the other 'strategies', this one does not exist alone, but operates in conjunction with others, such as group discussion, for example, some of the students' comments, although not specifically referring to 'model answers', could be interpreted as endorsing more use of particular applications of this strategy. Many students during the course of the year mentioned that they would like to hear or read the essays of other students in the class, and talk over their different interpretations. At the end of the year, when I met with all of my students as a group, this again was mentioned as a pedagogical technique that they considered useful. Those who had experienced the sharing of others' essays during the course of the year said they quite definitely found it helpful. Of course, sharing each other's essays is a very restricted application of this idea of the use of 'model answers', by which Mr. Moore (for it is his term) means answers which serve as a model or sample or way of going about answering a question. It is, however, so far as I can glean from the students' reactions, the particular application of the strategy which they express as being the

most beneficial for helping them in the following ways (this list is generated on the basis of informal talks with the students and the end-of-the-year meeting referred to above):

1. seeing how others interpret the same question
2. seeing how others develop a line of argument in response to the question
3. hearing how others write within the terminology and discourse of the discipline
4. hearing the variety of supporting evidence which can be brought to bear on answering the question
5. discovering ways that they can improve what they do by listening to others
6. talking more with their colleagues about writing in each subject
7. comparing their responses with their colleagues

What I have not addressed in this section is the concept of 'modelling' in its broader sense, wherein the reading which students do influences their written text. Extracts already quoted from my interviews with Mr. Moore in geography and Ms. Elliott in English as well as with Christine, in geography and history, indicate that they think this is an important influence on writing. Unfortunately, within the scope of my research, I could not devote sufficient time to explore and trace these influences, despite their obvious significance. It is, once again, a topic which merits a study of its own.

11. THE USE OF PRINTED HANDOUTS

In all six subjects, a document which addresses some aspects of teachers' and examiners' expectations of written competence in the respective subject areas is distributed to the students. Some of these are quite specialized, in that they refer to just the extended essay in English, or the independent project in biology, or to how to write a "revision notebook" in geography (writing which is done solely for the purpose of examination revision and is seen and used only by the student). Others are more general: "The Requirements of 'A' Level History"; "Writing A-Level History Essays", "Planning an Essay in Sociology", "Writing in History of Art", and the most general, "Essay Writing". These documents are of interest to this study because they contain advice and assumptions about writing in each discipline, and

because most of the twelve students refer to them during the course of the year as providing helpful guidelines of what is expected of them in terms of written articulation.

Since the major purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that within the limits of transactional writing for an examining audience, the teachers and students interactively engage in meaningful cognitive encounters with the evidence of the discipline, I would like to extract from these documents, where possible, the statements which imply or which make explicit the nature of these cognitive encounters in the respective disciplines, bearing in mind that a printed statement in a handout guarantees nothing in itself. Taken in conjunction with the rest of the teachers' strategies which have already been presented, however, these expectations can be viewed as pedagogical intentions which influence the composing of written text in the A-level classroom. The document entitled "The Requirements of 'A' Level History" is the most explicit in making clear the manner in which history students are expected to engage in writing with the evidence of the discipline, particularly in an examination situation, as the following extracts will indicate:

Every question asked requires historical information to be applied: the basic need here is for the candidate to select information which is relevant and to organize it in such a way that it is directed toward answering the specific question asked. The examiners...will be much less impressed by mere regurgitation of that information (no matter how voluminous) than by evidence of careful selection of relevant material used in the construction of a pointed argument....The candidate will, therefore, as appropriate, direct his or her answer to an analysis of reasons, a synthesis of results, an assessment of motives or the measurement of success....the examiners are not asked to apply rigid mark schemes and there are never any definitions in those schemes of 'right' or 'wrong' answers except in those sub-questions in extract questions where 'right'/'wrong' will be obvious....In general, the best answers are those which show critical awareness - awareness of the meaning of words, the limits of evidence and the uselessness of woolly and unexplained generalisations....When questions contain such words as 'Discuss', the examiners expect candidates to show that they appreciate the nature of the controversy involved, an awareness that 'much may

be said on both sides' and a willingness to weigh up the issues and arrive at their own conclusions....The examiners are anxious...to encourage candidates to develop an awareness that history is a live subject of active debate. They therefore give generous credit to candidates who can demonstrate knowledge of historians' controversies and evidence of wide reading....Candidates should be reminded that basic knowledge and understanding should include familiarity with the conventional language of the subject.

There is a lot said in the above extract which would appear to contradict the notion that information-transmission is the most predominant manifestation of students' understanding of history to be demonstrated in their written texts. Such a document, however, can function only as a starting point in enabling students to "construct a pointed argument", for example. This particular bit of advice, as I have tried to illustrate in the history vignette and throughout this chapter, forms the basis or catalyst for many of the teaching strategies which Miss Aird employs in her classroom, and the basic struggle students experience in composing written text in history. Their journal extracts indicate that they judge their own writing on the basis of how well they can construct an argument in response to a specific question, and the vignette illustrates how they judge each other's essays according to the same primary criterion.

The sociology handout, entitled "Planning an Essay in Sociology", summarizes in print the process that Mr. Goodman takes his students through in the sociology vignette. After emphasizing the need to "read as widely as possible", it proceeds to list particular procedures of cognitive engagement with the evidence of the discipline when students are responding to specific questions in sociology:

(b) Body of Essay - *should contain each of the issues you have outlined in your introduction and each one should be subjectd to:-*

(i) *a thorough explanation*

(ii) *if possible, approached using different sociological perspectives, i.e. is there a functionalist approach or social action or interactionist or phenomenological view of the issue*

(iii) your analysis should be CRITICAL and cross-referenced, i.e. use one sociologist's view to offset another's. Bring in your own assessment, but do not be naive

(iv) wherever possible, bring in comparisons with another culture(s) or consider the special position of racial/sex groups in the argument

(v) conclusion for essay should finish with a bringing together of the main themes of your argument. Do not just repeat the question and say you agree or disagree. Use words like 'tentative' when making concluding statements.

We see emphasized here the various perspectives through which the evidence of sociology is viewed, as well as the integral assumption that sociologists' views will differ. This assumption is very important in how the students assess sociological evidence, because they begin from a position of realizing there are no absolutes, no 'final solutions' among the evidence. It is within this realization that the teacher's cautionary suggestion to be "tentative" is offered. As the sociology vignette and subsequent discussions illustrate, this handout works in conjunction with other enabling strategies employed by Mr. Goodman, and used by his students when composing their responses.

Of the three handouts relating to specific writing tasks, the one in biology offers the most explicit advice. Entitled "Notes for Guidance in Conducting and Writing Up Your A-Level Project", it provides assistance in the following areas: stating the problem; investigating related research; designing the investigation; drawing inferences from results; and relating inferences and deductions to similar investigations, giving suggestions for further investigations. After indicating what sorts of content should be included in various sections, the handout addresses some issues of style. The following excerpt gives some indication of the expectations:

There is no rigid pattern in which you should present your report. It would be advisable to read through one or two scientific papers - not necessarily related in any way to your own work - in order to see the style of presentation and writing. Most are written in a very impersonal style. This does avoid the monotony of every other sentence starting with "I then

did...". On the other hand, an occasional "I" does not spoil the science, and the recounting of personal experiences, especially if amusing, can add to the pleasure of the reading.

The following points may be useful to you.

Title

If this is to be of any real value it will inevitably be fairly long. For example, a recent project at Tiara Glen was titled "An investigation of seasonal variation in the flora and invertebrate fauna of a section of the River Darent." As you can see, any contraction would have been misleading. "The River Darent", or "The flora and fauna of the River Darent" would have been titles bearing little relation to the precise content of the report.

There are several interesting features of this excerpt from the handout. Rather than lay out specific instructions about scientific register and manner of writing up investigative studies, it directs students to models written by biologists, or other scientists, so that they encounter ways in which the 'experts' write about their engagement with primary evidence in the discipline. The advice about 'style', incorporating both syntax and mode with suggestions not normally anticipated in scientific writing (the use of subjective pronouns and personal narrative) indicates a changing view towards scientific writing in an educational context. Even the very specific advice about the wording of the title is offered not in decontextualized, authoritative assertions, but with reference to a topic done by another sixth form student in the school. Unfortunately, since these projects were carried out and written up completely out of school hours, and the students in my study conferred with teachers in the department other than Mr. Fox, I have no feedback from the students on how helpful they found this advice, or to what extent they used it in composing their project. Also, since three of the four students in my study who take biology handed their projects in immediately prior to the deadline for sending them away for external evaluation, I had the opportunity to photocopy only Vernon's completed text. It would seem, however, that his project, entitled: "*WHEN PROVIDED WITH AN EVENLY DISTRIBUTED STANDARD FOOD SOURCE, BLUE TITS AND GREAT TITS RETAIN THE UNEVEN PATTERN OF DISTRIBUTION IN FEEDING OVER*

DIFFERENT PARTS OF A TREE THAT THEY INHABIT UNDER NATURAL CONDITIONS: An investigation into ecological segregation between two coexisting congeneric species" follows the pattern and suggestions offered in the handout.

12. APPLICATION OF STRATEGIES AS GENERALIZABLE HEURISTICS (and CONCLUSION)

I wrote at the outset that my story would be an optimistic one. At the same time, the empirical data base cries out, "It might have been otherwise". That is true. It is relatively easy to distance oneself from the arena and criticize the performance, and there are times when that is precisely what needs to be done. One could look at these strategies, at these teachers' and students' intentions, at these contextual constraints, at these vignettes, and see a lot to be concerned about, such as, for example, the emphasis on writing *after* the process of responding to the evidence of the discipline, reflecting upon it, and formulating one's opinion, as well as the limitations of function and audience. One could look at these students, these teachers, this school, and say, "But you are basing your study on an almost ideal situation. You have not addressed yourself to many current and significant issues such as racism, sexism, and class bias. Are you implying these are non-existent issues in the classes in which you conducted your study? or that they do not influence the emergence of written text at A-level?"

