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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF LITERACY LEARNING
AND TEACHING DURING AN
AUTHOR STUDY/VISIT

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

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ABSTRACT

A growing interest in schools among teachers and school administrators is using an author visit to enhance reading and writing in the curriculum. The purpose of this study was to describe the impact of a school author study/visit on seventh graders’ literacy activities in one seventh grade language arts class. This study looked at the learning opportunities planned for the students by the staff and their classroom teacher, but also looked at how these learning opportunities were shaped and co-constructed by the students, teacher and other adults. This study has potential significance in adding to the body of research on an author study/visit by describing how an author study/visit shapes teacher and students; discussions in reading and writing, interests in reading, the support of the teacher’s efforts to stimulate and encourage writing, to offer insights into the creative process of writing, and to promote lasting appreciation of the written word. This study should be a contribution to the reading/writing literacy used to inform future researchers about the findings on author studies/visits by providing effective strategies for teachers.

The period of data collection for this study was seven weeks. Data collection was divided into three phases, prior to the author visit, during the author visit and after the author visit. This study used a qualitative perspective for data collection with participant observation, audiotapes with
full transcription, field notes of classroom observations, transcribed
audiotaped interviews (formal and informal with the teacher), student
interviews, and school artifacts.

The major findings of this study were that the author study/visit
affected student attitudes in literacy learning. The indicators of connections
made in reading and writing are as follows: students experienced the work of
an author and extended this knowledge through the author sharing her
experiences; students recognized that stories came from the author's life
experiences; students were able to better understand the read aloud once they
heard the author had shared the writing process of this book; the teacher
indicated students were still reading the author's books at the end of the
school year (six weeks following the visit); two students modeled the author's
plot structure in a narrative writing piece and in the student year end
reflections, seven students listed one of the author's books as the best book
they had read that year. The continuum of teacher-led to student-led
discussions of questioning and the sharing of personal experiences can
directly affect the motivation and development of comprehension.
Dedicated to my family, especially my mother, 
without whose support 
and constant encouragement, 
this would not have been possible.
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I wish to thank Dr. Janet Hickman for the many opportunities and support she has given me for the past five years. Without her guidance and expertise in the field of literacy, this dissertation would not have been possible. I thank Dr. Dahl for making me feel smart. I deeply appreciate the support and guidance she has given me throughout my course of study at Ohio State. I thank Dr. Kos for her encouragement, thoroughness and positive attitude and am grateful for all the extra hard work I did to become a better researcher. I thank Dr. Bishop for her ability to explain to me in an easy to understand manner. I thank Dr. Bishop for her kindness and calm demeanor, which in turn calmed me many times. I wish to thank Mr. Keith Earley, for reading all my papers and encouraging me to strive to my highest potential as a teacher and scholar. I greatly appreciate Dr. Carol Lynch and Dr. John McCracken for their unfailing support during this entire research process. I especially thank Carol for keeping me on track and supporting me at each turn in the research process. A special thanks to Dr. Gloria Flaherty for helping me with data analysis.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

A growing interest among teachers and administrators in schools is the use of an author visit to enhance reading and writing in the curriculum. Classroom teachers are showing an interest in using an author visit in their language arts programs and seem to have questions concerning how they should plan for this special event. Author visits are being used in schools and classrooms as a way of providing an opportunity for students to personally respond to an author's body of work. Since literature based reading programs have become increasingly prevalent in some middle schools, novels are being used as a primary tool for literacy learning (Galda and Cullinan, 1991; Huck, Hepler, Hickman & Kiefer, 2001; Tunnel & Jacobs, 1989). As students are able to delve into the body of work of an author, and then have the opportunity to meet the author, the students receive a glimpse into the literary world of the author's work (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, & Kiefer, 1997, p. 653) To teachers, author visits seem worthwhile because of the positive attitudes they see among students during or after the author visit. In spite of the increasing popularity of using author visits with middle school students, little is known about how teachers facilitate this event and the influences it has on students' reading and writing.

Many educators and researchers in the field of literacy generally agree that an author visit shares the "magic" of books and gets students interested
in reading and writing. "The prospect of having a real life author come for a school visit is exciting and motivates students to read his or her books in anticipation of meeting the author" (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, & Kiefer, 1997, p. 652). Classroom teachers seem to also have concerns about how they should be using the body of work of the author in their classrooms. Yet, as classroom teachers introduce the author's work into the classroom, usually in the form of an author study, followed by an author visit, little knowledge of the connections students make to the authoring process is known. More attention is needed on how the author study/visit influences student responses in reading and writing before, during and after the author visit. Unfortunately, research has little to say about how an author study/visit affects the students' motivation to read and write.

Author visits can be a school-wide experience or a single classroom event. In general, an author visit usually consists of three stages: advance preparation, day of visit activities, and follow up activities (Staas, 1987; Simons, 1995). Teachers and staff members prepare for the day by planning, developing, and integrating activities into the curriculum to familiarize the students with the author's body of work. The preparation stage usually consists of planning the author visit, classroom preparations such as reading the author's work and doing activities around the author's books. The day of the visit usually begins with the arrival of the author, a whole school assembly, classroom visits, small group discussions, and the author signing books. The day of the author visit is usually the culmination activity of the author study in the classroom. The follow-up activities are the least planned and developed stage of an author visit (Staas, 1987; Simons, 1995). Usually,
the follow-up activities involve writing activities such as a thank-you note to the author, a story, and the teacher and students discussing the author visit in the classroom.

In current practice, author studies are used by classroom teachers as a teaching tool in the language arts curriculum. Using literature in the classroom has become a commonly accepted practice. Within the context of using literature in the classroom, an author study/visit fits naturally into the language arts curriculum. According to Routman, the purpose of an author study is to make connections between an author's work and the author's life. By doing an author study, the teacher is able to involve the students in an in-depth study of the author's work, background and literary style (Routman, 2000). An author study/visit presents authors as real people, and this may develop motivation in the students to seek out other work by the same author. According to Vandergrift (2001), students want to know about their favorite authors because they often feel that an author is speaking directly and personally to them through their work. This may increase an interest in further reading and writing by the student. As students read stories, poems, and various genres by an author, the students may become curious about the person who writes this literature and may make connections from the text into their own personal experiences in the reading/writing connection. This may encourage students to recognize the style of one particular author and develop critical reading and thinking skills as they examine the characters and themes in the author's work.

Many readers are curious about the creators of the books they enjoy (Vandergrift, 2001). An author visit seems to also increase the exploration into the processes of reading and writing beyond the world of the text. As
Marilyn Parker states in describing a visit by Madeleine L'Engle, "the actual event of an author visit should be something like the tip of an iceberg—the most visible part of something much broader and deeper" (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, & Kiefer, 1997, p. 655).

It is commonly accepted among teachers, although undocumented and proven, that the preparation for the author visit provides the real learning experiences. Author studies introduce students to the author's process of writing and provide a sense of direction for students to use as examples in their own writing. Author studies have the power to affect the quality of the students' writing—their style, organization, vocabulary and sentence structure (Routman, 2000). An author study increases awareness of the students own potential as writers because "favorite authors become mentors to students and their works become powerful models" (Routman, 2000, p. 79). One advantage of an author visit is the author sharing his writing and discussing the craft of writing. In listening, the students may gain further understanding of the writing process and possibilities for their own individual writing.

Very little formal research has documented the impact of an author visit. A dissertation study was done by Staas (1987) on the effects of author visits in selected elementary schools in Texas. A master's thesis was conducted by Simons (1995) on a single school's interpretation and application of visiting author programs. The primary reporting on author visits consists of short vignettes written by teachers and authors who have experienced/done an author visit in classrooms. Research is lacking on the student/author interactions, classroom author studies, teacher planning, and student activities as observed systematically in a classroom study. No formal documentation exists on the motivation which may or may not occur during
the author visit. Likewise, few systematic observations on the ripple effect which may occur following an author visit in the classroom are documented. More studies are needed which provide insights into the current status of using author visits as a part of the language arts curriculum.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe the impact of a school author study/visit on seventh graders' literacy activities in one seventh grade language arts class. This study not only looks at the learning opportunities planned for the students by the staff and their classroom teacher, but also looks at how these learning opportunities are shaped and co-constructed by the students and teacher and other adults. This study should provide insight into the operations of an author study/visit and its influence on this classroom of students and their teacher.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions for this study:

How does one teacher use an author study to enhance reading and writing in a seventh grade language arts classroom?

1. What learning opportunities occur as a result of an author study in a classroom?

2. How will these opportunities be shaped and co-constructed by the students and teacher or with other adults?

3. What did the students in this classroom learn and value during and following the author study/visit in literacy learning and understanding?
Definitions of Terms

The following terms are used throughout the body of this paper.

**author**: a writer of children's books

**author study**: the preparation before, during, and after the author visit on the author's body of work

**author visit**: the time period in the school setting during which the visit occurs and varied activities relating to that author take place on site

**read aloud**: a book read aloud to the entire class by the teacher

Theoretical Framework and Assumptions

An understanding of how children learn in a classroom might best be explained from the social constructivist perspective. It is commonly accepted among literacy researchers that children are active learners and relate new information to prior knowledge and experiences. Therefore, the classroom is viewed as an “interpretivist community” in which the teacher and students socially construct their own knowledge (Fish, 1980). Together, through a collaborative effort, the teacher and students build literary understanding in reading and writing in a social context and this social context shapes their thinking. According to Langer, (1986) “during the act of reading or writing, meaning is continually in a state of becoming; the mind anticipates, looks back, and forms momentary impressions that change and grow as the text-world develops” (p. 221). Thus, children construct knowledge from new experiences by relating them to past experiences and the teacher's and students' literary discussion strategies, patterns and quantity of talk affect learning. After students hear their teacher read aloud a story, it seems reasonable that students may have conversations with classmates or friends.
Once they met the author of the read aloud book, a variety of questions would occur based on each students' prior knowledge and experiences.

Through language, students are active agents in socialization with the potential of constructing knowledge through various reading and writing opportunities. By looking at the individual in relation to their social world, patterns over time, and the interactions between the teacher and students, the construction of meaning and knowledge building is best obtained. Unlike the behaviorist who mainly believes in an automatic response to external factors in the environment and the cognitivist who sees knowledge as an abstract symbolic representation, the social constructivist views knowledge as constructed, where the learner relates new information to prior knowledge and organizes and integrates this knowledge into the schemata.

Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development provides a framework for understanding the role of social interactions in literacy. Vygotsky suggests that we learn as we move cognitively from one function to the next. Vygotsky (1986) believed that interaction enhanced learning through scaffolding and the zone of proximal development. As children relate new information to prior information, children are able to organize and integrate information into their schemata. The zone of proximal development serves as the foundation for Vygotsky's argument that with peer interaction and teacher guidance students can do more than they can do alone (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 187). In collaborative efforts with adults or more capable peers, children are able to organize their thinking and to perform tasks that they are not able to do alone (Vygotsky, 1978).

By looking at learning through a sociocultural lens, language and thought are seen as interrelated. Meaning making occurs within the
institutional, cultural, and social setting of the learner. Reading is the act of constructing meaning while transacting with the text. The interaction with the text is where the reader makes meaning by bringing in prior knowledge and previous experiences, stance, and interaction with others (Goodman, 1994; Hartman, 1995; Rosenblatt, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978). As with reading, writing is also influenced by social interaction with others (Butler & Turbill, 1984). Rosenblatt’s (1978) theory had been foundational to the parts of this study in considering how students construct meaning as they read and how students are expected to respond to particular books in the classroom.

Scope and Limitation to the Study

I hope that this study can be a contribution to the reading/writing practices used to inform future researchers about the findings on author studies/visits by providing effective strategies for teachers. This classroom will serve as a case (Stake, 1994) chosen because examining an author study/visit in one particular setting could provide insights into how classroom teachers might use author visits as a vehicle for teaching students about the nature of response and the craft of writing during an author study and author visit.

The study is not intended to lead to conclusions which can be generalized across classrooms. This study reports on the experiences of one school, one teacher, and one classroom of students in their development before, during, and following the author visit. This study attempts to provide a description of this classroom in order to enable the reader to determine the transferability it has for other students, classrooms, teachers, and schools. In
addition, subjectivity is a limitation. I can only claim to have evaluated the
learning opportunities to the best of my ability from my own unique
experiences as a researcher and teacher.

Significance of the Study

There is a need for more research on the impact of an author visit on
the reading and writing of students. The importance of the author study/visit
should not be underestimated. Many teachers have described anecdotal
accounts of an author visit in their school and classroom, but currently, little
formal research has been conducted on the learning opportunities of an
author visit in one particular classroom. This study seeks to expand and
broaden our view of what constitutes literary learning and understanding in
one particular classroom. This study should offer insights into the operations
of an author study/visit and its influence on students in reading and writing.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A social constructivist view of learning provided the conceptual framework for this study. This review begins there, then moves on to explore work related to specific components of literacy learning, and ends with my search for comparable research relevant to this study. In particular, this chapter includes discussions of the following: the theory of learning proposed by Lev Vygotsky, studies of patterns of talk in classrooms, Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of the process of reading literature, literature based reading and writing in middle grades, small group discussions of literature and guest author visits.

A Social Constructivist View of Learning

There is an increased interest in using author visits in schools; however, there is very little research available on how these opportunities are shaped and constructed by the teacher and students. An understanding of how children learn and develop in a literature based classroom will be best explained from a social constructivist perspective. In a social constructivist model of learning, which draws on the perspectives of Lev Vygotsky, teachers work to establish a shared community of learners. The emphasis is on the connection between the student’s social and psychological world. The teacher’s role within this community of inquirers is to organize the learning
environment around the students' thinking. In this environment, the students talk, write, and present their ideas as the core of the learning culture. According to Marshall (1994), cultures are learned and shared and always changing. When classrooms are viewed as cultures, the teacher's role can be seen as constructed through interactions with the students and the materials. Relationships are built in the context of the classroom. The interactions with materials such as reading and writing are also constructed and not given (pp. 38-39).

The theory of social construction suggests that meaning is best achieved through dialogue, communication, and interaction with others in the classroom (Barnes, 1976; Cook-Gumperz, 1986; Tharp & Gallimore, 1989). According to Peterson (1988), as students engage in dialogue, "they collaborate one-with-the-other to comprehend ideas, problems, events, and feelings... and experience and intent" (p. 1). Through this genuine responding, the students work together to expand what they know of the world's meaning.