All of the above are good and valid concerns and questions, and it is not enough simply to say, "I have only one story to tell, and I have told it". There are many stories in the archive of data I have collected over the past year, and many stories in the particular selection of that data which appears in this thesis. I am telling the one I think most fitting, for reasons which, if not already made clear, will be further elaborated in the following chapter, and do not deny that others in the same situation might have told a very different kind of story. In all research, but particularly in ethnographic research, the researcher is an integral part of the inquiry, and although I have tried to let the students and teachers tell as much of the story as possible, my biases

and intentions have inevitably shaped the development of the plot, and have brought us through the conflicts, the struggles, and attempts at reconciliation, now to the denouement.

What makes this story predominantly optimistic is related to this last category of teachers' strategies, which is not really a strategy at all, but rather a way in which teachers intend and hope their strategies will function. Of the many ways in which we try to measure 'success' in an educational context, surely one of the most universal is the extent to which students learn how to learn, the extent to which they learn how to engage with new and different bodies of information, and to articulate this engagement confidently and competently (within the particular set of standards and constraints operating in the situation) to someone else, or even to themselves. If the above strategies are intended to help students achieve this confidence and competence, and if students take these strategies on board to the extent that they generalize them as being applicable to other writing situations, and use them as heuristic guidelines to assist both their engagement with the evidence of the discipline and their articulation of this engagement, then, with reference to our criterion for success, the student-teacher interactive drama which unfolds throughout this story can be judged 'successful'. Such a generalization, although partly verifiable through the extracts from the students' journals already offered, calls out for further evidence. I would like to conclude this discussion and analysis of this major movement of the polyphony of the classroom language environment, the interactive struggles of teachers and students as they collaborate to reconcile the conflicts inherent in writing as the site of potentially contradictory demands, by offering you one student's text, from 'start' to 'finish', as a basis from which you might prefer to draw your own conclusions about 'success' and 'optimism'.

I have chosen this particular text for a number of reasons: first, it has already been introduced and contextualized in one of the vignettes, so its origins are familiar; secondly, before pen was set to paper, teacher and student had already engaged in several of the strategies, such as collaborative talk, pre-writing individual conference,

and clarification by the teacher of some of the cognitive procedures suggested by the wording of the question; thirdly, the student had declared himself at the beginning of the study to be antipathetic toward writing, a declaration iterated by his teachers, yet seemed, as the year progressed, to develop a keener interest in expressing his ideas in writing more effectively, a development noted also by his teachers; fourthly, the text was composed in the latter half of the year, and indicative of this development, particularly in view of the fact that all of the documents prior to the final draft are done, not at the teacher's bidding or direction, but out of the ways in which he has learned, to a large extent from their strategies, to engage with discipline-specific evidence; fifthly, it is one of the texts which, when the student gave it to me, included all of the preparatory 'thinking on paper', providing written evidence of the student's heuristic application of the strategies teachers have offered as ways of cognitively engaging with the evidence of the discipline; sixthly, it is one of the texts that Steve, the author, is pleased with, because, as the extracts from his journal previously quoted indicate, he came to a better understanding of the literary text through the process of composing this text; finally, this text, in my opinion, reflects the writer confidently using his own voice to respond to a literary text in a creative fashion, internalizing his engagement with the text to the extent that he can employ the structure of argument used in the text as the basis upon which he structures his own argument. Taken in conjunction, then, with the contextualizing information already given in the English vignette, here is the artifactual 'story' of how one A-level text emerged. It reminds me of Janet Emig's comparison of writing to eating an artichoke: a slow and laborious leaf by leaf spiralling towards the delectable core.

A BRIEF RECAPITULATION OF THE CONTEXT: The English vignette tells of the original assignment, to write a letter to Virginia Woolf, and of an alternative assignment, to assess the effectiveness of chapter six as a conclusion. The students have discussed the structure of the book in class, and the original topic in small groups. In the subsequent conference with Ms. Elliott, Steve indicates he will try the original topic, but between that decision and this document, he changes his mind, and opts for the alternative. The writing in the following eight documents has been done outside of class, with no teacher prompting or

intervention. According to Steve, it represents the way he has learned and developed to "go about writing an essay". It is therefore offered as an illustration of how one student, who, while indicating in his interviews and journals a strong ambivalence toward writing in school, mostly critical, employs the strategies he has taken on board from his teachers in order to compose his response.

DOCUMENT 1.

Steve: This first bit helped me to understand chapter six, and then the rest of the book, because I missed that crucial bit at the beginning, where she introduces Mary Beaton, so I didn't understand. Her argument seemed all over the place. Reading chapter six again and writing these bits down made me realize I had missed something.

*How well does chapter 6 serve as a conclusion
[to Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own"]*

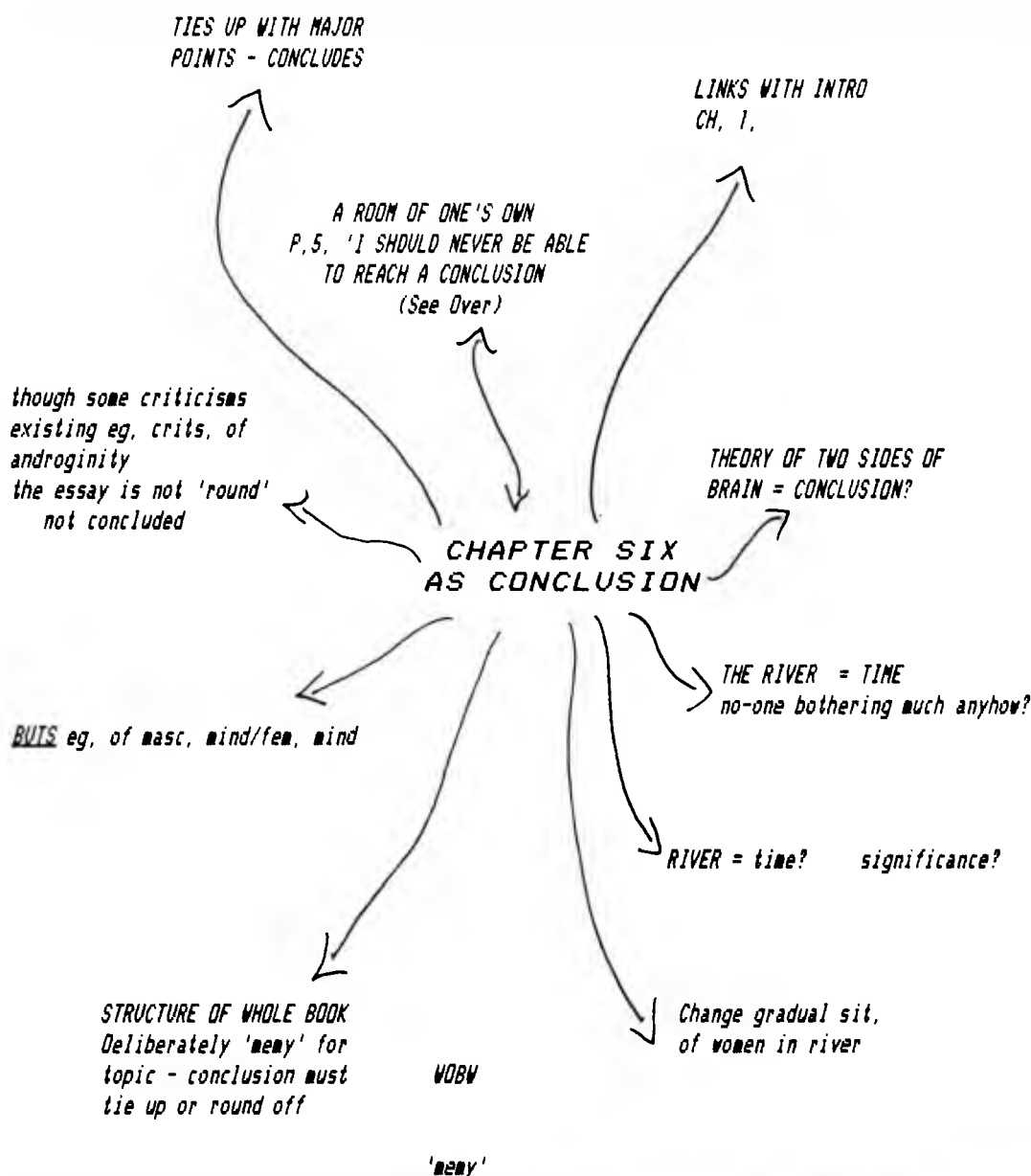
Chapter 6

- ¶1 91-92 top *Nobody is too bothered about much in October, 1928, London about the future of women's fiction. Too bothered about work, etc.*
- ¶2 92-92 *Sets up idea of androgenous mind symbolic m/f in taxicab - mind*
- ¶3 92-94 *m/w in taxicab leads us to think of man & woman as 1 unit. Idea of androgenous mind. For good mind - m/w parts of mind work together.*
- ¶4 94-96 *Coleridge testing the above by looking at books ⇒ androgenous mind is not the best way to look at the m/f inves. Male writing = straightforward. Written with confidence because of education & ambitions, etc. ⇒ bit about I difficult - I = male getting in the way. Bored by I & male etc.*
- 96-97 *m/f sides to mind. Men can only communicate in male way.*
-

This initial piece of writing is basically a list of the major ideas in chapter six, showing no relationship to each other or to the ideas in the rest of the book. It functions for Steve as a catalyst to re-read the whole book in order to trace the development of these ideas.

DOCUMENT 2:

Steve: I did this star diagram before I clicked onto all the ideas - when I sat down to get some kind of order, and then realized I had to re-read chapter one.