Teachers, as part of this classroom community of learners, make students' ideas more meaningful by commenting and elaborating on their ideas and asking students to clarify, expand, and justify their emerging conceptions with one another. In doing so, these conversational turns allow for deeper and richer inquiry among the student learners. Pinnell and Jaggar (1991) state that the language arts curriculum should ensure that students have many opportunities to use talk in a variety of meaningful social situations. In this process of knowledge construction, the students must be guided by the teacher to build connections from new knowledge to prior experiences. This enables the students the opportunity to apply new knowledge in making sense of and explaining new phenomenon.
Dewey (1916) explains:

The social environment...is truly educative in its effects in the degree in which an individual shares or participates in one conjoint activity. By doing his share in the associated activity, the individual appropriates the purpose which actuates it, becomes familiar with its methods and subject matter, acquires needed skills, and is saturated with its emotional spirit (p. 26).

The importance of educational intervention in children's learning and development was emphasized in Vygotsky's psychological theories. Vygotsky (1978) provided a framework for understanding the role of social interactions in literature/writing instruction. Vygotsky's theory focused on how children participate with other people in a social order, and this supports the belief that learning is an active process of construction of meaning and knowledge that is both exploratory and collaborative in a social setting. Vygotsky (1978) posits that the child's cognitive development has to be understood as taking place through their interactions with others, especially other members who are more conversant with the society's intellectual practices and tools, especially language. Vygotsky states, "what may occur is that students grow in[to] the intellectual life of those around them" and they develop knowledge by these interactions (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88). Thus, students internalize the tools for thinking and problem solving as they engage in activities in the classroom environment.

According to Vygotsky (1962), the acquisition of knowledge through instruction is essential in short term learning and is a critical factor in long-term development. "What the child can do in cooperation today, he can do alone tomorrow" (p. 104). Vygotsky used the term "zone of proximal development," which he defined as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the
level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 76). He describes the “zone of proximal development” as the region between the learner’s spontaneous level of knowing and the level he can reach in problem solving with assistance. Vygotsky states there are three interrelated assumptions which underlie the “zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). First, there is a difference between what the child can accomplish now and his potential for further learning. Second, what can be achieved alone is different from what can be achieved with the help of a more knowledgeable teacher or peer, which Vygotsky calls mediation. Third, a deliberate transfer of control takes place from the more knowledgeable to the less knowledgeable. For Vygotsky, classroom instruction needs to be challenging and should be running ahead of the actual development of the learner’s present knowledge and thinking. In Vygotsky’s “zone of proximal development” the child can reach this level with assistance and through instruction to attain optimal levels of thought. However, without this social mediation, growth would be minimal (Vygotsky, 1978).

Other theorists and researchers have expanded Vygotsky’s framework of the zone of proximal development to explain how the expert’s assistance helps the child (Rogoff & Wertsch, 1984). Pinnell & Jagger (1991) state that oral communication plays a role in the cognitive and social development of children. As children read and write, they write and think about psychological events that have aroused their consciousness. Rogoff (1990) presents a sociocultural approach that is based on consideration for the personal, interpersonal, and community planes of focus in the analysis of
developmental processes involved in the participation of individuals with others in cultural practices (pp. 160-161). These processes, in a metaphorical sense, are "apprenticeship, guided participation, and participatory appropriation" which are different planes of focus in a sociocultural activity-community, interpersonal, and personal. To understand one, one must understand all of them.

The metaphor of apprenticeship provides the plane of the community activity in which individuals participate with others to gain mature participation in the activity. Guided participation is the term used in applying the interpersonal plane of sociocultural analysis. This plane stresses the mutual involvement of individuals and their social partners, communicating and coordinating their involvement as they participate in a sociocultural structured collective activity (Rogoff, 1990). This stage would include peers, a significant person in their lives like a parent/teacher, with a face-to-face discussion of their reading/writing activity. "Guided participation is an interpersonal process in which people manage their own and others' roles, and structure situations in which they observe and participate in cultural activities" (Rogoff, 1995). The processes of "communication" and "coordination" are central to this participation. Guided participation includes interactions which involve the teacher instructing the students. This Vygotskian theory emphasizes "routine, tacit communication, and arrangements between children and their companions" (Rogoff, 1995, p. 148). The final analysis of sociocultural activity, participatory appropriation, examines how children change through participation. In this plane, the children transform their own understanding and use it in their individual activity. "Participation involves creative efforts to understand and contribute
to social activity, which involves bridging between several ways of understanding a situation (Rogoff, 1995, p. 153). This sociocultural analysis requires considering how the child, the whole class, along with the teacher, transform as they read, compose and produce writing in a social activity. Wells (1986) states that the adult's support and feedback is crucial for fostering children's communication.

Building on Vygotsky's views on learning as a social event, Bruner (1985, 1986) used the metaphor "scaffolding" to describe how adults use language to interact with children in the zones of proximal development. Bruner's "scaffolding" of new knowledge is developed by building new knowledge and is replaced as new knowledge is constructed through meaningful interaction (Bruner, 1983). According to Bruner, "the crucial interpretive question is, "What's it all about?" But what "it" is, of course, is not the actual text-however great its literary power-but the text that the reader has constructed" (Bruner, 1986, p.37). The importance of building knowledge together in the classroom will reappear throughout the review in terms of how this author study is approached by the teacher and students and how it is dealt with in this particular classroom. Research on literature based research practices is discussed in the next section.

Literature Based Reading and Writing Practices for Middle School Students

Within the theoretical underpinnings of literature based programs are issues concerning the development of the middle school learner. During this crucial period, physical, cognitive and psychosocial development of adolescents occur. During this development period, profound developmental changes occur in the adolescent physically, cognitively, and socially. Physical
changes are the most obvious changes that occur with adolescents. Educators would have little interest in the physical changes of these students if it were not for the effect it has on their self-concept and behavior of the adolescent which influences classroom learning and behavior (Pikulski, 1995).

Within a Piagetian framework, adolescent cognitive development moves from the "concrete" to the "formal" operations period which lasts from 11 to 14 years of age. At this time, the child can use logic and reason to generate possibilities beyond what had been experienced in reality, to engage in hypothetical reasoning, and to construct ideal and contrary-to-fact situations (Pilulski, 1995). Atwell (1998) states that middle school students choose classes which are their favorites where they “routinely collaborate with other students and the teacher, have some say about the product, and take an active stance, classes in which whole-group listening and busywork are minor components” (p. 69).

A literature based classroom is best characterized by “students who move back and forth seamlessly between writing and reading as they engage in responding to literature and creating literary works on their own” (Dahl & Farnan, 1996, p.86). Language Arts classrooms are social settings where students read, write about, and discuss literature. Together, the teacher and the students create their own unique classroom community. This community strongly influences students’ learning (Tompkins, 2001). Cognitive-oriented researchers argue that an engaged reader is one who is motivated, knowledgeable, strategic, and socially interactive (Gambrell, 1996; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). The reciprocal process between reading and writing is
important because when students are engaged in the reading-writing process
together, they seem to benefit more (Tierney, Soter, O’Flahavan & McGinley,
1989).

Literature-based reading programs have grown steadily in recent years
as teachers use real books as the major instructional material to help children
connect literature to their own lives (Huck et al., 2001, p. 570). The following
characteristics consistently appear in the literature as descriptors for a
literature based reading/writing program in the middle grades.

◊ Use of trade books as the primary source of literature for all aspects of
reading instruction (Huck et al., 2001).

◊ Reading aloud to children fills the classroom with an author’s language
and offers pleasure and enjoyment to learn about different genres and
authors (Huck et al., 2001; Atwell, 1998).

◊ Independent reading/writing time with self-pacing and self-selection of
novels and writing topics gives students many opportunities to read and
write for knowledge, vocabulary and pleasure (Graves, Juels, Graves, 2001).

◊ In-depth whole or small group discussions with the teacher and peers
provide the students with opportunities to explore varying levels of
meaning in the construction of literary experiences (Eeds & Wells, 1989,

◊ Group projects allow students to work cooperatively with other students
to build language and thinking together to reach one common goal
(Routman, 2000).

◊ Teacher-student interactions can be in a whole class setting, small group
setting, or individually with the student. The teacher engages the students
in meaningful and authentic learning experiences beyond simply
presenting students with information, but to understand a topic deeply,
retain important information and actively use the knowledge they gain
(Graves, Juels, Graves, 2001).

◊ Student response to literature, both orally and written, aesthetically and
efferently, encourage students to express their preferences, thoughts and
feelings (Huck et al., 2001).
Descriptions of literature based reading programs are similar since the foundation of literature-based programs uses books as the primary instructional material for language arts instruction (Scharer, 1992, Zarillo, 1989).

A Transactional Approach

The focus of literary theory has shifted from the text to the reader. This view of reading is constructivist in nature. This theoretical view of reading suggests that the reader will naturally construct different meanings from the same text. Rosenblatt's transactional theory defines reading as a reciprocal process which takes place between the reader and the text. Rosenblatt's transactional theory insists on the reader's interacting with the text, and how each combined together create one distinctive purpose-transaction. Rosenblatt (1978) postulates that literature is a personal interpretation the reader makes, and the text guides the individual's interpretation based on their previous knowledge, experiences and feelings. Rosenblatt believes the reader's aesthetic experience with the "poem" contributes to the meaning of the "poem." Rosenblatt (1978) posits that readers respond to reading both efferently and aesthetically and all reading falls somewhere on the line between the efferent and aesthetic poles...mainly near the middle (Rosenblatt, 1978). Therefore, readers will come out of a reading with different experiences and readers will fall or move independently along the continuum as they read. Therefore, students become active in the role of reading and since readers respond differently, and some may read with a lot of focus, they will then be able to share their "inside" perspectives of the selection with others in the classroom.
According to Probst (1988), the transactional theory will not view a literary experience as identical with the text from which it emerges. The emphasis is on the reader's emotional response and not on the recounting of the details of the book. Rosenblatt calls this the "lived through" experience. Rosenblatt states the reader responds to literature at two levels—evocation and interpretation. In responding at the evocation level, the reader is creating the text world. The reader is also active in the "interpretation, appreciation, analysis, criticism, and evaluation in the transaction with the text" (Rosenblatt, 1986, p. 126). Thus, the reader is analyzing the characters actions and patterns and deciding whether it is believable or not. This whole process is an interwoven web. It continually builds on each component of the transaction with the text.

Reader response researchers have investigated the reader, text, and context features which affect children's responses to literature. Many researchers have documented children's responses to literature and have provided data on how children construct meaning which is influenced by their feelings, personal experiences, and knowledge (Cox & Many, 1992; Many, 1991; Eeds & Wells, 1989). Hickman's (1981) pioneering research on students' responses in a naturally occurring school environment with children in three multi-ages classroom, K-1, 2-3, and 4-5 observed "response events" across all grade levels. These events varied in degrees and were as follows: (1) listening behaviors such as laughter and applause, (2) contact with books, including browsing and keeping books at hand, (3) acting on the impulse to share, (4) oral responses such as retelling and free comments, (5) actions and drama, (6) making things, and (7) writing (p. 346). Hickman emphasized that the teachers "had considerable power to influence expressions of response
through ability to manipulate the classroom context” (Hickman, 1981, p. 353). Hickman found that teachers were integral in creating the context for response by selecting titles for classroom use with an emphasis on quality and relatedness such as author, theme, or genre. Hickman found that when the students had the book in hand, more reflective thinking emerged in the forms of discussions, writing, and artwork. Books presented through read aloud and sharing were more sought out by the students. Moreover, these were the titles that generated the most talk and the greatest variety of response events such as writing and artwork. The teachers discussed books with the children using critical terminology to support the students’ ideas; teacher provided suggestions, space, time, and materials for book related activities in the school setting. The teachers provided time for the students to share and display their work on completed book projects. Last, Hickman found that by teachers varying genre selection and depth of time spent on a selection, the response of the students varied. Hickman suggested that “both the length involved and the cumulative effect of employing a variety of modes seems to be important in determining qualitative shifts in the content of the responses” (p. 349).

A number of researchers and educators have suggested that collaborative small group literature discussions foster literary understanding of the reading selection (Eeds & Wells, 1989; Raphael et al, 1992; Short 1993). From a Vygotskian level, the small group setting fosters more response to the student’s zone of proximal development since there are fewer students and a more intimate environment. In this setting, the student tends to feel less intimidated and more willing to take risks (Barnes 1976; Wells, 1986). Eeds and Wells’ (1989) study investigated what happened in literature discussion
with 5th and 6th graders led by teachers in training. The students chose the books and met with group leaders who were encouraged to be "fellow participants." The researchers found in describing the literature discussion groups that the students (1) articulated their construction of simple meaning, but also changed their views as they heard alternative views; (2) shared personal stories inspired by the reading and discussions; (3) participated as active readers-predicted and hypothesized, confirmed and disconfirmed their predictions; and (4) valued and evaluated the text as literature (p. 5).

Other researchers have also stated the importance of teacher influence as integral in student response. Hade (1989) found the teacher in his study included the opportunity for children to share with others their readings and response to literature in most activities. And with sharing came demonstrating from the teacher and students. The teacher and students “shared with each other their thoughts and work, they showed each other how they went about reading and responding to literature” (p. 275). As the teacher read aloud to the students, she modeled for the children how to read and what she paid attention to in books she read. She modeled for students and students modeled for other students in quiet reading time. “Through discussions, children shared how they read and interpreted a book. It seemed the children were mindful of what each other was doing and how they were doing it” (p. 275). Taken together, studies of reader response indicate that the context as well as developmental and text factors must be considered when considering children’s responses to literature. Teacher guidance and creating an environment which provides the needed support for students in meaning-making are important.

21
Reading-Writing Connections

In the following sections, I will discuss what the research states about reading-writing connections and relate it with existing research on how author visits can facilitate and improve literacy learning through reading and writing related activities.

A number of studies have been conducted on the relationship of reading and writing with each other. Eckhoff (1983) explored the effects of children's reading on their writing. She focused on the format the students used after being exposed to different reading genres. She found that the children were influenced by linguistic structures of the texts they had read. The more complex or simple the language used in the text the more the students modeled in their own writing. Langer and Applebee (1987) found that classroom focus was on the product, not on the process.

Traditional approaches to the teaching of writing have been prescriptive and product centered, emphasizing the formal structure of effective discourse. At the sentence level, this approach has led to an emphasis on the rules of grammar and usage; at the text level, it has led to an emphasis on the traditional modes of discourse (narration, description, exposition, persuasion, and sometimes poetry (p. 6).

Donald Graves’s research describes how focusing on the natural processes of writing provides the foundation as student writers compose in the language arts curriculum. Graves (1983) contends voice breathes through the entire process: rehearsal, topic choice, selection of information, composing, reading, and rewriting. “Kids don’t write with good voices unless the teacher has one” (p. 229). Graves (1983) suggests teacher modeling of writing with students as an important factor in the teacher instruction of composing in the classroom. “When a class becomes a community, all of its members learn to help and model for each other in the writing process.”
(Graves, 1983, p. 51). Judith Langer (1986) examined the reading and writing abilities of children at three age levels: 8, 11, and 14. In the writing analysis sections of her report, Langer described the ways students composed by looking at the social contexts that surrounded their understanding, the cognitive processes the writers invoked, and the products that were produced (Langer, 1986). She examined the approaches and strategies these students used while engaged in writing tasks. Langer's method of gathering information was through the use of 'think-alouds' and interviews. Half of the students were trained to verbalize their thoughts as they wrote, and the other half were trained to report their thoughts at the completion of the specific writing task. Langer (1986) found that intermediate students' writing strategies indicated four broad categories of writing activity: generating ideas, formulating meaning, evaluating, and revising. These strategies were found to be recursive and nonlinear. As the students wrote, their strategies may have changed in emphasis before, during or after the writing task. The eight year olds, compared to the fourteen year olds, spent more time (74% and 15%) developing their ideas after the writing piece had been written. Whereas, the fourteen year old focused more on revising and evaluation (18% and 8%) of their developing text world in comparison to the eight year olds (Langer, 1986, p. 89).

Bereiter and Scardemalia (1987) state that frequent practice for varied audience purposes, as well as instruction that focuses on meaningful goals, is important if young writers are to develop a broad range of text representations. In their research, like Langer, they employed 'think-aloud' protocols. Bereiter and Scardemalia (1987) suggest that planning becomes an integral part of the writing process at the adolescent level of composing.
“Through free association and daydreaming, the adolescents form links from one idea to the other, chaining through the process of association” (In Levy & Ransdell, 1996, p. 133). Bereiter and Scardemalia (1987) assert that planning and production in the fourth grader’s composing was the same; whereas, in the middle school writer’s process, the planning notes were different from the stories they produced. They relied on their planning notes to construct their compositions, and they talked about planning during the writing process. By leaving a record of their thoughts through their planning notes or draft, the students were able to return to their initial thought and work to revise it. In doing so, they were able to extend their own understanding of the writing to the topic.

Research suggests that writing is not one act, but a recursive cycle. Each writing act is directed by the student who is composing the piece. The strategies change as the child develops and becomes more focused on planning, drafting, and revising. This research only provides a beginning in the knowledge of writing during the intermediate and middle grades. Dahl and Farnan state (1996) “it is clear that little has been written about writing in content-area classes” (p. 35).

Writing in Response to Literature

According to Emig, (1977) it is important to have children respond to the story read, by doing so, this enables the teacher to follow the student’s thoughts. Harwayne (1992) suggests that literature helps students find ideas for their writing as the content of the story can trigger thought, unlock
memories, and help create a safe community for them to share their stories. Harwayne states that children do this by being reflective thinkers and taking a reflective stance (Harwayne, 1992).

Graves, Hansen, & Wansart (Graves, 1989) conducted a three year study with children in first through sixth grade. In this study they found that children's understanding of the fiction they read was indicated by the degree of elaboration of the characters in their writing. They also found that more personal and story specific information was shared by having students write letters in response to the literature read instead of having students write in a reading journal or writing log. The following section is on classroom discourse and how the community of the class interacts together.

Classroom Discourse

In this section, research on classroom discourse and student learning is presented. Additionally, related research on typical patterns of talk about literature in the classroom is discussed. “Classroom discourse happens among students and teachers” (emphasis in original) (Cazden, 200, p. 60). Classroom discourse research has revealed that the classroom teacher controls most of the talk (Cazden, 1988; Pinnell and Jaggar, 1991; Wells, 1992) in the classroom. Discussions of literary work are often led by the teacher, who asks students questions in order to elicit a “correct” interpretation (Applebee, 1990; Hynds, 1990; Langer, 1990). During teacher-led lessons in the classroom, the most common pattern of talk is the initiate-respond-evaluate (IRE) sequence. First, the teacher introduces the topics and asks questions. Next, the students answer the questions posed by the teacher and the teacher evaluates the students' responses (Cazden, 1988; Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975).
Applebee (1990) states that the teaching and learning of literature contributes to literary analysis and to whole class discussions. By doing so, this leads to one single acceptable interpretation. Eeds & Wells (1989) refer to this as the 'inquisition' mode of response to literature. Cazden (1988) reported that teachers expect students to talk a certain way during discussions in the classroom. The students:

- do not share narratives or personal experiences during lessons
- answer questions at the appropriate time
- contribute only relevant information (as defined by the teacher) during discussions
- use standard syntax when speaking

Major interactional structures in which literacy events were embedded in home and school contexts are studied in the work of several researchers (Green & Wallat, 1981; Collins & Green, 1991; Gutierrez, 1994) who examined how patterns of activity and 'ways of participating' are constructed in classrooms. Collins and Green (1991) emphasized the situated nature of social interactions, and Gutierrez (1994) used the notion of 'scripts' as "a way of describing organized interaction in order to better understand what is being done and how" (p. 337). Wallat (1981) describes instructional conversations as structured and teacher-directed. The classroom teacher chooses the topic, accepts, rejects or ignores students' messages, and distributes student turns (p. 175).

Student-student interactions reflect collaborative patterns of talk in the classroom. Barnes and Todd (1977) found that when students used an "exploratory" speech style that the students extended ideas, worked through disagreements and considered other possibilities. Forman & Cazden (1985) observed students during a peer collaboration and found students took the
roles of their teacher by formulating questions and verbalizing instructions. By doing so, this challenged students to express and consider alternative viewpoints.

According to Bloome et al. (1989), classroom lessons are events co-constructed by teachers and students based on cultural meanings and values for education. Bloome et al. (1989) found in their analysis of two classroom lessons of 7th and 8th graders that the teachers and students used interactional strategies to successfully complete lessons. What Bloome et al. found was that these strategies succeeded in engaging students in the content of the lessons; however, it was like recitational patterns and did not show that the students were actively engaged in the learning process. Marshall (1989) observed secondary students and found in the analysis of those observations and discussions that students contributed to the teacher’s development of an interpretation rather than constructing their own interpretations. While interviewing the teachers in this same study, Marshall found that the teacher valued the students’ responses, but Marshall discovered that their teaching practices revealed a conflict between genuine student response and the literary knowledge the teachers expected the students to know.

Current research has shown that less teacher directed forms of talk (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) in the classroom and teaching and learning as “assisted performance” provides a less teacher dominated form of classroom discourse. Applebee & Langer (1983, 1986; Langer, 1991) have discussed the features of such learning environments under the general rubric of “instructional scaffolding” (Cazden, 1979; Palinscar & Brown, 1984, Rogoff & Gardner, 1984). Applebee & Langer (1983) use the term “instructional scaffolding” to describe teaching approaches which incorporate five “natural
language learning" criteria: intentionality, appropriateness, structure, collaboration, and internalization. According to Applebee & Langer (1983) instructional scaffolding involves: (a) giving students purposeful talks that build on their prior knowledge, (b) using modeling and questioning to provide a structure within which the students can approach a task, (c) respond to students' efforts in a facilitative rather than evaluative manner, and (d) gradually withdrawing external support as students internalize the means of approaching and accomplishing the task.

Silliman & Wilkinson's (1994) study identified two types of scaffolds used in regular and special education classrooms: directive and supportive. Each type has its own structure of social interaction as patterned by the discourse of teaching. Each provides assistance to students in language and literacy learning.

**Directive Scaffolds:** from an instructional viewpoint, the most formal organizational unit of classroom interaction, parallels the direct instruction or skills-emphasis model of instruction (Pressley, 1987; Pressley & McCormick, 1995), teacher's primary job is knowledge transmission and assessment (Cazden, 1988); defined by teacher control mechanisms, designed to assess students' content knowledge in accord with a predetermined standard for acceptable participation (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990).

**Supportive Scaffolds:** instructional applications which support scaffolding, mirrors Vygotsky's concept, developed by Palincsar & Brown (1984); approach is consistent with current recommendations for student-centered instruction, values learning as a search for understanding, provides opportunities for feedback, views teaching and learning as evolving within the community of learners (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 1999); allows integration of assessment with teaching, evaluation can be immediate and ongoing and allow the level and type of support to be modified "on the spot" (Pressley & Woloshyn, 1995).

How peers influence one another's learning has been the focus of much research during the past three decades. Webb and Palincsar (1996) provided an extensive overview of current approaches to peer learning in the
classroom. Most of these approaches allowed numerous opportunities for the students to use oral discussion in connection with their literacy learning.

Examples include:

- cooperative reading and writing groups (Bramlett, 1994; Deering & Meloth, 1993)
- conversation groups (Koskinen & O'Flahavan, 1995; Leal, 1992)
- questioning the author (Beck, McKeown, Sandora, Kucan, & Worthy, 1996; McCarthy, Hoffman & Galda, 1999)
- literature discussions (Eeds & Wells, 1989; Lewis, 1997; Nystrand, Gamoran & Heck, 1993; Scharer & Peters, 1996)

In a student response centered classroom, the students talk by talking, read by reading, and write by writing (Cox in Karolides, p. 33). When the teacher and students respond to a piece of literature, they do this as a cultural and social event. Research focusing on the social dimensions of language used in the classroom maintain that the teacher and students construct knowledge together during classroom activities. Almasi and Gambrell (1994) showed that particular forms of social interaction during literature discussion in elementary school classrooms foster the growth of strategies for literary interpretation. When teachers encouraged students to listen to each other’s ideas and entertain multiple interpretations of a text and recognize alternative perspectives, the students may respond and challenge each other, spend time interpreting the text’s meaning, challenge the authors’ style, share their opinions, and question each other and the text.

Taken together, most research on classroom discourse suggests that teacher-led discussions are often teacher directed and do not actively involve students in meaningful talk. However, less common teaching approaches
such as instructional scaffolding (Applebee & Langer, 1983) indicate that collaborative teacher-student interactions can engage students in a new way of thinking, talking, and learning.

Guest Authors in Schools

Research which centers on guest author visits is scant. Much of the professional literature on author visits is anecdotal and few formal research studies have been conducted. University scholars have discussed the importance of author visits in the literacy curriculum in schools for over twenty years (Calkins, 1986; Harste, Short, & Burke, 1989, Vandergrift, 1980; Huck et al, 1999) but only two formal research studies have been reported on the impact of an author visit with children in a school setting (Staas, 1987; Simons, 1995). Both studies were located after a comprehensive search. Both Staas' (1987) and Simons' (1995) studies investigated what children learned from a visiting author program in whole school settings. An emphasis on the planning stages were prevalent in both studies and the general learning effects of the student body and adults in each setting were described. However, no study, to the best of my knowledge, is available which reveals the process beginning to end of an author study in one naturally occurring classroom environment. However, many anecdotal writings from several classroom teachers, authors, and scholars have been written on the importance of implementing an author visit in a school and classroom. In many of these accounts on author visits, the authors of the articles offer descriptions of the preparation and planning for an author visit and comments on the positive impacts of the one day special event from students and staff.
Education scholars have referred to the importance of including author visits as part of the curriculum for the language arts curriculum (Avery, 1993; Calkins, 1986; Harste, 1989; Routman, 2000; Vandergrift, 1980). According to Harste, Short & Burke (1998):

Students' recognition of themselves as authors is facilitated when they have the chance to meet professionally published authors or when they hear and read about the lives of the professionally published authors. They begin to see professional authors as real people who have to work hard at their writing and who encounter difficulties in their writing, just as students do. Learning about and meeting authors demystifies the authoring process and opens students up to exploring different strategies in their own writing. Students also develop a personal feeling for authors whom they have met or learned about, and so they search for that person's work at the library. They begin to recognize an individual author's or illustrator's style. As they become familiar with certain authors, they are able to make better predictions as they read that persons' work, and this in turn, facilitates their comprehension (p. 232).

Kay Vandergrift's (1980) work has been influential in the importance of including visiting author programs in schools for students. She emphasized, in her book Child and Story, the importance for students to see what real writers do when they write stories. "An excellent means of encouraging children and young people to become involved in literary discussions and in their own work as writers is to provide opportunities for them to meet the authors of some of the books they have read" (p. 200). Visiting author programs offer students the opportunity to see firsthand what an author does in the authoring process and stimulate reading (Schachter, 1980).

One of the first informal studies, done by Schachter (1980) utilized author visits via video cassettes. In this study, well known children's authors were videotaped and the videotapes were presented to the students in classes. The program was called, "Profiles in Literature" and each tape was approximately 30 minutes in length. According to Schachter (1980), "a great
deal can be learned from establishing authors in person and via mixed media. Their wisdom and experience await talented young people. For some, the experience may plant an early seed of desire to become a professional writer” (p. 70). Fusco (1981) also conducted an informal study by observing an “Author’s Week” in her school. Thirteen authors spoke to a total of 520 students in 46 groups. Pre-and post-attitudinal surveys were given to students to gauge the success of the “Author Week” project. The survey results indicated positive changes in student attitudes toward the process of writing and toward the authors (Fusco, 1981, p. 677). Several books were ordered prior to the visit for the library and circulation records were monitored before and after the author project. The results showed a significant increase in books being checked out of the library.

Parker (1981) described an author visit in her school by Karla Kuskin. She described in detail the before, during, and after effects of the visit. The students made art work, wrote poems, and looked up biographical information prior to the author visit. Following the author visit, Parker states the excitement of the visit continued with students seeking out books by Kuskin and with the continuation of poetry writing by the students.

Staas’ (1987) qualitative dissertation research on the the effects of visits by authors in selected elementary schools found that positive attitudes were generated around and because of the author visits. In this study she looked at two authors in four elementary schools and found that some members of three groups-teachers, students, and librarians attempted creative writing as a result of the author visits. Over seventy-five percent of the students attempted to check out or purchase a book written by one of the two authors. This was strongly attributed to the read aloud activities done by the teachers.
before the visit in preparing students. She also found that each visit consisted of three stages: advance planning, day of visit, and follow up activities.

Simons' (1995) Master's of Arts thesis investigated what children learned from a visiting author program implemented in a rural school district. Data were collected before, during and after the author visit. The findings emphasized that while students gained information from the author visit, little writing was done to strengthen the connection between reading and writing. Her findings, like Staas's, showed that the organization of the author visit followed three planning stages. As Staas (1987) and Simons' (1995) found, most author visits can be typically characterized as following three stages (Buzzeo & Kurtz, 1999; McElmeel, 1994; Peck, 1982; Smith, 1999; Schwartz, 1995; Simons, 1995; and Staas, 1987). The first stage consists of advance planning and preparation for the day of the visit with the author's body of work, the second stage involves activities relating to the author visit, and the third stage consists of follow-up activities relating to the school curriculum following the author visit. Advance preparation before the author visit consists of inviting the author, learning about the author through autobiographical information, ordering the author's books for sale to the students and staff, students and staff reading books by the author, launching book-based projects, preparing the schedule for the author day visit, and publicizing the visit to the community (Buzzeo & Kurtz, 1999; McElmeel, 1994; Smith, 1999; Schwartz, 1995; Simons, 1995; Staas, 1987).