After reading chapter six and the first few pages of chapter one, Steve begins to see some connections, and can relate some of the ideas in chapter six with those introduced in chapter one. It is an attempt, as he says later, "to get some kind of order" by constructing a star diagram, a strategy he has learned from his teachers. It represents a considerable cognitive advance over the first piece of writing in its perception of relationships within chapter six itself and with the rest of the book. Whereas the first document focuses on chapter six as an autonomous entity, this diagram hones more discriminately into the focus of the question - chapter six as an effective conclusion. He also begins to order hierarchically, subsuming some of the details of chapter six into more global categories.

DOCUMENT 3:

Steve: These two bits (Documents 3 and 4) are just plans for a conventional sort of essay - getting a conclusion - just scratching around in the dark trying to scrape together an essay without really understanding the book.

"A woman must have money and arooo [a room of one's own] of she is to write fiction" - good 1st line → BUTS

introduction V IMPT

p.5 "the first duty of a lecturer" - goes back to the purpose of essay

conclusion on women and fiction impossible "w & f remain, so far as I'm concerned, unsolved problems"

∴ conclusion is not in fact a relevant question to ask of the essay as Woolf admits freely she can only reach a conclusion on one (see intro) of the questions in "Women and Fiction"

sets up essay - here was I... p.6 in fictional way

∴ How well does conclusion conclude

p.6, ¶ as a novelist present preceding two days I hope to reveal how a novelist the

Shows through a fictional account how a woman writes - points out most of the others are held back by thoughts of men & anger, etc.

DOCUMENT 4:

How Well does Chapter 6 Serve as a conclusion to AROOO

(Ch 1 serves better as conclusion)

Int.

A Room OOO, as Woolf outlined in the very first pages of the essay,

In arooo, the conclusion is a minor point in the essay and, strangely perhaps, the purpose of the essay is not to reach a conclusion. The conclusions that Woolf reaches are (1) that one cannot conclude reach a conclusion on either women or fiction and

(2) that a woman cannot have i) a room of her own, and ii) money to write good fiction. W

(3) (104) WOMEN! - WRITE! NOW
all books (105) it is much more important to be oneself than anything else

(4) 105 PERORATON

main conclusion is

"That if one agrees with my conclusion on W & arooo, the excuses are running out! there is a move towards the condits necessary

Although Steve, in talking about these two pieces of text, lumps them together as "just scratching around in the dark trying to scrape together an essay without really understanding the book", there is actually a considerable advance between documents 3 and 4. In 3, he is, as he suggests, trying out different ideas and different starting points. In 4, however, we see two significant developments. The first is the indication of an emerging structure, hierarchically organized. The second is rather more exciting, in that Steve begins to distance himself from the text sufficiently to make a confident personal assessment - "Ch 1 serves better as conclusion". Although Steve tells me that his "brainwave" strikes him later in the process, I suggest that this personal statement in response to the focus of the topic might be a semantic representation of the beginnings of his 'entering the text', changing it from what he describes as "a conventional sort of essay...without really understanding the book" to a piece of writing in which he has some sort of personal commitment.

DOCUMENT 5:

Steve: Here I'm just sorting out - I'm not sure whether I'm sorting out my essay or the book - it's just a bit of description of the main body of "A Room of One's Own" - and possibly of my essay.

PURPOSE OF MB OF ESSAY

↓
SHOW HOW ONE REACHED ONE'S
OWN CONCLUSIONS & TRY TO
MAKE OBVIOUS ONE'S BIASES
ETC ETC (P6) develop the
train of thought through
description & leave conclusion
hanging

SHOW WORKING OF
ESSAY TO EXPOSE
CONSTRAINTS
BIAS ETC

Steve's retrospective confusion (he talked to me about these documents a number of weeks after he had composed them) over whether this document concerns the book or his own essay shows how closely the arguments and the development of the two are becoming integrated as he works through this planning process.

DOCUMENT 6:

Steve: And then I had a brainwave! I re-read chapter one in detail and realized the structure of "A Room of One's Own". I then decided it might be a bit of a lark to do a satire. Here, I'm just basically working out an order - a new order. The first five bits were really planning for another sort of essay - the conventional sort of thing. I was quite excited to be trying something different.

OPENNESS - I FEEL IT WOULD BE BEST TO PRESENT IT
SATIRICALLY

Points to include in satire

(1) Intro imp \Rightarrow include:

- a). Show that concl not imp, as essay not designed for it
- b). many of mini conclusions are in fact in first couple of pages
or dotted in mb. eg w & f \Rightarrow especially
- c). Sets up the fact that mb is fiction etc \uparrow eggs.

- e). why. it's designed as such
 d). The duty of a lecturer etc to reach conclusion
 ⇒ Woolf only one as subject complex, controversial, etc

INCLUDE IN INTRO ↑
 -change back to self? -

- (2) Conclusion does in fact conclude on same points, but under the umbrella of openly asking the reader (in the intro) to conclude like her self

Steve's excitement over "trying something different" indicates his view of "the conventional sort of thing" as being less personally engaging and also, as he implies earlier, less cognitively stimulating. However, although he suggests that the first five documents were "really planning for another essay", they might also be interpreted as writing which contributed to his being able to perceive the possibility of this later response, writing which effectively deepened his cognitive engagement with the book to the extent that he could not only enter the universe of discourse of the discipline but also of the book itself, retaining, at the same time, the integrity of his own voice.

DOCUMENT 7:

Steve: I didn't finish this rough draft because it was getting a bit late, so I went right into my final draft. Since the structure was to be based on the structure of argument in the book, I didn't really have to structure it.

MY ESSAY = SATIRE OF AROOO

A Conclusion of One's Own

But, you may say, the question is about the conclusion of AROOO not one's own conclusion. I will try to explain. When I looked at the question "How well does ch 6 of arooo serve as a conclusion?" I sat down by the banks of a river and began to wonder what the words meant. I thought about what a conclusion is, and concluded it is that which stops one from thinking more about the particular question. I looked at chapter 6 of arooo and realized that it didn't conclude many of the questions that had been raised by the main body of the book and I wondered why. ~~The best way, in my opinion to chew~~ I realize that the purpose of this essay is to reach a conclusion on the question, and I have reached a conclusion, and that conclusion is that one must reach a conclusion of one's own ~~to~~ ~~on~~ ~~of~~ from arooo and Woolfe does not even attempt to ~~do so~~ create one herself as the subjects of the book are too complex to conclude upon. The best way in my opinion to ~~show this~~ help the reader to understand ~~the conclusions~~ how well chapter six served as a conclusion is to show how I, with all my constraints and weaknesses reached my conclusion, so that one may easily identify flaws in my argument and reach... 'A Conclusion of One's Own'

There then was I, (call me Martin Beton, Martin Seton, Martin Carmichael any name you please, it is not important) Sitting on the banks of a river contemplating the question. I realized that the question was difficult, and I needed to look very closely at the

structure of the essay, itself, in order to answer a question on how it concludes.

(INCLUDE: "THE DUTY OF A STUDENT IS TO REACH A CONCLUSION, HOWEVER, WHEN A STUDENT IS NOT SURE OF THAT CONCLUSION, EMPHASIS MUST BE PLACED ELSEWHERE")

FIT IN "AS FICTION NOVELIST"

DOCUMENT 8:

Steve: Another essay which illustrates the fact that I do better on subjects I know little about. On re-reading the first and last chapters I realized who Mary Seton, Beton, and Carmichael actually were, and how the structure of the book worked. During classwork, I didn't realize at all and didn't bear in mind any of the points made in the first three pages of the book, which definitely reduced my understanding of the book.

My essay, at first, followed the normal evolution - find an argument, write an introduction, etc, but then I thought I'd satirize it. The satire actually turned out loose and not convincing, but I was in a hurry to finish as I only decided to use the satirical structure very late, and it was difficult to get all the points I wanted to in. Quite enjoyable, though (Journal, January 10, 1985).

HOW WELL DOES CHAPTER SIX SERVE AS A CONCLUSION TO 'A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN'?

A Conclusion of One's Own

But, you may say, we asked you to write about the conclusion of 'A Room of One's Own - What has that got to do with a 'Conclusion of One's Own. I will try to explain. When I looked at the question given to me I sat down on the banks of a river and began to wonder what the words meant. I thought about what a conclusion is and concluded that it is that which stops one from thinking more about a particular question. Applying this to the book as a whole, I wondered whether you wanted me to write about how chapter six holds the answers to questions raised in the other five chapters of the essay, questions like "Why haven't women managed to write as well as men?" and "What has money to do with poetic talent and natural gifts for writing?" I realized that these questions had been discussed earlier in the essay (eg. the first question was answered in the first two pages - (though not in detail)). After thinking awhile, I realized that I was getting away from the purpose of my writing and thinking. "The duty of a student is to reach a conclusion, to hand over a pure nugget of truth to his answer who may delete him or knight him with a pen. I reached a conclusion that one must reach a conclusion of one's own from the essay, and Woolfe asks the reader to do so, very early in 'A Room of One's Own'.

"I have shirked the duty of coming to a conclusion upon these two questions" [the true natures of women and fiction] "Women and fiction remain, so far as I am concerned, unsolved questions." In my opinion, the best way to help the reader understand how well chapter six serves as a conclusion is to show how I, with all my constraints and weaknesses reached my conclusion; - (That one must reach a conclusion). I shall present to you in the form of a fictional account, a shortened

version of the days leading up to my handing in this essay, so that the inadequacies and flaws in my argument may show up, and one may reach a 'Conclusion of One's Own'.

Here then was I (call me Martin Beton, Martin Seton, Martin Carmichael, anything, it is unimportant). Sitting on the banks of the river, I realised the complexity of the question and realised I needed to look closely at the structure of the essay in order to understand how it concludes.

First I looked at the introduction to the essay, which was very useful as it linked well with the conclusion, and presented Woolf's thoughts on how she in fact was going to conclude the essay. "One can only give one's audience the chance of drawing their own conclusions as they observe the prejudices, the limitations, the idiosyncracies of the speaker."