Preparing the student audience for an author visit is vital for a successful author visit. This stage is pivotal to the success of the visit (Buzzeo & Kurtz, 1999; Calkins, 1986; McElmeel, 1994; Smith, 1999; Schwartz, 1995; Simons, 1995; Staas, 1987). Students must study the work of the authors and
be prepared to “raise questions about specific techniques used and decisions made by them in their work” (Vandergrift, 1980, p. 200). Generating meaningful questions “encourages students to zero in on the particulars of the artist’s work and life” (Schwartz, 1885, p. 49). If students have read and discussed the works written by an author prior to the visit, the author has a foundation to build a discussion on and the author and students have a connection with each other and a foundation to build upon in which the author can talk about the themes of his stories and how books are written (Smith, 1999, p. 16). Calkins (1986) states “The meaning of these authors’ days (visits) depends entirely on what has gone on before the hoopla, too often they are preceded by hasty assignments telling children that stories for Authors’ Days are due the day after tomorrow...implicit in the motion of a single culminating event scheduled near the end of the year, is the notion that authorship is an end point. Publication means that the process is over and children can now gaze at their monuments.” (p. 225). McElmeel (1994) states, ‘The audience must be totally prepared and the visit must be viewed as a culmination of the celebration of the author/illustrator’s books. The celebration of the author/illustrator’s work is one that incorporates many reading and writing activities, as well as integrates those activities into other curriculum areas” (p. 43).

Motivating students for the upcoming event creates an excitement with students. Preparation activities include the teacher and students reading the author’s work, and the teacher developing activities related to the author’s work. Whole group and individual activities may include: authoring and publishing a book, composing songs, creating artwork, doing book based projects, read aloud sessions, choral readings, hall displays, library

The second stage of the author visit is the visit itself. Author visits can be whole school or single class experiences. Typically, an assembly begins the visit for a whole school visit. Presentations (30-40 minutes in length) with small groups of students or individual classrooms comprise the majority of the one day author visit. During these sessions, the author’s craft is shared by the author in which he/she discusses how the ideas came for individual books and his/her personal and professional background and the process of writing. According to Oesau (in Gutman, 1997), “They (students) also see that the process of writing they learn in school is the same as the way authors work—rough drafts, rewrites, rejections are all part of any writer’s life, and students benefit from knowing that writing is an ongoing—often difficult—process.” (p. 65). According to Buzzeo & Kurtz (1999), some book people particularly stress writing in their visits. Jane (Kurtz) says, “I emphasize many of the same writing principles in my presentations that I do in my own writing classes—‘write what you know’ and ‘all writing is rewriting’ (p. 71). Last, the students are usually given the opportunity to ask questions from the audience (Allen, 1994; Baker, 1993; Buzzeo & Kurtz, 1999; Caseley, 1999; Day, 1977; McElmeel, 1994; Schwartz, 1995; Simons, 1995; Staas, 1987). Autograph sessions usually occur where the author signs copies of his/her work for the students and staff, which provides a personal moment with the author to
possibly ask a question or make a comment about a book (Buzzeo & Kurtz, 1999; Caseley, 1999; Hale, 1986; McElmeel, 1994; Schwartz, 1995; Simons, 1995; Staas, 1987).

The third and final stage is following the day of the author visit. This stage usually consists of reading and writing activities following the author visit. During this stage, students may write thank-you letters, reflect on what they learned from the author visit through discussions and writing activities, such as modeling the author’s style of writing, and the reading of additional books by the author (Buzzeo & Kurtz, 1999; Caseley, 1999; Gutman, 1997; Harste, Short, & Burke, 1988; McElmeel, 1994; Schwartz, 1995; Simons, 1995; Smith, 1999; Staas, 1987). However, the literature does not mention specific follow-up activities or lessons intended to relate the author’s visit back to the student’s own writing (Staas, 1987; Simons, 1995).

Much of the literature suggests that author visits present learning opportunities in reading and writing. The literature suggests these visits are seen as a “one day special event” with the actual author visit itself as the focal point. Activities are centered around the author’s work. Most often the planning follows three stages: advance planning, day of visit, and follow up activities. These visits also prompt other activities such as checking out the author’s books from the library following the visit. However, more research is needed to support the literacy learning in reading and writing students make following the visit.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

This qualitative, descriptive study will attempt to describe the impact of a school author study/visit on seventh graders' literacy activities in one seventh grade language arts classroom. Data collection over a period of seven weeks was divided into three phases, prior to the author visit, during the author visit and after the author visit. The types of data collected included: (1) field notes of classroom observations; (2) researcher log; (3) focus group discussions with the students; (4) teacher, student, and author interviews; and (4) student reflection journals.

Qualitative Approach

This study was designed to be a descriptive study within the context of one middle school, with the emphasis on one seventh grade classroom. The classroom is one of the most important contexts for the development of children’s responses to literature, and I needed to be present as the participants engaged in activities. By using a variety of empirical evidence, I was able to describe the routines, moments and meanings of the teacher, students, and other adults in this school setting and classroom.

Qualitative inquiry provides the opportunity to look at the “enormous complexity of social phenomena” (Peshkin, 1988, p. 417). Just as there are various philosophical perspectives which can inform qualitative research,
there are various qualitative research methods. The research method I chose states the views on the research knowledge and the perspectives on reality (Glesne, 1999, p. 4). The choice of the research method influenced the way in which I collected the data. According to Glesne, (1999) "to understand the nature of constructed realities, qualitative researchers interact and talk with participants about their perceptions" (p. 5). Specific research methods also imply different skills, assumptions and research practices. The interpretivist does not seek out one perspective, rather, she seeks out a variety of perspectives. This entire research design was constructed by me so the methodology used throughout is my interpretation. According to Fine (1994), the researcher must "probe how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations" (p. 72).

Qualitative researchers associate trustworthiness with internal validity and transferability with external validity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Validity is associated with knowledge creation in more ideological paradigms. It forced me to examine the data to see if my interpretations were in line with what had been collected. I constantly asked myself whether this study is unbiased and does it compare with other studies? According to Altheide and Johnson (1994), researchers need a logical and systematic way of assessing and communicating the interactive process through which the researcher acquires the research experience and information (p. 485). By analyzing the intimate relationships between the research process and the findings, I addressed these problems of validity with straightforward honesty and integrity (Altheide &
Johnson, 1994, p. 486). And so, acting on these principles, I approached the inherent complexity of this social interaction and attempted to do justice to that complexity (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Selection of Site

Site Entry

The selection of the suburban school in this study was based on accessibility. There was an existing relationship between the school and the author when the librarian contacted the author in the Spring of 2000 to schedule the author visit for Spring 2001. Criteria for the selection of the school as the site of the research included: (1) a curriculum that addressed and promoted multiple literacy opportunities; and (2) a staff which shared this common philosophy. The selection of the teacher was guided by these priorities: (1) an expert teacher interested in participating in ongoing conversations about her own literacy teaching and decision making processes and her student's literacy learning processes; and (2) a teacher who had not yet begun activities for the author visit.

Initial contact was made through the school librarian. Then, the research was cleared by the building principal. The librarian stated a seventh grade teacher was very interested in my research topic and agreed to have research conducted in her classroom. I met with the teacher and after reading the research proposal, the teacher granted me permission to do research in her seventh grade classroom. Soon after, formal approvals were granted from the Ohio State University Human Subjects Review Committee and the district's Board of Education during Winter Quarter 2001.
Issues of Access

Before the study began, I had access to people within the site (Glesne, 2001; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). I toured the facilities, talked informally with teachers and was invited by the librarian to observe a staff planning meeting in February for the author visit in April.

Access issues were discussed at several levels, and a good working relationship was established with the school. Although issues of accessibility have to be continually re-negotiated throughout the research process, beginning steps were taken to insure trust, rapport and authentic communication patterns with the principal, participating teacher, librarian, staff, and students.

Through informed consent, the teacher, librarian, author and student participants in this study were made aware of the methods and purpose of the study so that they received enough information to make a rational decision. A formal, detailed research proposal was submitted to the school district and was officially approved. The teacher in this study was also given a copy of the proposal, so that she knew in a detailed way what I was planning to do in the study. Permission was sought from each parent and student for the student’s participation in the study according to the Ohio State University guidelines. “Informed consent” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 111) permission slips were given to the teacher, author, parents, and student participants in the classroom. An oral explanation was given to the children in the class and a detailed letter and consent form explaining the study was sent home to each parent with the child. Consent was granted for 15 of the 18 children in the classroom to participate in the study. Permission was elicited from the parent.

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or guardian for the collection of written documents, and for each child to be observed, interviewed, and audio-taped. There were no negative consequences of a parent or student choosing not to participate; participation was voluntary and at any point in time a child was free to drop out of the study.

The School District and Building

The School District

The middle school is located in a suburban area outside a large midwestern city. The median income is $36,933. The price of homes ranges from $115,000-400,000. During the time of the study, approximately 10,300 students were enrolled in this district in grades kindergarten through twelfth grade. Approximately 87% percent of these students were European-American; about 6 percent Asian; about 6% African American, and 1 percent were either Hispanic and/or American Indian. Approximately 200 students spoke approximately 20 different languages in the school district. The district had 12 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, 2 comprehensive high schools and one Alternative High School. The student-teacher ratio in the district was 18.6:1.

During the time of this study, the school system was in the process of asking the community to vote and approve an operating levy. Many cuts in the building budget were made to save money. Teachers were asked to copy on both sides of the paper, reuse one sided paper, and no colored paper was used for classroom projects.
The Building

This middle school was self-described as a “Best Practice” school as recognized by the state. Approximately 400 students attended the school. The students were accustomed to visitors. During my study, students from a nearby university came and observed for a day and incoming fall sixth graders toured the classrooms on another day. The teacher stated that college students had visited throughout the school year to observe classes and the school’s unique scheduling of blocked/period classes that run simultaneously during the school day. The blocked schedule of classes attracts visitors from other school systems.

After school activities frequently occur. One such night was called “Quality Night,” which was an open house run by the students to invite their parents to come and see their work in all areas of the curriculum. Much preparation and enthusiasm were shown for this family event.

The physical layout of the school was inviting with motivational posters and announcements posted on the hallway walls. Throughout the school walls, various student art projects were framed and displayed. These pieces of art were a culmination of many years.

The Classroom

The classroom for this study was located on the second floor of the building. It was shared by two teachers. The other teacher who shared this room taught World History. The room was divided in half with two teacher work areas. Each teacher’s half of the room was decorated by that teacher. The entire room was bright and cheerful. Posters, student work, and books filled the classroom. On one side of the room was the rug area, which was the
primary gathering place for daily language arts instruction. On the other side of the room were rows of desks and chairs that were often used for group and independent work.

Figure 3.1: Map of Classroom

The Language Arts Program

This suburban school utilized a literature-based reading program. Language Arts instruction integrated reading, writing, and spelling into one blocked time period of approximately 80 minutes. The teacher was one of four language arts teachers in the seventh grade. The philosophy of the faculty and
staff was one that embraced literature as an integral part of the Language Arts Curriculum. The middle school curriculum states:

The Language Arts program is designed to provide instruction for the development of the communication skills of writing, reading, speaking and listening. Literature assignments include short stories, plays, poetry, novels, and other forms and are taught in a wide range of approaches, from large group to individualization. There is an emphasis placed on increasing student's interest and motivation toward reading and writing as life-long pursuits.

Much interactive instruction between the teacher and students occurred. Students had daily opportunity to talk. Large group, small group, and individual instruction were used to clarify and assist in learning. Children's literature was an integral part of each day. Bookshelves were lined with quality literature, and many different genres of books were present. Prior to the author study on the work of Margaret Peterson Haddix, the students completed an individual project on the work of any author of their choice.

The teacher facilitated discussions before, during, and following the book she read aloud. Extensions to the literature followed with drama, writing, art, etc. Blocks of time were set aside for S. S. R. (sustained silent reading), D. O. L. (daily oral language), literature discussions, journal writing, story writing, free writing, drama, and vocabulary. Students worked either independently or collaboratively with other students in the classroom.

Participants

Teacher

At the time of this study, the teacher was in her twenty-fifth year of teaching. She taught 14 years of sixth grade; seven years of Language Arts instruction in eighth grade and five years in seventh grade teaching Science,
Social Studies, and Language Arts. The year of this study, she moved from eighth grade to seventh grade Language Arts instruction. The teacher believes:

"Children's literature should just permeate the classroom and should be a starting point for everything. It's about life. It's about how to deal with things. It shows you are not alone. It's how to figure out the answers to big questions. It should be read all the time. Kids should be reading. Teachers should be reading to kids."

The teacher's planning and implementation of the various literature activities of the author study will be described in detail in the data collection chapter.

Students

There were 18 students in the language arts class when the study began. No children left the class and no new children entered the class during the time of the study. Of the 18 students, 15 were granted permission to participate in the study. Of the 15 students, 14 were of European-American ethnicity and one was African American. There were 8 boys and 7 girls. None of these students received remedial assistance in reading programs implemented in the school curriculum.

The teacher and I discussed possible focal students, and I asked her to nominate a cross sampling of students identified as possible "focal students" to be chosen by the end of week one of the study. The purpose of selecting a focus group was to take a more in-depth look at the nature of literacy learning in the classroom. Both the teacher and I wanted a representative sampling of all students in the classroom. Both the criteria and the choice of the students were the result of a collaborative effort between the teacher and me. The following criteria were used in focal group selection in this study: gender,
ethnicity, socio-economic categories, and social dynamics within the classroom. We chose collaboratively the children that would represent the focus group. Our first concern was that the group should represent an equal number based on gender. Three girls and three boys were chosen. Second, in so far as possible, we chose students who represented a variety of ethnicity and socio-economic status. Third, we felt the focus group should represent a wide range of participation, reading and writing interest. Two students whom I had considered initially were not considered after the teacher stated they were popular and often got chosen to do many special things, and she thought they should be not be considered. A total of four focus group discussions took place. The students seemed to work well together, so no membership changes were made during the duration of the study.

Participation in the focus groups did not involve any stress to the students. Because the teacher had used literature groups as part of her classroom language arts instruction activities, the students found the focus groups and activities an extension of what the teacher did prior to the study.

Visiting Author

Margaret Peterson Haddix is the author of many novels for children and young adults. These novels include Running Out of Time (1995), Don’t You Dare Read This Mrs. Dunphrey (1996), Leaving Fishers (1997), Among the Hidden (1997), Just Ella (1999), Turnabout (2000) and The Girl With 500 Middle Names (2000). Her work has been honored with the International Reading Association Children’s Book Award, American Library Association Best Books for Young Adults and Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers citations, and several state readers’ choice awards. She graduated with
a bachelor's degree in history, creative writing, and journalism. After college, she worked as a reporter at The Indianapolis News. She now writes full-time as a children's author.

**Role of Researcher**

Denzin & Lincoln (1994) state that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting and attempt to interpret and make sense of the phenomena in terms of the meanings the respondents bring to them. My goal was to describe and interpret. An interpretivist researcher looks at how people understand their worlds and how they create and share those meanings about their experiences. During the act of describing and interpreting, new knowledge is generated through the interaction between the teacher and students. By doing this, there is a continuous and constant give and take between the participants as they converse with one another. An interpretivist's job is to describe and interpret, and as the inquirer in this classroom, I did not stand autonomous of the students and teacher. To assume an independent reality was not my purpose as the interpreter.

At the time of data collection, I was a full-time doctoral student at Ohio State University in the area of Language, Literature, and Culture. My cognate areas include Children's Literature, Language Arts, and Research. I have taught sixth and seventh grades in a middle school for 4 years and fifth grade in an elementary school for 7 years. I had three author visits in my classroom the last four years of teaching. I have also observed other author visits in various schools. At the time of writing this report, I was an assistant professor at a private college teaching reading courses.
During this study, I planned to be a resource for both the teacher and students in the classroom. My role in this study moved along a continuum of observation and participation (Spradley, 1980). During whole group instruction, I never participated in the lesson or discussions. I was never asked to contribute, nor did I ever enter the discussion myself. At times, during independent or group work time, as I walked around the room taking field notes or moved the tape recorder closer to a group of students, I would occasionally be asked a question, or a student would volunteer to share their work, or I would ask a student about their work in progress. When I met with the focus students in literature discussions I participated as if I were another teacher in the class or I observed without participating in the student discussions.

Research Design

Data Gathering and Organization of the Study

This section contains a discussion of the roles assumed by the researcher, the phases of data collection and the types of data collected. The qualitative inquiry underlying this study used participant observation, audiotapes with full and selective transcription, field notes of classroom observations such as discussions and reading aloud to the students, transcribed audiotaped interviews (formal and informal with the teacher), student interviews, school artifacts (photographs of posted classroom writings, bulletin boards, etc.) documents such as copies of student writing/drawings in portfolios, and copies of handouts from the teacher given during instruction.
Methods consisted of (1) field notes of classroom observations; (2) researcher log; (3) focus group discussions with the selected students; (4) teacher/student/author interviews; and (4) student journals for reflection on the author study.

Organization of the Study

Data collection was divided into three stages: prior to the author visit, during the author visit and after the author visit. The period of data collection for this study was seven weeks.

During Stage I (week one), I observed the teacher and the students for one week prior to the beginning of the author study. I observed and documented their classroom culture and the routines of the language arts classroom. I described the various uses of literature that were used in the classroom with the teacher and students. I observed the concluding project of the author study and how each individual child conducted his research. This project was already in progress before I entered the classroom. I also described the physical arrangement of the classroom.

Within this stage, I conducted informal interviews with the teacher and asked questions about the instructional decisions and culture of the classroom. A researcher log was kept beginning on day one of observations and continued throughout the end of the study. I noted various types of data collected and my self-reflective comments on the procedures, the progress of the study, and my relationships with the teacher and students in the study.
During the Author Study

During Stage II (week two-week five), I began to audio-tape the Language Arts lesson daily. I audiotaped the teacher reading aloud a book written by the author, *Among The Hidden*, to the whole group. The teacher and I briefly collaborated on the choice of the book. She asked me my opinion of which book she should read aloud to the students. I gave her two suggestions and she chose one. During this phase, the first teacher interview was conducted. At varying times throughout the study, informal discussions and debriefings occurred between the teacher and myself.

Each student was asked to keep a self-reflective journal. I provided a small spiral notebook to each student. The teacher and I decided on this format at the beginning of the study. The students were asked to keep an "author study" journal and they could write anything they chose which pertained to the author study. I collected the journals at the end of each week and made photo copies and gave the teacher back the student journals the following school day.

Data Collection During the Author Visit

The day of the author visit, April 18, 2001, I observed the author, teachers, staff, and followed the scheduled events of the special day. These activities included observing the whole school assemblies, the regular scheduled classroom session, and activities involving the author visit. I took extensive observational field notes of each activity and audio-taped one small group literature discussion with the author and students.
Data Collection After the Author Visit

During Stage III (week six and seven) of the author study, I observed in the classroom once immediately following the author speech and one day following the author visit. At that time, the teacher said she was “wrapping things up” with classroom activities. An agreement was made that I would come back at the end of the school year and collect reading records, student writing samples, and she would share with me via e-mail or in person any classroom or individual discussions pertaining to the study following my departure from the classroom. I also requested if any writing activities were to take place, if I could be invited back to the classroom to observe those activities.

Formal interviews were conducted with each student, teacher, librarian and the author within two weeks of the day of the visit. The student interviews took place three days after the author visit. I asked the teacher for permission to take the students out in the hall (or in another convenient, quiet area to interview the students). Each interview was audio recorded. A final teacher interview was conducted 14 days following the author visit to supplement any information that was not clearly obtained about the teacher’s ongoing decision making processes. I initially planned to interview her within a day or two of the author visit, but decided to wait since I was leaving the classroom and I planned to spend time in the follow-up interview asking about any student discussions following the author visit.

An interview with the school librarian was conducted the morning following the author visit. The interview was 30 minutes in length. Before the interview I asked the librarian if she would be willing to keep track of any circulation records of Margaret Peterson Haddix books checked out from the
school library. I also asked her if she could keep track of any comments or discussions students made after the author visit to her as the librarian. I suggested she could keep a record of date, comment, and grade level of student. I asked her to either e-mail or keep a journal of those student/teacher/librarian remarks. She agreed and said she would do this task.

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Figure 3.2: Organization of the Study

**Types of Data Collected**

The types of data collected included observational field notes of many varieties; interviews with the teacher, students, librarian, and author;

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audiotaped read alouds and teacher directed activities with the whole class; focus group literature discussions, documents from student work, handouts from the teacher, and a researcher log.

Observational Field Notes

Handwritten observational field notes were kept throughout the study in two spiral-bound notebooks. Observational notes were kept on the right side of the pages, and left facing sides were reserved for preliminary analysis. In all, there were a total of 222 pages of handwritten notes. The notes were of various types. I noted the different types of data collected and my self-reflective comments on my procedures, the progress of the study, and my relationships with the teacher, staff and students in the study. There were notes as I observed the day-to-day language arts instruction, activities and other literacy activities the teacher and student engaged in on a daily basis. I took notes on the teacher and how she instructed her lessons, managed her classroom and interacted with the students. Notes were taken of student interactions individually, in small groups and as a whole group. Some notes consisted of my self-reflective comments and questions about procedures, the progress of the study, and my relationship with the teacher and students. Notations were taken on my preliminary analysis through patterns I was observing, hunches, hypotheses, questions, and speculations about the observations I was seeing within the social construction of the classroom.

Teacher Interviews

Two interviews were conducted with the classroom teacher. The questions for the interviews came from the research questions. The
interviews were open-ended and occurred in March and May. The purpose of the two interviews was to understand the teacher's philosophy of teaching, learning, the use of children's literature in the classroom, and the use of author visits as a tool in literacy learning and teaching. As I interviewed the teacher, my purpose was three-fold. First, I wanted "an insider's perspective" to form an accurate appraisal of the teacher and to observe and interact enough with her to establish an insider's identity. I wanted to have a record of her reflective attitudes and interpretations of the progress of the study because interviews are used to determine what is on the interviewee's mind (Patton, 1990). Second, I wanted to note the personal interactions, habits, and social organizations in the interview as the teacher discussed the topic at hand (Denzin, 1994, p. 380). Third, I wanted to quote her directly and precisely when she spoke about these issues. The first interview was conducted during the teacher's planning period and the second interview was conducted after school. The second interview was a more in-depth interview. In-depth interviewing is a data collection technique that is used by ethnographers to ascertain the participant's perspective on a specific phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed by me. The questions that guided the interviews are listed in Appendix C.

Librarian Interview

Two formal interviews were conducted with the librarian. The first one was about two weeks prior to the author visit and the second one was the day following. The first one was conducted at the nearby public library at 10:00 a.m. The second interview was in her office before school from 8:15-8:45 a.m. Each lasted approximately 30 minutes in length and the questions were open-
ended. The purpose of these interviews was to understand the librarian's philosophy of teaching and learning as it pertained to the use of author visits as a tool in literacy instruction. As I interviewed the librarian, my purpose was three fold. First, I wanted "an insider's perspective" to form an accurate appraisal of the librarian's perceptions of the author visit and any other related perceptions. I wanted to observe and interact enough with her to establish an insider's identity and to have a record of her reflective attitudes and interpretations of the author visit because interviews are used to determine what is on the interviewee's mind (Patton, 1990) Second, I wanted to note the personal interactions, habits, and social organizations in the interview as the librarian discussed the topic at hand (Denzin, 1994, p. 380). Third, I wanted to quote her directly and precisely when she spoke about these issues. During the first interview I took detailed notes of her responses and the second interview was audiotaped and transcribed by me the same day of the interview. The questions that guided the interviews are listed in Appendix C.

Student Interview

One formal interview was conducted with every student in the study on the third school day following the author visit. The questions for the interviews came from the research questions. The purpose of the interviews was to enable me to ask each student about how their literacy in reading/writing changed during and after the author visit. Each interview took place outside the classroom in a small alcove located across the hall from the teacher's classroom. The interviews were conducted during the language arts class session and carried over into the students next class session, which
was Science. I obtained permission from the Science teacher to use a portion of her class time because I wanted to complete all interviews on the same day since all the students were present, and I did not want to give the students access to discuss the questions with other students. I wanted their own personal opinions without any outside influence during the interview sessions. The interview was audiotaped and transcribed by me the same day. The questions that guided the interviews are listed in Appendix C.

Author Interview

An author interview of Margaret Peterson Haddix was conducted two weeks following the school visit in the author's home. It lasted about 45 minutes. The purpose of interviewing Ms. Haddix was to discover: (1) her perceptions of author visits; (2) her insights of this particular author visit; (3) her personal history and preparation for author visits, and (4) her perspective on what schools and teachers can do to make a school author visit successful. The questions that guided the interviews are listed in Appendix C.

Classroom Observations

Classroom procedures included the teacher reading aloud to the students on a regular basis. During the study, she read aloud the book *Among the Hidden* by Margaret Peterson Haddix, a picture book titled, *Black and White* by David Macauley, and the beginning chapters of an advance copy of *Among the Impostors* by Haddix. During the reading of the novel, *Among the Hidden*, the usual pattern was to read aloud the book at the beginning of the language arts blocked period. During this time, the children were either seated in chairs around a carpeted area or sitting or lying on the carpeted area.
The carpeted area was separated by desks and chairs. The teacher usually sat in a student chair. A total of 14 whole group read aloud sessions were observed. The teacher spent about 20-25 minutes per language arts session reading aloud. I audio-taped 13 of the 14 read aloud sessions. During one read aloud session, there was a failure of the audio-tape equipment, so only observational notes were available. During each read aloud session I made observational notes of the students' verbal and non-verbal responses.

Teacher led activities that followed the read aloud sessions included whole and small group discussions, small group writing activities, small group drama activities, and individual writing activities. These will be discussed in chapter four.

Small Group Literature Discussions

The procedures for conducting the small group discussions were as follows. On the day of the first discussion group, the teacher assigned each student in the class to a discussion group. She directed the discussion groups where to go in the classroom to conduct their group work and for all literature group sessions the students followed that initial protocol. The students went to the same designated area each time. The timing for these sessions varied from week to week, with one a week being the average. The time these groups met during the blocked language arts block varied. The activities the teacher had planned for the day depended on the time scheduled for the discussion groups. Each discussion group was about 20-30 minutes in length. The small discussion groups were perceived by the students as an extension of their daily instructional activities.
The seating for the discussions was similar during each session. The students and I sat around a small grouping of desks that were pushed together to resemble a table. It was very informal; at times, students would sit on top of a table instead of being seated in a chair. The seating arrangements were usually on a first come first serve basis. The girls usually sat beside one another as did the boys. I usually sat where a chair was available or a space was available to move a chair into the seating arrangement.

Each small group discussion (topic) was teacher directed. She had discussion questions on a handout for the students to follow. For each session, the students were instructed to take turns being the recorder or discussion leader. The recorder was in charge of writing down the answers to the questions on the worksheet, and the discussion leader was in charge of reading the questions off the handout and moving the discussion along so that all questions would get answered in the allotted time for the group work. The discussion leader also encouraged each child to participate in the discussion. The choice for the group discussions were the result of the teacher's own personal planning.

My participation in the literature discussion group varied along a continuum. At times, if asked verbally or nonverbally, I would talk or ask questions in the discussions group session, but for the most part I observed. I audio-taped and transcribed each focus group discussion and made observational field notes of verbal and non-verbal behaviors during each discussion group session. In all, there were four discussion groups during the study. My purpose as the researcher was to encourage discussion among the students, not to direct the discussion about the author's work. At times, I did participate during teachable moments to bring additional insight to the
discussions. According to Eeds and Wells (1989), the researcher will be sensitive to teachable moments when a student's response about the text can bring attention to a literary aspect of the author's work.

Self-Reflective Student Journals

During the author study, each student was asked to keep a self-reflective journal. I provided a small spiral notebook for each student to record their responses. They were passed out by me on the first day of the author study. Prior to the study, the teacher and I discussed what the purpose of the journal was. The students were told by the teacher that it was an “Author Study” journal, and they may write anything they choose which pertains to the author study of Margaret Peterson Haddix. The teacher verbally stated to the students, (which she read from the piece of paper I pasted into each journal) “This journal's purpose is to represent your feelings, thoughts, insights, and exploration in any form of expression you choose (diary, poems, free writing) in your understanding of the author's work or your own changes in how you look at reading and writing.”

The students were asked to write in the journal 3-5 times per week with no word length required. I suggested to the teacher that 5-10 minutes be given each day for the students to write in the journals. The students were also encouraged to write in the journals at any other time, as there was no time or word limit. The journal was intended as an open-ended response log with little guidance from the teacher or me.