I looked down into the water, hardly noticing, so deep in thought, that a plump trout was basking in the shallows near the edge of the river. Still oblivious, I acted quickly, taking the fish by surprise and flipped it onto the bank beside me - a catch.

How can chapter six serve as a conclusion when it sought no conclusion.

The introduction, I thought to myself, was also important as it showed that the main body of the poem actually had many purposes.

More fish could be seen to ripple the surface of the water very close to where I sat, but I tried to concentrate on unravelling the structure of 'A Room of One's Own'.

Ms. Woolf used the body of the essay to present a fictional story, I thought, of a woman producing a piece of writing, so that the readers could experience themselves what limitations there are on woman writers, and also other elements contained under the title 'Women and Fiction' eg the first experience Mary Seton had was of being turfed out of a grass plot in Oxbridge. This represents a barrier stopping women experiencing things that men may.

The woman in the essay, Mary, also happens to be writing about the subject of women and fiction, and in this way Woolf presents her own theories on women and fiction without making them 'gospel', reducing them to simply an input to the reader rather than a definitive statement, in the way she expressed a need to in the first two pages of the essay.

I again looked over the edge of the riverbank into the shallows. More fish. This time I reached behind me and picked up my net. One swoop and I had caught another three, not as big as the first, but worth keeping. I carefully dropped the first fish (still flapping) into the net with the others and lowered it into the water so the fish could stay alive, being careful not to lose any.

I turned away from the river to look again at my work. Looking through my notes I realised that my essay was not actually answering a question on chapter six, so I hurriedly turned toward the back of the book. The chapter begins with the end of Mary Beton's speech, the end of a long explanation (long and flowery because the subject required it) of a conclusion cited in the first few paragraphs of the essay. However, after Woolf returns to the real, non-fictional world, she eventually manages to reach some conclusions on what she has written.

In chapter six, Woolf attempts to take the role of the reader, firstly by presenting some criticisms of her own opinion and then, more significantly, by making some more significant opinions of her own known. I would sooner describe them as implications than conclusions by Woolf, she has already made conclusions on the essay, but she applies these conclusions by making a concrete statement about what the essay means for 'young women today', this is Woolf's conclusion. "What is your (women today) excuse? It is all very well to say "That we had other work on our hands"... "There is truth in what you say, I will not deny it," excuses are fast disappearing as women are becoming more liberated. Woolf then strides on to say that there is no excuse for a woman writer of similar status to Shakespeare not to exist before the year 2028.

Here then Martin ceases to speak. Leaving criticisms of my argument to you, I would like to draw some tentative conclusions concerning the final few pages of peroration from Woolf.

It seems that Ms. Woolf has, in fact, bent slightly from her first intention, (as outlined in the introduction) not to reach any conclusions on women and fiction as she actually has reached a very definite one - that a woman Shakespeare must exist before 2028, owing to the fact that material conditions of women are changing, and more women fit into the bracket needed to have a chance of literary genius, (£500 and a lock on the door). Therefore one could say that as the conclusion was very definite, chapter six provided a good one, but it would be more correct to point out that the structure of the essay meant that no conclusions should have appeared in the final chapter, and chapter 1 should have remained the conclusion.

Let us suppose that all we have for analysis is just this text, with none of the contextualizing features which have been presented in this chapter and in the English vignette. We could subject it to a variety of kinds of linguistic analysis which would inform us richly and interestingly about how syntactic, semantic, and conceptual elements within the text 'hang together' (or don't!). We could trace movements among various levels of abstraction, search for correlations between cohesive features and presentation of new and known material, and explore modal variations, for example. These sorts of discourse

analysis have an important role to play in helping us to understand how students formulate written text, but - and that 'but' is really the starting point for the informing principle of this thesis - unless discourse analysis, of whatever nature, occurs within consideration of the contextualizing influences out of which written text has emerged, it tells us very little which is helpful for advancing either the theory or pedagogy of writing. **What this thesis is arguing is that text emerges from context, and that context is both historical and social; what this chapter has tried to develop specifically from that general argument is that within the social and historical constraints of discourse conventions, examination traditions, and general academic expectations in six A-level subjects, six teachers and twelve students have engaged interactively in a variety of strategic endeavours to overcome the fundamental dilemma of the contexts in which they are positioned, and in which they participate, and which they therefore play a role in creating and maintaining.** These strategic endeavours are the site of thoughtful, creative, and productive attempts to engage in writing with discipline-specific evidence in ways which try to reconcile this fundamental dilemma. Yet the strategies alone, just as the texts alone - decontextualized from the historical and social circumstances which precipitate them - tell us very little. At the same time, once we look at text in context, there is no easy piece of generalization or dogma which can be readily formulated in a sentence or two. That is my dilemma, as ethnographer. The following chapter will try to solve that dilemma.

CHAPTER SIX A VOICE OF THEIR OWN : THE DILEMMAS

This study began with a set of aspirations. In posing the question, "How does written text emerge from the A-level classroom context?", it sought a broader understanding of the nature of writing as a taught process, and of the nature of student-teacher interactions within this process. It hoped that specific features of this broader understanding would offer insights into the A-level classroom context which would more comprehensively inform prevailing views of writing, particularly of writing in the examination-oriented context of the upper sixth form. It began with a firm commitment to the concept that writing, as a social act imbued with socio-historical conventions, emerges from and therefore manifests and helps to maintain a variety of socio-culturally shaped interactions, values, and relationships. It has therefore focused on these student-teacher interactions as the key site from which writing as a taught process emerges. These contextualized interactions have been represented in the six vignettes and elaborated in the preceding two chapters. It now remains to determine what has come out of these elaborations, and of the study as a whole, which has implications for the theory and pedagogy of written articulation.

A lot remains cloudy and unclear. Looking at language in context throws up such a vast network of cultural and historical interrelationships that summary sorts of generalizations must almost inevitably appear reductionist and inadequate. On the other hand, some very strong statements about writing and learning in an examination-oriented educational context reverberate throughout the study, echoed in the comments of both teachers and students. A recapitulation of what we have learned about the situation in which teachers and students are positioned in relation to writing in the educational context will reveal some of the fundamental contradictions and dilemmas which they struggle interactively to reconcile.

A. THE TEACHERS' DILEMMA

They want a grasp of the ideas...and a voice of their own which they can employ with confidence...perhaps we don't give them enough time - give them the essay while they're still uncertain - while they're still working their way through their response (Ms. Elliott, March 27, 1985).

...and so I find myself in a dilemma...do you allow for individual interpretation or demand a common understanding... (Mr. Christopher, March 26, 1985).

These reflections of two of the teachers in the study, taken together, epitomize the dilemma in which all six teachers find themselves in the A-level context. As the vignettes illustrate, they all feel, to varying degrees, torn between what they think would be good teaching to help their students engage meaningfully in writing with new bodies of knowledge and what they think is necessary teaching to help their students pass their final examinations. As we have seen, each teacher manifests a somewhat different representation of that dilemma, from the history teacher, for example, who concentrates primarily on the nature of writing which will be rewarded on the examination, to the English teacher, who employs a broader range of modes of writing in service of a broader range of functions of written articulation. And as we have also seen, although the A-level examination lends itself to certain attitudes about writing and learning which point teachers in certain directions, these are not all necessarily 'bad'. Just as there are (at least) two sides to the teachers' dilemma, there are also (at least) two sides to the prevalent situation of writing in preparation for the examination experience. If writing to demonstrate knowledge is perceived as the only or even the predominant function of writing, the resultant contextualizing constraints on written text will severely limit the nature of written articulation which emerges from the classroom context. If, however, writing to demonstrate knowledge is perceived as one of a variety of functions appropriate to the repertoire of writing functions being developed throughout the students' educational careers, the vignettes give evidence that opportunities exist for students and teachers to work together to reconcile in writing the two major

interdependent activities of the A-level classroom: engaging with new bodies of knowledge; and demonstrating the extent of that engagement in written text to an examining audience. This will hold for all teachers caught up in systems of assessment. This is the first major implication of the study.

The six teachers in the study who are caught up in the dilemma posed by the A-level system of assessment attempt to reconcile the conflict in very different ways. Mr. Christopher quite painfully negotiates an awkward compromise of what he considers important within the history of art examination requirements, expressing his awareness of students' difficulties with his sensitive understanding of writing as "a process by which meaning is made manifest", and yet assigning writing tasks which function primarily to assert authorized views of works of art, particularly as the year draws closer to the time of examination. The history of art vignette shows dramatically the conflict he feels, and expresses when he says:

...we're restricted by trying to get them to pass an examination....It encourages pat, glib reactions to the major movements of art history, and therefore stultifies concept development....I feel what I'm doing develops individual perception, but I sometimes feel it's restrictive (March 26, 1985).

Miss Aird, in history, admits quite frankly that her pedagogical approach to writing differs drastically between the fifth and sixth form, and that she envisions her main teaching responsibility at A-level is to get her students through the exam. Part way through her description of functions of writing in A-level history she pauses with a frustrated sigh:

...to argue and discuss; to show whether they have clear thoughts in their head and can develop them into a clear line of argument. [pause] Really, it's to pass the exam (March 20, 1985).

Mr. Fox, in biology, is also a teacher pedagogically divided by constraints upon writing imposed by the examination, acknowledging the discrepancy between what students understand about biological concepts and their ability to express it in the precise terminology expected on the examination:

You get your answers wrong not because you don't understand the concept but because you get the language wrong. Is your understanding different depending on whether you use your phrase or mine? The examiner will think so (October 10, 1984).