I hoped the data would inform me about student learning, observations, questions, personal connections, and possible new learning directions. I did not want to put ideas into the students mind by suggesting
topics, since the purpose was to find out what the students were interested in as it related to the author study. However, a back up measure was prepared if they needed "gentle" prompting. For example, the teacher and I discussed after the first week of responses that the students were mainly giving "retellings" of the chronological event in the chapters read aloud by the teacher. The teacher and I discussed the directions originally given to the students and she suggested to the students to not retell and modeled some of her own examples for responses in the journals. I collected and monitored the journals and made photo copies each week and immediately gave the journals back to the classroom teacher.

Researcher Log

A researcher log was kept beginning on day one of the study and continued until the conclusion of the classroom study. I kept this in a notebook in a journal format. Initially, I began to keep this in my observational field notebook, but after noting the amount of students watching me write, I switched to a notebook that was separate and wrote my thoughts after the language arts sessions. I noted various types of data collected and my self-reflective comments on my procedures, the progress of the study, and my relationships with the teacher, students, and staff in the study. The purpose of the researcher log was to monitor my own subjectivity and bring issues to the forefront with my field notes visible to me as a constant reminder. This empowered me by allowing me to document the specific changes in the interpretations from the beginning of the study to its conclusion.
Transcription

I transcribed my own data throughout the duration of the study. I transcribed each audio-taped interview, language arts lesson (all but one due to audio-tape difficulties), focus group discussions, and the reading discussion group with the author (two of the 15 students participated in a reading group the day of the author visit). Almost all data collected were transcribed verbatim unless there was independent work being done by students in which no one verbally communicated or if the whole class was working collaboratively on projects and it was impossible to hear any conversations clearly. As I transcribed each language arts session and the interviews, it helped me become more familiar and intimate with the dialogue and mannerisms of the participants during the observations and the interviews. Factors that affected the transcribing of the recorded interviews were background noise in the classroom, students who spoke too softly, students talking over one another, and the fast speed/pace of the student responses.

When the teacher did an activity that was not related to my study, such as daily oral language, morning announcements, fire and tornado drill procedures, etc., I did not always transcribe those unrelated activities within the classroom sessions.

Transcribing my own data proved to be advantageous because I became much more familiar with the data and was able to recreate each lesson in my mind in a play-by-play manner. According to Kvale, transcription in itself is an “interpretivist process” (Kvale, 1996). During the act of transcribing, I often made notes of patterns and predictions. "In working with the material it is
important that the researcher work with the whole. Preselecting parts of the tapes to transcribe and omitting others tends to lead to premature judgments about what is important and what is not” (Seidman, 1998).

Data Analysis

In the interpretivist paradigm, the findings and analysis are created and developed. According to Guba & Lincoln, (1994) “the investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the ‘findings’ are literally created as the investigation proceeds” (p. 111). Data analysis is not a separate function from data collection. Initial analysis should follow data collection from the onset and remain as a recursive process throughout the entire study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Spradley (1980), data collection and data analysis have a transactive relationship, affecting one another, so waiting until all the data is collected deprives the method of its power. In order to establish and support high data quality, my field notes from the observations and interviews were immediately and personally transcribed.

Data was analyzed recursively according to the constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) whereby the data gradually evolve into an emerging theory (Merrian, 1998, p. 191). Building theory in the manner described by Glaser & Strauss (1967) as an ongoing repetitive process integrated into all phases of the research process. It is mainly an inductive process with the researcher moving back and forth from inductive to deductive modes of thinking (Merriam, 1998, p. 192). Categories and patterns emerge from the data rather than being presumed prior to the data collection.
The purpose of analysis is to determine the categories, relationships, and assumptions that form the participant's view of the topic.

Data analysis began by reviewing the purpose of the study, which was to explore, discover, describe and interpret. I came to this exploration with a sense of what the literature review said should be there and with a sense of how the topic at issue was established in my own experiences. I began to search for general statements about my relationships among categories of data to build a grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1997). My analytic procedures fell into six phases: (1) organizing the data; (2) generating categories, themes, and patterns; (3) coding the data; (4) testing for emergent understanding; (5) searching for alternative explanations; (6) and writing the analysis in Chapter 4 (Glesne, 1999, p. 152).

When all the data were collected, each of the 17 transcripts was transcribed. The transcripts were organized according to session to enable comparing of the teacher procedures and student responses. I read through all transcripts and field notes each day for two weeks. People, events and quotations were constantly going through my mind as I became more familiar with the data (Glesne, 1999). My goal was to become as intimate with the data as possible.

Second, a coding system was created based on the research questions. I began searching the data for emerging themes and then separating the data into categories associated with those themes as it related to my research questions. I put the categories, themes, and patterns on index cards. I did this over and over as I went through the data. I did this until "salient categories" emerged from the data. "Coding was a progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting those papers of collected data"
that were applicable to my research purpose” (Glesne, 1999, p. 135). I repeatedly looked for emergent patterns and alternative explanations (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This process enabled me to see patterns growing and expanding.

Third, I coded the data. A coding system was developed to characterize the content of student and teacher talk in the whole class discussions and focal group literature discussions. This discussions analysis was approached from a sociolinguistic perspective. I believe that classroom communications are socially constructed by the teacher and the students use these communications systems to influence one another in the task of teaching and learning (Cazden, 1988; Wells, 1986). Within each pattern, sub-patterns emerged, and I looked for specific examples to support that pattern and went through the data and color-coded major themes and patterns with different colored highlighter pens and arranged those grouping onto pieces of “11x18” paper. As new themes began to evolve, I started over and began a new collection. Sometimes, one piece would support several, and I would make a connection through the themes. This is how I began to piece together my data.

Fourth, I searched for emergent understanding because as a researcher becomes more familiar with the data after the coding has begun, “the researcher begins the process of evaluating the plausibility of his developing understandings and exploring then through the data” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 157). Again, repeating the process enabled me to begin the process of categorizing. I didn’t go into this study having categories in place, they were
created as I immersed myself in the data. For this study, few systematic studies were found to guide me in what to expect, except my own experiences with author visits in my own classroom.

Fifth, after coding was finished, I searched for alternative explanations because "alternative explanations always exist" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 157). I looked for negative instances of the patterns that emerged. McCracken (1988) states the researcher must be prepared to use all of this material as a guide to what exists there, but she must also be prepared to ignore all of this material to see what none of it anticipates. "If the full powers of discovery inherent in the qualitative interview, observations, field notes, etc.) are to be fully exploited, the investigator must be prepared to glimpse and systematically reconstruct a view of the world that bears no relation to her own views or the one evident in the literature" (p. 42). Since little existing research exists on author visits, looking for alternative explanations was difficult. When I would come across a negative case that didn't seem to fit, I would stop, ask myself why it didn't fit, where it did fit, and challenge my own thinking to find a relationship.

When I felt I had analyzed the transcripts sufficiently for examples of patterns, I began to write my narrative portion of the analysis by putting together and refining my grounded theory and looking for more support.

Issues Of Credibility, Trustworthiness, and Generalizability

Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness that the research was being conducted properly, I had many safeguards in place to establish criteria for credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Denzin, 1994, p. 508).

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According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), there are three ways to increase credibility: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation. One way credibility can be strengthened is through the triangulation of the data. This is the prime way to establish the various constructions of realities that exist within the setting of the study. When using triangulation, the information is gathered through varying sources, methods, and through exploration of different events and relationships in a variety of perspectives. In this study, I gathered and analyzed data in the forms of observation field notes, audio-tapes and transcripts of activities, interviews, and related documents. For example, patterns in the teacher and student talk was observed during classroom and small group discussions. These were then checked against the teacher and students’ perspectives in the transcribed interviews.

Member Checks

One technique for addressing credibility is the use of "member checks," in which participants are asked to corroborate findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 313-316). Member checks should have been ongoing with the teacher because they are “the single most crucial technique for establishing credibility (Lincoln, 1985, p. 239). I did few member checks with students due to lack of time in their schedule. In this study, an effort was made to involve the teacher as a collaborator in the entire research process. However, due to her own time constraints, the teacher chose not to read the transcribed data and make further comments. However, the teacher and I discussed the research on a day to day or week to week basis. Preliminary assertions were shared with the teacher and I invited her responses about the observed activities. I

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audio-taped and wrote notes in my field notes during these discussions. We usually did the member checks the day following a transcription of a session, but before the next scheduled class session. We also discussed during brief snatches of time during or after class sessions. Formal interviews with the teacher were conducted twice during the study during which we discussed the data. In addition, after the first teacher interview, I asked the teacher to read the transcribed interview and correct any errors or add any additional information in the interview. However, she only did this once and said she didn’t have time to read each one. An example of one member check with the teacher was done before school. This example was following a point in which the students seemed to have lost interest in the read aloud activity. The discussion was on the unfolding of the plot in the story.

R: ...They [students] are not interested in this part of the story, it’s not like this big climax, the climax happened when he left the house.
T: When he made the move and left.
R: Yes, I just sat and thought?
T: I was watching that, very aware of that and I thought, why are they not as focused as they were, but I never thought it was the story.
R: They are really not even watching you, they are fidgeting, and not hanging on their seats waiting to see what happens next and [watching] the words coming out of your mouth.
T: You know I read this to eighth graders and they had trouble getting into it. They were really bored at the beginning, too much of the same thing, and as soon as he gets to Jen’s, then they were with me, and then they were really interested.
(March 28, 2001, TD)

Peer Debriefing

Lincoln & Guba (1989) define peer debriefing as the process of tentative research findings with a peer. Doing an external audit, in which another research colleague examines the research process and product throughout the
researcher's field notes adds trustworthiness to the research study (Glesne, 1999, p. 32). This external reflection process allowed me to explore the viability of evolving assertions, interpretations, and analyses with a third party (Glesne, 1999). I asked Dr. Carol Lynch and Dr. John McCracken, who both have recently finished their doctoral dissertations to serve as my peer debriefers. Both Dr. Lynch and Dr. McCracken worked with me throughout the duration of the data collection and analysis process. I discussed my developing ideas and impressions with both of these colleagues. I would explain categories, give examples, and ask their opinions of the soundness of the analysis. In these conversations, Dr. Lynch and Dr. McCracken asked questions, challenged my thinking, and gave me valuable insights. Dr. Lynch worked closely with me to interpret and analyze each of the codes before I applied them to the data. Dr. Lynch worked with portions of the data, helped me develop codes, apply the codes and interpret portions of field notes to check for perceptions (Glesne, 1999, p. 152). Questions or clarifications she had concerning my analysis were noted and used to rethink that aspect of the data analysis process before applying the codes to the data. In addition, my dissertation committee members also became debriefers for the research during the course of the study.

Audit Trail

A qualitative researcher maintains dependability by having an audit trail (Denzin) of materials which verify and document how the study was conducted, data collection pertaining to interviews and observations, records of inquirer's decisions, and findings of the study. In this study, documentation of the data (all field notes, transcriptions, data synthesis and
reduction materials) was continuous throughout the study. I depended on my field notes, transcribed data, documents, and my researcher log to keep records of the participants' thoughts, feelings, assumptions, motives, and rationales. In this study, by using a constant comparative method of data analysis, this assured that the findings were data-based rather than the result of pre-determined stances by me. By doing this, confirmability involved the use of raw data such as written field notes, transcripts and a reflexive journal (Altheide & Johnson, 1994, p. 513). By doing an external audit, the finding and conclusions in this study are supported by the examples drawn from the data itself.

Persistent Observation

Persistent observation identifies the "characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issues being pursued" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994 p. 513). To increase credibility, I spent as much time as possible in the environment to determine the validity of the information received from the participants by checking one perspective against another one in the same context. Seven weeks wasn't a long period of time for this study, but it's the relevant time period in this study.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which findings in a study are applicable in other contexts or with other respondents. The researcher cannot provide for transferability, only provide sufficient information to be used by the reader. One way is by using thick descriptions in the research study. Another strategy for transferability would be the use of "purposeful
sampling" (Glesne, 1999) in the selection of the study participants. According to Patton (1990) "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting ‘information-rich’ cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance of the purpose of the research" (p. 169). Specifically, a site was chosen in which a scheduled author visit was already planned. A teacher was chosen who was planning to do an author study in her classroom. A site which presented this phenomenon was most likely to be the most worthwhile for answering the research questions. At times, transferability of results is not achievable. Altheide & Johnson (1994) state the audience must determine the relevance of the research to their own research study.
CHAPTER 4
PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter will be divided into three sections, each addressing one of the three research questions and the data which relates to it. The coding which follows is a reference to the location of the transcripts (date and session). For example, (March 21, 2001, TI1) refers to March 21, 2001, Teacher Interview One. The teacher is identified as “T,” and librarian as “L,” author as “A,” and the student participants are identified with pseudonyms. I identify myself as “R,” the researcher in the transcripts.

Question One:

How does one teacher use an author study to enhance reading and writing in an intermediate classroom?

1. What learning opportunities are planned for an author study/visit in a seventh grade classroom?

   Much preparation went into the whole school and classroom planning for this one day ‘special event’ of a guest author visit. School, classroom and library activities were impacted at this school for varying lengths of time prior to the author visit. There were a variety of events in the school and the classroom in which the author’s body of work was introduced and responded
to by students, teachers, and staff. In this question, the planning of the various events and activities in which members of this school and classroom prepared for the author visit will be described.

Staff Preparation

Author visits have been done in this middle school for the past three consecutive years. The preparation for this author visit consisted of two phases: advanced planning and day of visit preparation. The planning for the author visit began with the scheduling of the author one year in advance during Spring, 2000. A group of 14 staff members, taking classes for their Master's of Arts degree at a nearby university (unaffiliated with the university for which this study was conducted) formed a university class titled "Young Adult Literature/Author Visit" during the Fall, 2000. I will refer to them as the committee. The librarian stated that during these weekly, biweekly, and monthly meetings, the committee spent from 30 minutes to 120 minutes per session planning for the author visit. The librarian suggested that the overall feelings of these committee members was that this author visit was an important reading event and was a group planning project.

Advanced preparation for the author visit on April 18, 2001 included the committee reading and responding to the author's body of literature, which included first learning about the author as a person, reading all of the author's books, having literature discussions about each book following each novel reading, and webbing common themes among all the author's books. The committee also planned the author day visit with an emphasis on the student/teacher/author schedule for the April 18th school event.
The librarian was an integral part of all planning phases of the author visit. All previous author visits were mainly planned and scheduled by the school librarian. Planning for this particular author visit first began by choosing the author. Margaret Peterson Haddix was first suggested by the librarian to a group of language arts teachers in both the seventh and eight grades. She was a local resident of the area, and just as Staas (1987) reports, teachers looking in their own community for local writers could be a resource and motivation for the students (p. 24). With input from the various seventh and eighth grade language arts teachers, the local author was chosen. When asked how the author was chosen and the input she received from teachers, the librarian stated:

L: I liked the variety of books she [Haddix] has written which I felt would appeal to everyone. I really like the ideas she explores, and she was here in [town], which negated traveling expenses. She was picked by me, but only after asking others for input. For several years I picked people to work with on an author committee, trying to be equitable with grade level and subject areas. This last time they picked themselves based on their desire to sign up for the [university] course, though some more came just for fun. These small groups have always done the planning jointly. (LI2)

The teacher said the librarian has always been an integral part in recommending and supporting the author visit in the school. The teacher stated:

T: Well, our librarian is really caught up on author visits. We had a lot of trouble in the beginning getting people on board. There was one or two language arts teachers on board, that said this makes a difference and kids can improve in their writing and their perceptions and like some were, “Nah, Nah, we don’t want to do that.” (TI1)
The philosophy of the individual teachers in the building on having author visits was mixed. By many it was considered another special event that comes with a school year of special activities. According to the librarian:

L: Some wouldn't ever care if we had an author, and would probably rather not spend the energy. I feel most of them go along with it if it's something that some of us are excited about. (LI2)

Each language arts teacher in the school prepared their students for the author visit, but in various ways. At different times before the visit, (ranging from two months prior to the visit to two weeks prior to the visit) varying lengths of time were spent on this author's work in each classroom.

L: There is a big difference between teachers. There also was, I think, some teachers, like J, who were sorry almost, that she had done it too early. I think timing, it's real tricky because if you do it too early, the kids peak and then they don't give a hoot about it. But if you do it too late, they are not ready and you don't finish what you are doing or you don't have time to do the kinds of projects and extensions that you want to do. So, a lot of it is a timing process. I think D's kids and J's maybe did it a little early. They did it wonderfully. Had she come like right after they finished, they would have been ecstatic. But this was like a month later and they were on to something else. (L12)

Just as Buzzeo & Kurtz, (1999); McElmeel, (1994); Peck, (1982); Smith, (1999); Schwartz, (1995); Simons, (1995), and Staas (1987) report, in the planning process of having an author visit, the students must be familiar with the author's work thoroughly. However, previous research has not addressed the significance of the timing of introduction of the author prior to the visit and if this had any effect on student learning. This process seems to be critical to the success of the author visit.
The teacher's believed in using literature-based reading instruction in her classroom. She believed that literature was an important part of the language arts curriculum. The teacher stated:

T: I think children’s literature should just permeate the classroom. I think it should be a jumping off point for everything. It’s about life. It’s about how you deal with things. It shows you know you are not alone. It’s how you figure out the answers to big questions. It should be read all the time. (March 20, 2001, TI1)

The teacher in this study believed that author visits are an important event in the language arts classroom. The teacher stated:

T: There is an electricity that happens when an author visits a school, a classroom, it is a good hook for reading more stuff, there is nothing specific I can point out in how it changes kids reading and writing, but writers, not only the reluctant writers, but kids who write, who are writers, always take something away from it. (March 20, 2001, TI1)

She also believed that the students make a personal connection to an author's work.

T: If it is a provocative book, a compelling read, they are gonna want to read other things by the artist or other things connected to that. (March 20, 2001, TI1)

In preparing for the author visit, the planning and timing of the author study were important considerations to the teacher.

T: I wanted the kids to still be excited by the time she came. I wanted to have the book finished in time for a few extension ideas, but I wanted them to still be peaking when she showed up. The previous year, because of Spring Break, I did the study a little bit earlier and the kids loved the book but they were cold, and I learned from that. You know, it has to bud off with the author visit. (May 16, 2001, TI2)
Advance Planning of the Schedule

Initially, the committee planned the author visit in their [university] class according to what they believed was the best agenda for an author visit. I asked the librarian if the committee had at any time in the planning stages investigated author visits as a whole, or if they had asked other school librarians, authors or teachers for advice on their experiences with author visits, and whether they would consider this option for future author visits in their school. The librarian stated:

L: Because they (staff) sort of acceded it to me and one of the meetings was, 'How do we want to schedule the day, what do we want to happen?' and we were mainly in accord, maybe because they left it up to me. But they added some things that I didn't agree with. So, I have been to other author visits and I sort of have a feel for what other people have done. (L12)

Much discussion in the literature addresses the importance of the planning process for an author visit. Staas (1987) and Simons (1995) both reported on this process in their studies and found that the success of an author visit depended largely on the planning for the event.

On February 26, 2001 the committee had their initial planning session for the 'day of visit' schedule. The committee discussed the following considerations for the 'day of the visit' plans.

- day of visit schedule
- book sale and author signing
- format and length of time of both assemblies, morning and afternoon
- student applications to apply to small group sessions with author
- breakfast for staff and author
- student lunch with the author

The planning and scheduling of the author visit was impacted by the existing daily student schedule. During the planning meeting, much
discussion evolved around the daily schedule and how to adapt the author visit around the daily schedule without too much interruption to the master schedule of periods/blocks. The lunch shift was an obstacle. Possible times for each activity were planned and possible meeting sites for each activity were discussed. The use of the auditorium for both assemblies and the use of library for the writing groups were discussed.

Autographing was discussed for the longest length of time. The committee had different opinions on the importance of students getting books signed by the author. Some committee members felt this was not important, while others thought it was very important. Just as Buzzeo & Kurtz (1999) report, “autographing books gives the students the opportunity to visit with the author while their books are being signed.” Time for book signing was a central point discussed. The discussion focused on the amount of time in the schedule dedicated to the book signing and would this take up time the author could be spending with students doing other activities. In addition, an “autograph request” slip of paper would be given to each student who was planning to have a book signed to speed up the time in line for the autographing sessions. On this slip of paper was a space for the student to write his/her name:

- Name as you want it to appear in book (print neatly) (Appendix E)

The book sale was discussed. The librarian explained to the committee her procedures for the past author visit book ordering, and she gave suggestions for selling the books on site to the students. The dates of the book sale were discussed, where the sale would take place and the times during the school schedule the books could be on sale. The morning and afternoon assemblies were discussed. Length of time for these two events was planned.

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For the morning assembly, the committee planned for the author to speak to the whole school in the auditorium. Student involvement was discussed in introducing the author and whether time would be permitted for questions. The afternoon assembly was discussed, beginning with a gift planned for the author, and possible student activities presented for the student body, staff, and author. Possible suggestions for kinds of student activities were shared, such as presentations of scenes from books, skits, and student writing.

The student writing workshops were discussed. This activity would take the majority of the author’s time for the scheduled activities of the day. It was discussed how applications for students to come to a small group writing session were planned. This same format had been done successfully the previous year during the author visit and previous procedures were shared. It was stated that a workshop atmosphere was beneficial for student learning. A small intimate connection with the author by students who were really interested seemed to be important to the staff, as well as the author working with individual students on their own writing. It was stated that students would bring their own pieces of writing to share with the author. The previous year an application was used for the sign-up for the writing sessions with the author and was a successful tool.

It was explained to the committee by a teacher who helped plan last year’s author visit that students would write out “why” they wanted to come to a small group writing session. The committee decided on 2 groups (one seventh grade, one eighth grade) in the morning and 2 groups (one seventh grade, one eighth grade) in the afternoon. Each session would be 40 minutes in length. A breakfast for the author and staff was briefly discussed among the
committee members. It was agreed they would have an informal breakfast for
the staff to visit with the author before the day started.

During the next committee meeting, the author committee divided
responsibilities between the committee in the planning and implementation
of responsibilities for the upcoming author visit. These tasks were often
done before and after school, during lunch and staff planning periods. One or
two staff members volunteered for the following responsibilities.

- staff meeting presentation
- book sale supervision
- book signing supervision
- a.m. introduction at morning assembly
- p.m. introduction at afternoon assembly
- gift for Margaret Peterson Haddix
- breakfast planning/set-up/decorations
- displays in library
- lunch in library
- rescheduling of library study halls
- bus duty switching

Advance Preparation for Students by Staff and Teacher

Publicity

The school made various types of announcements of the upcoming
author visit at various times throughout the 2000-2001 school year. These
included school web page, a school newsletter, e mails to staff, staff meetings,
and morning announcements. In addition, signs announcing the book sale
were posted throughout the hallways of the school the week prior to the book
sale.

Booktalks

Booktalks were given by the librarian to many classes during their
language arts classes in the library. These were done at varying times during
the second semester of school. The booktalk usually coincided with each teacher’s plan for beginning their preparation for the author’s work. For the booktalks, the librarian shared that Margaret Peterson Haddix would be coming for an author visit, visually showed each book written by Margaret Peterson Haddix and did a brief summary of each book. For some books, the librarian posed “what if” questions and asked the students if they had any questions. At the conclusion of the booktalk, she explained to the students they could check books out of the school library, public library, or purchase one from the upcoming book sale. She mentioned that the author would sign books purchased by students. Each booktalk lasted approximately 20-30 minutes per session. After observing a booktalk done by the librarian, I asked the librarian how many booktalks she did with students. The librarian stated:

L: I’m guessing – probably a dozen over this school year. I did them both here and at the public library, both alone and with a young adult librarian from Worthington. I always offer that as an option. (L12)

However, not all teachers chose to have the librarian do a booktalk with their classroom students on the works of Margaret Peterson Haddix. The librarian stated:

L: In general, the staff who want booktalks are ones who want kids to be aware of recent literature, and who appreciate the input of someone who has attempted to keep up with literature. The ones who don’t, just my observation, tend not to care about recent literature, who continue to mainly stick with literature that was around when they went to college, and generally do not read much on their own. (L12)

The literature states (Buzzeo & Kurtz, 1999; McElmeel, 1994; Peck, 1982; Smith, 1999; Schwartz, 1995; Simons, 1995; Staas, 1987) that the single most important planning activity for an author visit is sharing the author’s work. The purpose of a booktalk is to interest the student in reading the author’s
work and to make them familiar with the author's body of work. Duckworth (1987) reports that “making new connections depends on knowing enough about something in the first place to provide a basis for thinking of other things to do—of other questions to ask—that demand more complex connections in order to make sense” (p. 14).

Book Sale

The book sale was planned for April 3rd and April 4th (two weeks prior to the author visit). Books were available for purchase through the librarian. The classroom teacher announced during class the dates, time, books available in hardcover and paperback, and the cost of each book in class. On March 28, 2001, a student asked the teacher procedural questions about the book sale and signing.

Tommy: Will they have books here that we can buy for her to sign?
T: Do you remember when we first started this, or maybe some time before we started this, I asked how many of you might be interested in buying one of her books and having it autographed. Those books are going to be sold next week. And, I will have all the information for you, everything is available, not everything, four of her six books are available in paperback and they are going to sell for five dollars. And Turnabout, which is her newest book, and I forget what the other one is, is only available in hard cover and they are $17.00. ...
Tommy: But do the people who are not in the writing group still get the autograph?
T: Yes.
Tommy: So, she will just sign a whole bunch of people books and just like-
T: No, there is going to be some time set aside in the day for people to get autographs. You will have to buy your book ahead and then bring it back that day and there will be a time when you can go down and meet her and say hello and she will autograph your book for you.
Tommy: All right. (March 28, 2001, LT5)
Teacher Shares Author Day Activities and Procedures

Author Writing Workshop

The classroom teacher announced on March 28, 2001 to the students the planned events and procedures for the author visit on April 18, 2001. She shared and explained the author day schedule with an emphasis on the students applying to a writing session with the author.

T:... If you are interested. I want you to think about that a little bit because the applications ask you some questions that you need to give thought to if you seriously want to be considered for the group.

Next, the teacher read the questions on the application to the students.

T: So, there are just four questions and they are not really difficult, but it will cause you to think a little bit about your motivation and your own writing. And, then people will be selected based on these applications, if a whole bunch of people apply there will be some people who don’t get to participate. If few people apply, then maybe all of them will get to participate. (March 28, 2001, TL6)

At this time, the teacher explained the schedule to the students for the first time. She suggested they begin to think about the opportunities for the day. Only one student asked two questions following the teacher explanation of the schedule of events, which pertained to book signing/autographing. The following day, March 29, 2001, the teacher stated at the beginning of the language arts class period she had the applications for the writing workshop. After the teacher explained the application process, Kyle asked for more clarification of the activity. Additional student questions followed about the writing session.

Kyle: What exactly is going on in the groups again?
T: Just talking in a small group with her about writing, about her books, about your own writing, about the writing process.
Emma: If we would get in one of the small groups, do we skip out on
class on the day that we left.
Kyle: Sweet.
T: Yeah, we don’t call it skipping out because the teachers have a list
and they know who is suppose to be there.
Emma: Do we have to make up the work anyway?

The teacher answered questions and told the students they may have to make
up work depending on the classroom teacher’s policies. She stated:

T: You would have to consider that. I am going to leave these
(applications for Margaret Peterson Haddix workshop) here on top [of
stool], if you want one, they are there. But, don’t take one unless you
are really interested, I don’t have enough for every single person in
every single class. So, only take one if you are interested.
(March 29, 2001, TL7)

The students asked procedural questions during this dialogue with the
teacher, which suggests the students really wanted to know the logistics of the
planned activity. Giving students a choice may have affected whether
students chose to fill out an application or not.

During the next planned meeting of the committee, few students
school-wide had signed up for the writing sessions with the author. Due to
low student applications, the committee changed the schedule and included
two reading groups. The following day, April 3, 2001, the teacher stated:

T: Yesterday was the deadline for Margaret Peterson Haddix’s
writing groups, and a number of people in here took applications and
nobody returned them...
Emma: I have a question.
T: Yes.
Emma: Do you put like both applications in to see which one you’ll be
in or just one?
T: Well, you know what, that opens a whole new can of worms
because I don’t know. I don’t know if you do two applications, if you
could get in both or if they’ll select you for one and then bump your
name out of the other one. I would say, if you think you might want to
do both, go ahead and fill out the application and we’ll see what
happens.
Emma: Okay.
T: Does anyone else want to think about a book discussion group? No one? Okay. Well take a minute and fill this out right now and then get one back to me those of you that were going to hand me writing group applications, give me those at the same time and I'll just try to sneak them in there like I've had them all along. (April 3, 2001, TL9)

The following day, April 4, 2001, the teacher came back after applications were collected school-wide and following the previous evening's author committee meeting where discussion centered around procedures for the new schedule. It was decided that a student could only attend one writing or reading session, not both. The teacher stated at the beginning of the class session:

Teacher: Okay, is there anybody in here who gave me both a writing application and a reading one? (Emma raised her hand) Okay, I have to ask you to choose, which would you prefer? Because we can only do one with schedules working.
Emma: Is there more people doing the writing than reading?
T: Well, there are more people doing the reading but those groups are going to be big, there are going to be like 25 people, because it is more just a discussion. The writing is going to be a real workshop kind of thing, where you can talk with her but you can also work on your own writing and get some advice from her and some feedback from her. I got to know something today. Today, I've got to know something.
Emma: Writing.
T: You want to stay in the writing group and drop the discussion group? Is that correct?
Emma: I guess.
T: You have until the end of class to change your mind. If that is that difficult. (April 4, 2001, TL10)

No more discussions on the small group discussions occurred until two days prior to the author visit. On April 16, 2001, Emma asked:

Emma: When do we find out if we are in those groups?
T: Ah, that stuff should be coming to you, I know it is ready, I just don't have them, Ms. Lowmiller is running around collecting all kinds of stuff this morning, so I would guess today or tomorrow at the latest.
Ah, we have, as far as I know, I think we have done most of the work that we need to do for you to be ready for that visit. We will talk more about that tomorrow, we'll have an actual schedule.