In sociology, Mr. Goodman (and his colleague, Mr. Smith) felt so constrained by the kinds of written responses elicited by the examination that they hunted throughout England to find an examining board which subscribed to a broader view of writing about sociological concepts, a view which encouraged students to integrate their knowledge of sociology with their growing construction of the world. Even so, Mr. Goodman still emphasizes the nature of writing which "will be rewarded on the exam". However, as the sociology vignette documents, he tries, within that limitation, to have his students engage in a variety of conceptual transformations of sociological information to formulate their written responses, through cross-referencing differing sociological perspectives and integrating their knowledge of sociology with their knowledge of what is happening in the world. The Cambridge geography syllabus, while encompassing an enormous breadth of material, allows a considerable amount of choice on the examination (three questions out of eight in one paper, and four out of fourteen on another), and incorporates into the assessment two extensive fieldwork projects as well as an additional independent study. Consequently, Mr. Moore finds more opportunity during his class sessions to devote to writing as a process of students' tapping their resources of knowledge and understanding, and integrating these with received information in response to particular writing tasks. The geography vignette reveals how he works within the requirements of the examination to have his students explore and speculate upon differing views of land formation, and to draw upon their broad reserves of geographical knowledge and experiential knowledge of the world when responding to questions. With the even greater latitude, in terms of coursework and projects, offered by the AEB, Ms. Elliott manoeuvres to the optimum within the system, and yet she also expresses feelings of uncertainty and conflict:

...the essay represents a cognitive process of your demonstrating your knowledge of what you've read, your understanding of it (December 13)...Their essays

in their folders are mostly 'end of the process'...it is generally assumed that they have a knowledge of the text. Perhaps we don't give them enough time - give them the essay while they're still uncertain - while they're still working their way through their response (March 27).

Despite these differences in the manner in which teachers interpret the hierarchy of their pedagogical responsibilities in relation to writing in their respective disciplines, all six teachers share a common concern: they all want their students to be able to write confidently and competently about the new bodies of knowledge they are encountering. And all six teachers share a common feeling about this concern. Although they all devote considerable amounts of class time trying out a variety of strategies to help their students transform their understanding of these new bodies of knowledge to written text, they all express, in private, a lack of confidence that they are indeed enabling their students to write better. As the vignettes show, three of them actually suggest during interviews that they do not know how to do it. Yet the vignettes show them all, within their various interpretations of what precisely is important about writing in their respective disciplines, committing time and energy throughout the year to this very enterprise. And the vignettes also show that even in the classes where writing is perceived almost wholly in relation to demonstrating knowledge to an examining audience, the students are engaged in composing written text which manifests a variety of kinds of cognitive engagement with the evidence of the discipline, and are enabled by various interactive strategies in the composing of these written texts. What reveals itself in this study is a group of six teachers caught up in a dilemma fundamental to their essential interpretation of what teaching at A-level is all about, and coping - in their individual ways in their respective classrooms.

What also revealed itself during the course of this study was that all six teachers were very interested, during the three occasions we all met together, to find out what was happening in relation to writing in each other's classrooms. These meetings opened up fruitful possibilities

for sharing ideas about what sorts of written articulation are required in different subject areas, and for sharing pedagogical procedures which can help students to transform discipline specific evidence to written text. Yet, as many of them informed me, such meetings would not have occurred without the impetus of my wanting to know more about their views of writing. This leads me to the second major implication of this study: although writing is a social act, imbued with socio-historical conventions, these conventions are often transmitted in a 'closed door' classroom, wherein what happens between students and teachers remains isolated from what is occurring behind other closed doors. As the vignettes testify, taken all together, these six teachers have tremendous corporate insight and understanding of many important issues involved in transforming information, understanding, and knowledge to written text, particularly within the A-level examination-oriented classroom context. They need to be empowered within the system to take a reflective stance towards the nature of writing opportunities and problems in their respective disciplines and the nature of the strategies they employ to try to capitalize upon the opportunities and ameliorate the difficulties, and to share these with teachers of other disciplines in other classrooms.

THE STUDENTS' DILEMMA

...I feel as though I'm not really sure what to do, to ignore all personal contradicting feeling and learn, parrot fashion, what the examiner requires does seem a little soulless, but to try, with what little experience I have, to argue around a point only conducted on a personal inner feeling seems a little stupid (Julia, October 18, 1984).

I could have brought more in [to the Parnell essay] but it wouldn't have been much good because it is, at the moment, doing work for the exam, and that's it. We're not working at things you're especially interested in. We're working at questions which are likely to come up. If we have a special interest in something that isn't likely to come up, what's the point in using time on it?...it's an intermediate phase....It's not something to enjoy but working towards an exam (Cora, February 26, 1985).

Possibly I'm fussing too much about trying to adopt an interesting style, when at this stage I should just have a structure and try to stick all the facts into it as quickly and as neatly as I can (Christine, February 18, 1985).

Finished at last. This one took ages, but I quite enjoyed it....It was a voyage of discovery and I had nothing much to regurgitate from my classwork (Steve, January 10, 1985).

*I signed up for biology because I liked it in the fifth year. It was really interesting, but my interest has been deadened. It's like a completely different subject...everything is oriented towards taking the exam, there's no time for enjoying the subject. **You should be able to learn things because you're interested in them, not because you have to pass an exam** (Linda, March 15, 1985).*

What the students' interviews, journals, and written texts reveal is that they are also caught up in a dilemma. They recognize that they are learning and writing within a system which circumscribes the nature of that learning and writing. The students whose statements I have quoted above also acknowledge that the dilemma poses choices for them: whether to break away and pursue their own "voyage of discovery" or to rationalize the situation as "an intermediate phase...working towards an exam", after which they can work "at things you're especially interested in". Some of the other students in the study may have been so intimidated by the system that they did not think to question, as did these five, and others whose questions echoed those presented above, the kinds of writing and learning that they were engaged in. Nonetheless, all twelve students talk about their writing in the sixth form with some degree of reservation, and/or some sense of loss. At the end of my year at Tiara Glen, all of the students in the study met and discussed among themselves (they recorded the session; I had thought it best not to be present) issues about writing which each of them had raised with me during interviews or in their journals (see Appendix IA for the complete list of issues). The greatest sense of loss they spoke of was the lack of opportunity for responding more creatively or imaginatively in writing to the new bodies of knowledge they were encountering. In searching for a reason, the one they seemed to agree upon was that "I

guess it's because you can't test the level" (June, 1985). Another aspect of writing at A-level that they felt needed more attention was the opportunity to read other people's essays:

Linda: Yesterday, in English, we read each other's Grapes of Wrath essays, and I thought - my god, we're doing this for the first time just before the exam. Why couldn't we be doing this all year?

Barbara: Well, we talk about our ideas a lot in class-

Virginia: Yes, but not everyone says what they're thinking, and what they write down in their essays can be quite different. Maybe we're selfish. Maybe we don't want to share our ideas so that others can latch onto them without having to do the thinking.

Virginia's comment, taken in conjunction with the cynical observation that "you can't test the level" of creative writing, indicates students' perceptions of some additional aspects of the dilemma which faces them in the examination-oriented A-level context. It is evident that the impending examinations exert a tremendously significant contextualizing influence on the ways students construe what writing and learning is all about. They are similar to many of their teachers, in that scholarly adventure runs a poor second to safe exam preparation in their hierarchy of educational priorities at A-level.

They are also similar to their teachers in that they enjoyed the opportunity to get together to talk with students in other classes and other disciplines about their writing. Despite the fact that so much of their writing is a demonstration of knowledge for an examining audience, the vignettes reveal that these students see their writing functioning in a much broader variety of ways, from being a "voyage of discovery" to "having something significant to say and enjoying saying it" (Steve). The vignettes also reveal that each student's perception of how writing functions in the educational context influences the nature of the written text she or he composes. For example, Julia sees writing in history of art as an opportunity to take on the role and language of an art historian and art critic; Vernon sees writing in geography as an opportunity to explore controversial views about land formation, and,

informed by these, to speculate on what might really have been the case; on the other hand, Christine views writing in geography as a mere marshalling of the facts into a coherent argument in response to a particular question, but perceives writing in history as an opportunity to explore controversy and take a position; Elaine, however, sees writing in history primarily as a marshalling of facts into a coherent argument; John sees writing in sociology as potentially vast and endless, each concept reverberating with issues related to other ideas; Susan envisions it as a relatively straightforward organizing of ideas in response to a question. Evidently, the opportunities inherent in each writing task open different doors for different students, despite their being in the same class with the same teacher.

But what determines which opportunities students will pick up when they respond to a particular writing task? The empirical evidence of the vignettes suggests that extent of interest in and enjoyment of the subject area are concomitant and co-variant factors, but not necessarily causative. Meta-statements by teachers about discipline-specific controversy, for example in geography, are taken up quite differently by Christine and Vernon, both of whom are 'A' students, so ability and teachers' comments would appear not to play significant roles in themselves. And Christine perceives opportunities to explore controversy in history, but not in geography, so that individual 'tendency' towards one particular way of interpreting cognitive opportunities offered by writing tasks would also appear to be ruled out. I mentioned earlier that in this attempt to construct a comprehensive picture of how writing emerges from the classroom context a lot remains cloudy and unclear, but that, at the same time, certain directions and implications are being suggested. What is implicit in the statements made by these students is that first of all, many of them have a fairly sophisticated understanding of the educational dilemma they find themselves in at A-level, and secondly, most of them have definite and differing perceptions of what constitutes written competence in their A-level subjects. These observations lead into the third major implication of this study: **like teachers, students need to be empowered within the educational context to be reflective about the**

nature of the writing tasks they are being assigned, and about the nature of the written texts they compose in response to these tasks. They need (and would apparently welcome) the opportunity to talk with students in other classes and other disciplines to explore more fully the kinds of opportunities which are possible in composing written text within the A-level examination context.

The fourth major implication of the study also grows out of the above discussion. A considerable amount of dissonance exists in these students' perceptions of writing in their different subject areas. This dissonance inevitably influences the texts they compose. What this implies is that a greater understanding not only of the contextualizing influences involved in the construction of written text, but also of the manner in which students respond to and interpret these contextualizing influences is required in order to appreciate what is occurring cognitively as well as semantically and syntactically in their written texts. Students therefore need the opportunity to be reflective about their writing within each class, and to share these reflections with their teachers and their fellow students.

RECONCILING THE DILEMMAS

I mention earlier that the story I have to tell in this study is a positive one, yet the above four implications suggest a more negative orientation towards what is occurring within the context of the A-level examination system. And if we were to consider the written texts which were produced throughout the year only as textual products, this more negative orientation might be confirmed. Certainly the findings of the London Writing Research Group with relation to writing in the seventh year would be confirmed. Suppose I had simply collected the writing of these twelve students and subjected it to minute analysis. What would that have revealed? For a start, we would see immediately that the written texts are predominantly transactional, predominantly for an examining audience, and predominantly at the analogic level. Next, we would be able to distinguish similarities and idiosyncracies at both the textual and the conceptual levels from student to student and from subject to subject. But we would have almost no information or

understanding of how or why these similarities and idiosyncracies occurred. This leads us to the fifth major implication of the study. By assuming at the outset that written text emerges from a contextual network, this study is modifying the traditional view of the student-writer as "a rational actor choosing alternative strategies",⁽¹⁾ and acknowledging the tremendous shaping influences of the "culturally-specific weight of imposition".⁽²⁾ **Any attempt to understand and explain how writing emerges within a particular set of contexts, for example the classroom context, must consider this constant dialectical relationship between convention and choice.**

It is in this relationship between convention and choice that the dilemmas of both teachers and students are positioned, and it is in the interactions between teachers and students that they may be reconciled. It is this potential for reconciliation which makes the story a positive one. The vignettes give evidence to some complex and sensitive manoeuvrings within the constraints of the examination requirements to help the students engage cognitively in a variety of ways with discipline-specific evidence, and to transform their resultant knowledge and/or understanding to written text. We have seen in the ways that students respond to these strategies and manifest them in written text that there is no simple one-to-one correspondence between certain interactions and specific textual results. **Yet every one of the twelve students felt that some aspects of their writing had improved over the year in the upper sixth, an improvement which was generally manifested in their written text and acknowledged by their teachers, and every one of the students attributed this improvement to one or more of the strategies employed by their teachers and taken up by the students.**

But 'improvement' is an ambiguous qualitative designation, particularly in the light of the predominant function of writing within the A-level context. If by 'improvement' the students and teachers mean the ability to compose written text which demonstrates the extent of knowledge in a particular discipline, that is a significant step within their particular setting and must be acknowledged. If by 'improvement' they mean a sense of increased confidence in their ability to respond to

a variety of writing opportunities competently and appropriately, and to adapt their own voice strategically within these opportunities, that is a significant step which will help them not only in the particular A-level context in which they are positioned, but also in a broader variety of socio-cultural contexts. Extracts from students' interviews and journals already quoted in the vignettes and preceding discussion indicate that most of them, while recognizing that writing at A-level functions predominantly in relation to the final examination, have a broader view of functions and possibilities inherent within the process of composing written text, a view which has, in part, been encouraged, as the vignettes testify, by many of the strategies which their teachers employ. Yet most of them define 'improvement' primarily within such apparently formal textual features as "structuring a better argument" or "writing better conclusions", and most of them (Christine appears to be the only exception) base their awareness of their improvement on the validation of their teachers. Here, then, lies the sixth major implication of the study. If the students' perceptions of what constitutes written competence emerge from a slow, spiralling, cumulative process of interactions with teachers throughout their educational careers, then opportunity exists within these interactions to shape not only that understanding of written competence, but also the locus and means of validating it, so that students become increasingly aware of their developing strengths and areas of improvement.

I want now to bring these six major implications of the study together, to see how they corporately inform us about written articulation in its educational context:

1. If writing to demonstrate knowledge is perceived as one of a variety of functions appropriate to the repertoire of writing functions being developed throughout the students' educational careers, then opportunities exist for students and teachers to work together to reconcile in writing the two major interdependent activities of the A-level classroom: engaging with new bodies of knowledge; and demonstrating the extent of that engagement in writing to an examining audience.
2. Since teachers have tremendous corporate insight into and understanding of many important issues

involved in transforming information, understanding, and knowledge to written text, particularly within the A-level examination-oriented classroom context, they need to be empowered within the system to take a reflective stance towards the nature of writing opportunities and problems in their respective disciplines and the nature of the strategies they employ to try to capitalize on the opportunities and ameliorate the problems, and to share these with teachers of other disciplines.

3. Since students understand to varying degrees the educational dilemma in which they find themselves at A-level, they also need to be empowered within the system to be reflective about the nature of the writing tasks they are being assigned, and about the nature of the written texts they compose in response to these tasks.

4. Since students have quite definite and differing perceptions of what constitutes written competence in their different A-level subjects, a greater understanding is required, not only of the contextualizing influences involved in the construction of written text, but also of the manner in which students respond to and interpret these contextualizing influences in order to appreciate what is occurring cognitively as well as semantically and syntactically in their written texts.

5. Any attempt to understand and explain how writing emerges within a particular context or set of contexts, for example the network of contextualizing influences in the classroom context, must consider the constant dialectical relationship between convention and choice.

6. If the students' perceptions of what constitutes written competence emerges from a process of interactions with their teachers throughout their educational careers, then opportunity exists within these interactions to shape not only their understanding of written competence, but also the locus and means of validating it, so that students become increasingly independent in assessing their own writing performance.

The strongest message emanating from these six implications is their investment of understanding, knowledge, and power in teachers and students. It is a message of confidence that teachers and students can corporately and collaboratively reconcile the educational dilemmas in

which they are positioned in relation to writing as a means of engaging with the new bodies of discipline-specific knowledge they are encountering. It is, moreover, a message which might hold true beyond the particular dilemmas of the A-level educational context to other problems generated in other educational contexts. The next strongest message is the call for needed changes within the system, for example, for timetabled opportunities for interdisciplinary discussions and reflections about the nature of writing, the nature of writing tasks, and the nature of strategies teachers of different disciplines employ in their attempts to enable their students to transform information, knowledge and understanding to written text. The third message focuses on the students, on the need for them to emerge from this interactive process by which they are inducted into the conventions of writing in various disciplines with an independent ability to validate their own writing in the light of enabling strategies suggested by their teachers.

As the conclusion of the previous chapter suggests, once you look at writing in context, no easy piece of generalization or dogma comes readily to hand. This study aspired to find out how writing emerges from the A-level educational context. Through exploring that question, it showed writing at A-level to be the site of a dramatic struggle to reconcile two potentially conflicting functions, the conflict engendered, to a large extent, by the A-level examination system. It also showed teachers and students interactively engaged in reconciling that conflict. If it is possible to crystallize a year's investigation of the teaching-learning activities and written texts of twelve students and six teachers into a summary sort of statement, it might be this:

Writing as a taught process at A-level emerges from a network of contextual influences which position both teachers and students in a fundamental dilemma; through corporate insight into the nature of writing as a means of coming to understanding as well as demonstrating understanding, and collaborative effort to employ writing in both of these major functions, teachers and students, working interactively, have the potential to reconcile this dilemma.

The questions which now arise concern the directions in which this statement points. There are a host of significant contextualizing influences which this study does not address, yet which undoubtedly influence the nature of written text which emerges from classroom contexts, for example influences arising from differences in class, race, and gender, influences arising from physical and emotional handicaps, influences arising from intellectual differences, influences arising from particular locations, such as urban or rural, and the list could continue. Studies which could offer 'thick description' of how these different contextualizing circumstances influence the composing of written text have a role to play in furthering our understanding of how written text emerges from the classroom (and wider) contexts. There is also the need for more particularized investigations into relationships among the different interactive strategies which have been discussed in this study, as well as for evaluative comments concerning the particular benefits each offers. Obviously, some of the strategies will be potentially more beneficial in certain circumstances than others. Equally evident is that some of the teachers' strategies, or the manner in which they were implemented in the classroom, had the potential, as the vignettes illustrate, to be counterproductive. However, if the main message of this study has any impact, this research and evaluation will be carried out most productively and most effectively by groups of teachers working and talking together, and with their students, about writing within the particular contexts of their own schools. This is perhaps the strongest message that this study offers: the assertion that teachers and students, corporately and collaboratively, have the potential to be the locus of knowledge and power in shaping the written text which emerges from and within particular contextualizing constraints (or opportunities).

APPENDIX I

A. COMMUNICATIONS TO THE STUDENTS

Document 1. September, 1984.

Dear _____,

This journal is for you to record your thoughts about the writing you do in school this year. Length and style of each entry are entirely up to you (from time to time, however, I may ask you to do something specific for me in a specified form). I only ask that you date each entry and write as legibly as you can.

To start, I would like you to write how you view yourself as a writer in the different subjects you are taking, and how important you think writing is to these subjects. I would like to read this first entry one week from today if possible.

Your subsequent entries will depend on your classroom writing assignments, but the sorts of things I would like you to comment on are

- * the difficulties you encountered while writing the assignment
- * how you solved them (if you solved them)
- * improvements you notice in your writing, and your ideas on what might have caused them
- * whether and to what extent the writing helped you learn or realize something you hadn't known or realized before
- * anything else you deem important or would like to write about.

Please bring your journals to our interview sessions. I hope you find writing in them helpful and not too onerous.

Thanks once again for your cooperation.

Document 2. October 22, 1984. To students taking biology.

Dear _____,

Very briefly, I'd like you to comment in your journals about some aspects of your writing up experiments in biology, specifically about your experiment to test the effects of saliva on starch during digestion.

1. Generally, why do you think you are asked to write up some (but not all) of your experiments to hand in for evaluation by your teacher?

2. You have a particular outline or model to follow: Introduction, Hypothesis, Diagram of Apparatus, Method, Results, Conclusions, Discussion.

- a) what do you think is the purpose of this model?
- b) does it accomplish these purposes for you?
- c) do you find these purposes of value?
- d) each of you deviated in some way from the model in your write-ups. Can you tell me why you deviated in this instance? Is it characteristic for you to deviate from the model?

3. Can you tell me how your actual method and/or results differed from your written-up Method and Results?

4. Can you describe your reaction when you were told that the experiment had been set up in such a way that the two variables rendered your conclusions less valid than you had assumed? Were you aware of this aspect of the experiment either while you were carrying it out or writing it up?

5. When you write up experiments for yourselves (not to hand in for evaluation), what parts of the model do you leave out? or do you follow the model at all? Do you remember or understand equally well as when you follow the model?

I realize that I haven't given you much time, but if at all possible, I'd like to read your responses to these questions by Wednesday, October 24th. However, if that is too difficult for you to manage, then as soon after that as you can. I know these journal entries take a lot of time; I certainly do appreciate the effort you put into them, and hope that during the course of the year your writing might benefit from the work you put into them.

Document 3. October 22, 1984. For students taking sociology.

Dear _____,

Could you please write a brief comment in your journals about your sociology conferences concerning your essay assignment. What I'm most interested in is the following:

1. What you considered to be the most helpful about the conference.
2. Whether the conference changed or modified your approach to your essay or your understanding of what the essay was about.
3. Whether you have done anything on your essay since the conference as a direct result of the conference.
4. Anything else you might like to comment on.

Could you let me read these when you come back from the half term break? Thanks once again for your cooperation.

Document 4. November 8.

Dear _____,

In any assignment in any subject, you are writing to make meaningful, both to you as writer and to your reader(s), some aspect of your subject area. I would guess that sometimes you feel you have been successful - i.e. that what you have written represents fairly closely what you intended to mean, or what you think or know about a particular topic. At other times, I would guess that you feel you have been less successful in getting down on paper what you think, or believe, or feel, or know. In other words, there is a discrepancy between the extent of understanding indicated in your writing and the extent of understanding you feel you have on a particular topic.

I would like you to reflect on the most recent bits of writing you have done in each of your subjects and judge how successfully what you have written represents what you know about the topic. If you pinpoint some discrepancies between what you know and what you have been able to express, would you please try to account for it in your journal. I realize this is a difficult task. It may help if I tell you, in part, what I am looking for.

I am wondering whether some of you find that you can more successfully write what you mean or write what you know in one subject than in another. I want to understand why this is so (if it is so). I am also wondering whether you are generally more or less successful in creating a written text which reflects your state of understanding with different types of assignments, within the same discipline or not. Finally, I would like to know to what extent you think the writing you do for these upcoming 'mock exams' reflects your knowledge and/or understanding of the material.

If possible, I would like to read these journal entries early in December. If you want to discuss any of these questions with me, I will be happy to do so.

Thanks again for your continued cooperation.

Document 5. December 17, 1984.

Dear _____,

A. I would like you this coming term to keep track in your journals of the reading that you do for each writing assignment. This can be done in quite brief form, something like the following:

SUBJECT	ASSIGNMENT TOPIC	READING DONE	TIME SPENT READING
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(include such items as your own notes or teacher written notes, articles, chapters, whole books - give titles, authors, and number of pages where applicable).

You might like to make a chart in your journals and just fill it in for each assignment.

B. If you have time, I would appreciate knowing to what extent your reading helped your writing, and how you changed, developed, combined or otherwise manipulated the ideas you encountered in your reading into your writing. You probably won't have time to do that for each assignment, but if you could do it at least once this term for each subject, I would really appreciate it.

C. I would also like to know what extra reading you do, regardless of whether or not it is related to your school work. For this term, could you keep a chart at the back of your journals and record the titles and type of each book or magazine that you read?

D. In addition, would you keep all notes you make on your reading for each assignment as well as all outlines and rough drafts etc. related to writing your assignments and give them to me when you hand in your finished papers? These notes and rough drafts are quite important to my study.

Thanks again for your continuing cooperation. I hope it's not proving to be too much additional work for you. I certainly appreciate your help.

Document 6. February 10, 1985.

Dear _____,

I would like to talk with you after half-term holiday about several aspects of your writing. Some of the areas I will be interested in exploring with you are the following:

1. the processes by which you learned how to write in the different subjects you are specializing in. If you have essays or teacher notes or comments which influenced how you learned to write within a particular subject area, would you please bring them to the interview? Try to go back as far as possible - to first form or earlier if you can.
2. the extent to which your writing has changed over the past year and a half in sixth form. If you have samples of writing which demonstrates this change (samples which I don't already have), bring them to the interview also.
3. the process of writing your most recent assignment in each subject (whether in-class work, study guide, essay, or other form of writing). Bring that as well to the interview.
4. your journals. Would you bring them too, please.
5. other aspects of writing you might like to discuss, for example work in progress such as your projects or extended essays.

I've looked over your timetables and have tried to schedule times which seemed convenient for you and for me. If you cannot come at your scheduled time, please see me as soon as possible, and we'll fix an alternate date. The interviews will take place in Room 409.

Your scheduled time is _____. I look forward to chatting with you then. As always, thank you for your continued cooperation.

Document 7. May 5, 1985.

Dear _____,

I've listened to the tapes of our interviews, and have listed below some of the concerns and ideas you talked about. What I'd like you to do is to look through the statements below and think about the ones you'd like to discuss with other students. On _____, we'll meet at _____, outside the sixth form common room. Half the group will go to Mr. Goodman's office and half to Mr. Smith's to talk with each other about writing, using some of these statements as starting points. I'll speak to your tutors so that you can continue until the start of period five. I realize your schedules are quite full at this time of year, but hope that you'll be able to participate in these discussions.

Thanks again.

1. Many of you talked about the difficulties of structuring your essay, or structuring an argument. How do you see the relationship between what you have to say and how you say it?
2. What kind(s) of writing do you do that help you to understand your subject better, or make you want to learn more (if any)?
3. To what extent does class discussion before writing on a topic help you? What about after?
4. How much extra reading do you actually do in your subjects? To what extent does it help you? What sorts of records do you make of your reading?
5. What do you think 'introductions' are supposed to do? 'conclusions'? Does this vary from subject to subject?
6. Have you received conflicting advice on how to write essays? How have you handled the conflict?
7. Julia said, "I think some people are born with a sense of when to elaborate". Nearly all of you commented on the difficulty of knowing how much to expand an idea, or when to give more background information. What sorts of things help you decide?
8. Do you have a 'reader' or 'audience' in mind when you write? If so, what kind of reader is (s)he? What attributes does (s)he have?
9. Whether or not you use 'I', your ideas and opinions are in your essays. In what ways do you or can you 'put yourself' into your writing?

10. Virginia says, "Every essay has a different structure, depending on the question". What do you understand by the word 'structure'? Do you tend to structure your essays in a particular way regardless of the question or subject? or do you use a variety of structures?
11. What role do your parents play in your school life?
12. How do you know when what you've written is good? or not good? What do you do when your opinion of your writing differs from your teacher's?
13. Steve suggested that whereas your own conclusions in English were 'valid', because they're tied to your own responses to the literature, conclusions in other subjects would tend, almost inevitably, to be 'naive', because there is so much information of which you are unaware. How do you respond to that idea?
14. Plans, outlines, rough drafts - how important are these when you're writing an essay (a) at home (b) in class (timed)
15. What kinds of teacher comments, oral and written, do you find most helpful to improve your writing and/or your understanding?
16. Does any particular piece of writing that you've done in the sixth form stand out as having been really interesting to do? or that you really learned something new or something you wanted to learn from doing it?
17. Many of you mentioned that you would like to do more imaginative writing. Can you see a place for this kind of writing in all your subjects?
18. Some of you mentioned that you chose a subject because you were interested in it for its own sake, but this interest has been deadened by its strong exam orientation. How many of you feel similarly?
19. Some of you mentioned that you frequently repress an original or off-beat or interesting idea that you would like to develop, both in class discussions and in your writing. I'd appreciate it if you'd talk a bit more about this.
20. Some of you mentioned that you would like the opportunity to read and discuss each other's essays. How do you see this helping you?
21. To what extent is your background reading utilized in your subjects? in your writing? in classroom discussions?
22. Some of your teachers feel that you do not pay as much attention to rough drafting and basic mechanics as you did at O-level. On the other hand, they feel that you are able to write about more complex ideas with greater insight. Do you have any comments?

B. COMMUNICATIONS WITH TEACHERS

Document 1. May, 1984.

TO INTERESTED STAFF MEMBERS OF TIARA GLEN SCHOOL

I'd like to explain my research project briefly to you so that you'll have an idea of why I would like to spend some time with you in your classrooms.

Generally speaking, I am concerned about the kinds of writing composed by sixth form students in response to learned material in a variety of subject areas. More specifically, I am concerned about the evident difficulties that students experience when attempting to write using information recently presented in a broad range of typical classroom contexts, for example: teacher presentations, activities, audio-visual presentations, science experiments, textbooks, guest speakers, directed research or investigations, and class discussions. I am seeking to discover what students do to meet teachers' demands and, eventually, how they can more effectively do so.

I have not yet outlined in detail my research design (number of students, criteria for their selection, elicitation of material, and so on). At this stage my main concern is to familiarize myself with the British context, the expectations of teachers and students, and, above all, how teachers view the questions I shall be addressing, for example:

- a) how do basic language components - terminology, kinds of sentences, organization of response - differ from one subject area to another?
- b) how do students learn to use these various structures and to accommodate this competence to what is required (for example: the terminology and organization involved in writing up a science experiment)?
- c) to what extent does the language of the discipline influence the language of students' writing in each subject?
- d) to what extent do the various sorts of writing tasks in different subjects influence written text?

I anticipate the project will require at least a year of research in your school, allowing us opportunity to become mutually aware of the potential benefits of this research. If you are interested in meeting me and discussing the research in more detail, would you please let Janet Elliott know.

Document 2. March 4, 1985.

Dear _____,

Now that I have been able to draw the several strands of my research together into a few focal points, thanks to your having so generously allowed me access to your classrooms, I would like to meet with each of you again and talk about your perceptions of some of these general areas, for example:

- a) what are your perceptions of what constitutes written competence in your particular subject?
- b) assuming a relatively equal understanding or knowledge of the content of your subject, what makes a particular essay strong or weak?
- c) what specific teaching strategies do you employ to assist students' written competence in your subject?
- d) what do you perceive as the functions of writing in your subject area? (i.e. what purposes does it serve?)
- e) how would you characterize the kinds of writing required within the written discourse of your subject?
- f) how do you use writing to increase your awareness of your students' understanding of issues, concepts, or information in your subject?

Because these questions have been generated from my observations of six different disciplines, they may not be equally applicable, in terms of their underlying assumptions, to each subject. Some will therefore be more difficult to respond to than others. What I am hoping will happen while we are talking is that we can explore some of the implications of these questions rather than trying to answer them straight off.

I realize how busy you all are, and would therefore like to meet at your convenience. I am available all lunch hours, after school, and at the following times during the day...

Could you let me know what suits you the best, and then we can arrange to meet, preferably within the next two weeks. Thank you again for your continued cooperation.

 Document 3. May 5, 1985.

Dear _____,

I've listened now to the tapes of our recent conferences as well as the conferences we had in May and June of 1984, and have extracted some statements which might stimulate further discussion. Many of you have expressed similar concerns about students' writing, and some of you have taken quite divergent stances, a situation which could provoke some exciting dialogue among you. Since you indicated that you would be interested to hear what each other has to say about writing, may I suggest that we get together at _____ and talk about your ideas. I've tried to categorize your comments into some general thematic areas for easier reference, but, as in most attempts at categorization, there are overlaps and 'forced fits'.

SECTION A: PROBLEMS: (1) Mechanics and Organization
 (2) Cognitive or Conceptual Concerns

(Although many of your comments seemed to separate these two areas, when I pondered the implications of your statements, the separation seemed arbitrary. In the end, it seemed more helpful to consider the two together).

- a) Students need exposure to and some mastery of formal skills before they can begin the course.
- b) Students need to be more precise in using the vocabulary, the terminology, of the subject appropriately (all six of you said this).
- c) Students frequently make sweeping, unsubstantiated statements.
- d) Writing doesn't sound analytical if you use personal pronouns.
- e) Students have difficulty organizing their writing because the essential experience is much greater than language can convey.
- f) Students need a basic essay plan or structure taught them: the more able students can modify the plan; the less able will benefit from the structure.
- g) I separate content and style in evaluating their essays.
- h) Students' inability to apply information in a succinct but detailed way is their chief weakness (all six of you said this).
- i) Students have difficulty analyzing what the question is asking (most of you expressed this concern).
- j) Students have difficulty establishing a basic argument.

- k) Students have difficulty developing a theme or argument throughout their answer (most of you said this as well).
- l) Essay structure is basically the same in all subjects, isn't it?
- m) The required readings assume a reader with more knowledge than the students actually have.
- n) A major problem is lack of confidence in their own voice, their inability to take what they've read and put it into their own language and question it (three of you mentioned 'confidence' as significant).
- o) Students seem less technically accurate than at O-level, but are handling more mature concepts with greater understanding.
- p) Students have difficulty integrating material from different categories.

SECTION B: EXAMS

- a) Exam questions have a 'phoniness' which requires seemingly 'absolute' answers, or which subscribe to an ideology of absoluteness in areas where answers (and questions) are arbitrary or controversial (expressed or implied in three interviews).
- b) All of you expressed a general concern that extensive syllabus requirements prevented your having the students write collaborative or exploratory or 'intermediate' types of writing.

SECTION C: STATEMENTS, QUESTIONS, OR CONCERNS ABOUT HOW TO HELP STUDENTS OVERCOME WRITING PROBLEMS

- a) I just really don't know how to help them (three people).
- b) Either they can do it or they can't; if they can't, they fail.
- c) The way I was taught, we just did it or failed.
- d) Give them lots of practice writing essays.
- e) Class discussion of the content and organization for topics.
- f) 'Model' answers, so they have an idea of one or more ways of going about it.
- g) They learn from their failures.
- h) I indicate their inaccuracies in comments and conferences, and hope they take it from there.
- i) Collaborative planning of essays.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Chapter 1

1. The names of the students, the teachers, and the school involved in the study have all been changed. Excerpts from students' texts and journals, from interviews with students and teachers, and from lessons will appear in italic script throughout the thesis. My points of emphasis will be indicated throughout the thesis in boldface. Points of emphasis made by students, teachers, or in quoted works will be underlined.
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6. Rather than tell you biographical and/or professional details about each of the six teachers, I will have them 'introduce themselves' by selecting extracts from interviews with them. These extracts have been chosen as representative of these teachers' views about writing in their respective disciplines.
7. These extracts are from my interview with Mr. Moore as well as from notes that Mr. Moore jotted down in preparation for the interview in response to some questions I had given the teachers to consider (see Appendix IB).
8. Two exceptions are Sian and Vernon, whom I was unable to see in June, 1984, because they were away on field trips and other school activities on the days I was at the school. Their 'introductions' are therefore based on a combination of extracts from their journals and later interviews.

9. Code for subject listings; UPPER CASE UNDERLINED indicates that the subject being observed is part of the study; UPPER CASE indicates that the subject was originally part of the study but subsequently dropped; (UPPER CASE IN PARENTHESES) indicates a different class and teacher of one of the subjects involved in the study; Lower case indicates other subjects, not in the study, taken by the student.
10. See Jakobson, R. and Halle, M. : "Closing Statement" in Sebeok, T. A. (ed) : Style in Language, Cambridge, Mass., MIT, 1960.
11. See Moffett, J. : op cit and Britton, J. *et al*, op cit.
12. This "view of writing as being located within a set of interrelated contemporary social practices" is derived from a series of discussions with Harold Rosen over a two year period, from 1983-1985.

Chapter 3

1. In Rosen, H. : Closing Address, NATE Conference, Nottingham, April, 1985.
2. Ibid.
3. ILEA : In other words : a layman's guide to educational terms, London, Waterloo Printers for GLC Supplies (no date on publication) (no page numbers).
4. Booth, W. : Narrative as the Mold of Character, Paper presented at the 17th Language in Inner City Schools Conference, Institute of Education, June, 1984.
5. See Britton, J. *et al* : "An approach to the function categories" in The Development of Writing Abilities, London, Macmillan, 1975, pp 74-87.
6. See Moffett, J. : "Kinds and Orders of Discourse" in Teaching the Universe of Discourse, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1968, pp 18-32.
7. See Britton, J. *et al* (1975), op cit, particularly the chapter on the function categories, pp 74-87.
8. Ogborn, J. : "Teaching T. S. Eliot ; Travelling hopefully..." (in press).
9. Ibid.

Chapter 4.

1. Polanyi, M. : Personal Knowledge, London, RKP, p.3.
2. See Kelly, G. : The Psychology of Personal Constructs, New York, Norton, 1955.
3. Foucault, M. : The Archaeology of Knowledge, London, Tavistock, 1972, p.59. It should be noted that Foucault sets these "procedures of intervention" in the formation of concepts within a much broader cultural frame of reference than my more narrow application in this chapter.
4. Because the first five descriptions of what constitutes appropriate written text were offered in direct response to a question concerning communicative competence in each teacher's respective discipline, I can reasonably interpret them as textual goals which those five teachers want their students to achieve. However, the sixth interview, in English, did not follow the format of the listed questions (see Appendix IB), and did not yield an explicit statement of what constitutes written communicative competence in English. I have therefore extracted from Ms. Elliott's interview with Steve (English vignette) a snippet which seems to address the issue directly. Since it was given to a student as a description of what writing in English entails, however, I should clarify that it is through my inference of it as a textual goal that it appears in the above list.
5. Britton, J. *et al* : The Development of Writing Abilities II-18, London, Macmillan, 1975, p.197.

Chapter 5

1. Britton, J. *et al* : The Development of Writing Abilities, 11-18, London, Macmillan, 1975, p.196.
2. Ibid, p.198.
3. Ibid, p.182.
4. Ibid, p.1.
5. See Dixon, J. and Stratta, L. : "Unlocking Mind Forg'd Manacles?" English in Education, 1985, 19, 1-11.
6. Ogborn, J. : "Teaching T. S. Eliot : Travelling hopefully..." (in press).
7. Ibid.
8. Britton, J. *et al* : op cit, p.197.
9. Eagleton, T. : Literary Theory : An Introduction, Oxford, Blackwell, 1983, p.170.
10. For a comprehensive elaboration of van Dijk's theory of macrostructures and superstructures, see Dijk, T. A. van : Macrostructures : An Interdisciplinary Study of Global Structures in Discourse, Interaction, and Cognition, Hillsdale, New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
11. Britton, J. *et al* : op cit, pp 94-105.
12. See, for example, Carol Robson's investigation into the reading difficulties experienced by A-level students in three subject areas : Making sense of discourse : a study of textbooks, reading, and reading development in the first year sixth, M.A. Dissertation, University of London Institute of Education, 1983.
13. Vygotsky, L. : Thought and Language, Cambridge, Mass., MIT, 1962, p.9.
14. Booth, W. : Narrative as the Mold of Character, Paper presented at the 17th Language in Inner City Schools Conference, University of London Institute of Education, June, 1984.
15. Britton, J. *et al*, op cit, p.85.
16. See Halliday, M. A. K. : Language as a Social Semiotic, London, Arnold, 1978.
17. AEB : Examiner's Report, September, 1985.
18. In Emig, J. : The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders, Urbana, Illinois, NCTE, 1978.
19. Ogborn, J. : op cit.
20. Ibid.
21. Dixon, J. and Stratta, L. op cit.

Chapter 6

1. Hymes, D. : Ethnolinguistic Study of Classroom Discourse, Final Report to the NIE, April, 1982, p.77.
2. Ibid.

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