(April, 16, 2001, TL12)

On April 17, 2001, the teacher gave both Emma and Kyle a small slip of paper with the scheduled time for their small group discussion with the author. She explained the procedure to Emma, and then to Kyle when he entered the classroom. Both students were unsure of the schedule.

Teacher: You need to be aware of your times, because they kinda supersede everything else that is going on that day. So, don't lose that [paper]. Also, teachers have lists of kids who are supposed to be in groups, so that means if you go out of science class, Mrs. W. will have a list of everyone who is suppose to be there. So, you don't have to worry about that.
Emma: Do I have to have this with me?
T: No, that is just a reminder for you. I don't think anybody will ask for it. It could serve as your pass out of class.

(April 17, 2001, TL13)

In summary, this was the final stage of the committee and classroom teacher preparing the staff and the students for the anticipated author visit. Much advanced planning and preparation by the author committee occurred for the school author visit. Organizational aspects such as contacting the author, publicity, ordering books, booktalks, and scheduling activities were also integral in planning this author visit.

**Question Two**

How will these opportunities be shaped and co-constructed by the teacher and students or with other adults?

This question explores the co-construction of learning opportunities in this particular classroom. Both interactional patterns (how they said it) and content (what they said) will be addressed. In Chapter Two, I discussed how
teachers and students adopt different roles and relationships, norms and expectations, and ways of participating in literacy-related events. Pappas et al. (1999) define a collaborative style of teaching as one where teachers share authority and power with their students, and where the culture of the classroom allows students' control. Research examining the ranges of classroom talk in the classroom include whole-class discussions, small group discussions, peer conferences, teacher-student conferences, and social talk. In this data, a continuum from teacher-led talk (primarily in whole group discussions) to student led talk (primarily in small group discussions) occurred. As stated in the literature, students' literacy learning in classrooms is shaped by talk-talk with teachers and talk with peers (Cazden, 1988, Pappas et al., 1991, Pinnell and Jaggar, 1991, Wells, 1992). Understanding how that talk affects classroom learning is important in understanding how teachers prepare students during an author study for an author visit. Teachers often act as discussion directors: they ask questions and shape students' responses towards specific ends with limited moments of insight and collaboration (Wells, 1995, p. 135). Looking across contrasting contexts, I anticipated that the whole group literature discussions would be different from the small group literature discussions because these are two different formats of discussions.

In this seventh grade classroom a continuum from teacher-led talk (whole group discussions) to student led talk (small group discussions) occurred. Different learning/response opportunities appeared to be associated with the different contexts.
Overview

As I was transcribing my data, I immediately noticed differences in the quantity and quality of student interactions and utterances between whole group discussions, small group discussions, and other activities. The total number and length of utterances made by the teacher seemed far greater in comparison to the student’s amount and length of utterances during whole group discussion as compared to other activities. At that point, I started counting and highlighting the patterns I found in the observational field notes and during the transcription of the data. These two sources guided the interpretation of the data, which Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to as “open coding.” The next level of coding was “axial coding.” Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe this as the process of putting the data together into larger categories by connections between category and its subcategories (p. 97).

During this stage I found several categories and combined them into smaller categories. By doing this, I was constantly going back and forth in a vertical and horizontal process of refining and changing the coding in a recursive manner. The result of the axial coding was the development of a continuum of co-constructions that were descriptive of the adult’s and students roles in the discussion groups and the students responses and literary understanding.

Now, I will look at the different learning/response opportunities that appeared to be associated with the different contexts. As noted earlier in Question One, many classroom learning opportunities occurred in this classroom prior to the author visit.

- read aloud Among the Hidden to the whole class
- read beginning of the sequel to the class, Among the Impostors
- whole class discussions on the book Among the Hidden
- student journal writing during author study
- small literature discussion groups on Among the Hidden
Whole Group Read Aloud Sessions

During read aloud sessions, it was common for the teacher, students, and I to sit in chairs in a circle on a carpeted rug. The students were also permitted to sit or lie on the floor in a comfortable position. During discussions of the book, the students mainly responded to questions or statements posed by the teacher. When the teacher asked a question, the students responded by raising their hands and the teacher saying their name to speak or by a visual nod by the teacher signaling their turn to speak. The students frequently looked at the teacher while they spoke and seldom looked or talked directly to their peers. The students seldom built off of each other's comments, but seemed to wait their turn to make their own contribution to the question or statement posed by the teacher.

The teacher used three key strategies during whole group discussions: (1) directed the content and context of discussions, mainly efferent questions (2) nominated students to speak verbally and non-verbally, (3) and acknowledged their responses and contributed her own responses in the form of statements and questions. Student responses were placed into two categories: (1) responded to teacher discourse and (2) mainly efferent responses.

During these teacher-directed events, several patterns appeared in the read aloud sessions of the book, Among the Hidden, which was the primary...
activity in preparing the students for the author visit. The teacher and student talk about the text primarily focused on the setting, unfolding of events, and characters' actions. The author's style and writing choices were rarely discussed during the seven read aloud sessions. Occasionally they considered the character's point of view or discussed what they would do in a character's position.

During read aloud sessions, the students were attentive and listened as the teacher read. They seemed to enjoy this activity very much. Before the beginning of each read aloud session, the teacher usually started by asking the students to summarize the previous chapters read. On occasion, the teacher would stop briefly to ask the meaning of a vocabulary word or to clarify an unclear passage. Whole group discussions occurred following each read aloud event.

In the coded discussions, 49% of utterances were made by the teacher and 51% were made by the students. In addition, the teacher made almost all of the marked episode changes in all the discussions; few turns were made by students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion 1</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion 2</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion 3</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion 4</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion 5</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion 6</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion 7</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Utterances</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The teacher's focus for each whole group discussion was primarily on the pages in the text she had just previously read to the students, but at times she would refer to previous chapters read. She usually began each discussion by asking questions and the dialogue which related to that specific question. It was common for more than one student to answer the same question posed by the teacher. In fact, this occurred regularly in the read aloud discussions. The teacher would then start the next conversational turn with a new question and the same pattern of teacher question, student response continued. Overall, most of the teacher's questions called for describing or inferring responses.

Teacher Patterns in Whole Group Discussions

Interactional Patterns

Interactions between the teacher and students primarily followed a teacher-student (t-s) pattern. The following discussion segment illustrates this pattern:

Teacher: Why do you think he came to that conclusion?
Kyle: Because he lives in that house.
Teacher: Yeah, but why does he think maybe those people are buying those houses? Who were the people going in?
David: The people who came in the car, and the car was driving slowly and people driving slowly in the neighborhood means they are looking at houses.
Teacher: Well who is the lady that they are following?
Don: The real estate agent.
Teacher: Yeah, the real estate agent. (March 21, 2001, LT)

In the above excerpt, the teacher followed up on students' comments from one student to the next. She invited other students to share their comments.
by acknowledging remarks. The teacher moved the discussion along by asking additional questions. After answering each question, the student gave the turn back to the teacher.

Nominating Speakers

The teacher often nominated speakers during whole group discussions. The nominated students are highlighted.

T: Why would that be a problem?
Angela: Because you could see him easier and it would be cold (laughs).
T: Yeah. Kyle?
Kyle: And also in the winter time like, his pants would get all wet and his parents would see that and-
Emma: And he probably doesn’t have a coat cause he’s never been outside-
T: (interrupts) and he doesn’t have a coat, right. Don?
Don: It also matters if it rains because there is a lot of rain and it will take him a while because the ground won’t dry up quickly.
T: Right. (March 23, 2001, TL)

In this excerpt, the teacher gives various students a chance to answer, but she designates who speaks by nominating them. As noted in my observational field notes, the teacher also did this non-verbally by nodding her head to students to speak.

Wait Time

The wait time during whole group discussions between the teacher questions and statements and student responses was usually one second or less. The following two discussion segments illustrates this pattern. A dash (-) represents an interruption.

T: The city can come in and buy your land if they need it for the good of the community.
Jacklyn: That’s mean-
T: And it really doesn’t seem very fair sometimes.
Jacklyn: So if you don’t want to sell-
T: So it’s like [the] government has a little bit more power over that
than the individual. (March 22, 2001, TL)

....

Emma: Cause he’s never been outside-
T: and he doesn’t have a coat, right?
Emma: And you’ll see the footsteps in the mud.
T: Footprints! I was waiting for somebody to say that. You know it is
hard to sneak in someplace if you are leaving a whole trail of footprints
behind you. (March 23, 2001, TL)

Cazden (1988, 2001) suggests one of the most important elements in
questioning is an increase in wait time for student responses. Brophy and
Good (1997) found that for teachers who use lengthened wait times of about
five seconds, their actions led to “longer and higher-quality student responses
and participation by a greater number of students” (p. 377). Rowe’s research
states that exciting things happen in the classroom with increased wait time:
whole sentence replies, more student questions, students making inferences,
and students trying speculative thinking (p. 38-43).

Asking Questions

The following excerpt illustrates the teacher’s use of efferent
(Rosenblatt, 1978) questioning in the whole group read aloud sessions.
Teacher questions were text related and often did not require students to give
personal opinions. Text related questions are in bold.

T: I am ready to read, are you ready to hear? Can anybody remember
what I said on Friday, or where we left off on Friday or what was going
on?
David: He got his butt whipped by a girl.
T: Why do you say he got his butt whipped by a girl?
David: Because she threw him, she threw him down to the ground and
wrestled him.

T: Ok, that was at the very beginning. What did he do, how, what precipitated all that? Why did the girl wrestle Luke and pin him to the ground? Kyle?

Kyle: Because he was like sneaking into the house, and then when he walked in the alarm went off and he peeked inside, I guess he was just acting like he didn't, she pinned him down because she thought it was like a burglar cause she thought he was a burglar and so after she found out that he was another third child, they started to talk and get to know each other.

T: What did he find out or what did we find out about her, about the situation, what do we know now that we didn't know before that we read on Friday. Is there anything? We knew there was another third child, since we saw her looking out the window, but we now know it's a girl and her name is?

David: Jen.

Teacher: What else do we know?

Kyle: Uhm, that Lukes's parents are way over protective about the whole third child thing because Jen can get on the computer and she can go outside to the lawn and go in the living room and stuff.

(March 26, 2001, TL4)

During this discussion, the teacher controlled the exchange by her questioning pattern. The most common pattern of questioning used by the teacher was the initiation-respond-evaluation (IRE) sequence (Mehan, 1979). The teacher introduced the topic and then asked the question. Next, the student answered the question posed by the teacher and the teacher evaluated the student's response (Cazden, 1988, Mehan, 1979, Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). As this excerpt illustrates, the teacher supported student responses, however, when the students' answers were different from the expected response, she asked another question. She gave several students a chance to respond, but she controlled who spoke and what counted as an acceptable response. Her questions called for describing or inferring responses from the plot of the story. The teacher's questions seemed to monitor the students'
comprehension of what was read to them from the novel. The types of questions the teacher asked impacted the level of possible responses by focusing on specific text related questions.

Evaluating and Giving Opinions

The following excerpt illustrates the teacher contributing her own responses to student questions about twin children. Kyle asked:

Kyle: I have a question about this?
T: Yes?
Kyle: What if you had a kid and then you had another kid and the kids were twins and they were born at the same time?
T: Well twins don't get born at exactly the-
Kyle: well, I know, but-
Teacher: same time, there is a slight delay so technically one could be older than the other-
Kyle: like a minute
T: But, what do you do, as a parent what do you think would happen?
Kyle: I don't know.

David: What if you have Siamese twins?
T: Now that would be a different problem, wouldn't it?
Jacklyn: Like that one woman who had eight kids.
T: Eight kids? What do you think, with this kind of government, do you think they would allow that kind of drug usage to help woman get pregnant. Probably not, they would outlaw that kind of medicine. But, what would happen? Kyle, you raised this question, judging from the two families that we have met so far, what do you think would happen with the twins?
Kyle: Uhm, probably the one that was born first would be the lucky child.
T: Probably and the other one born would have to become a shadow child or a hidden child. (March 26, 2001, TL)

In this excerpt, the teacher begins by clarifying the birthing process of twins after Kyle asked the question. The teacher come back with a question for Kyle about what would a parent do? Kyle responds with "I don't know." David
asks a question and the teacher acknowledges David's question, but Jacklyn immediately interjected with a remark about multiple births. The teacher supported Jacklyn's statement by adding supporting details of her own. The teacher goes back to the original question asked by Kyle and asked him to relate it to the story; he responded with his opinion of what could happen. Following, the teacher clarified his statement based on the story in the book. Similar conversations occurred frequently, with the teacher supporting student responses.

Dana: Can I say something about time. I don’t think it could be in the 1950s because the people were doing construction, they have bulldozers and a pickup truck and they wouldn’t have those in the 1950s.
T: Well, the 50’s were not as dark ages as you may think, I think there are clues that would say this isn’t 1950s.
Kyle: I think it could be like 1980s to the future because the book is fiction. It is not a real story so the author can use her imagination.
T: Ok, so the story might be about- (pause) I want you to keep your eyes and ears open as we continue to read so you can put this in a time and place. The setting hasn’t really been laid out like it is frequently in some books, think about that as we are reading. (March 21, 2001, TL)

This discussion begins with Dana’s elaboration of the impossible nature of a bulldozer and truck being used in the 1950s. The teacher and students followed by predicting the time period of the setting for this book. The teacher and students summarized prior clues from the story to build their understanding of the time period.

On occasion, during whole group discussions, students considered a character’s perspective, but this was primarily done after the teacher asked the students to vote on their views of a character’s trait or behavior in an event in the story.

T: How many of you think he’ll go? (a pause as the teacher counts raised hands) Everybody, WOW!
Kyle: I don’t think he’ll go.
T: You don’t think he’ll go, does anybody besides Kyle not think he’ll go. What if you were Luke, would you go?
Students: (many responses at once)
T: How many of you would go if you were Luke?
Students: (every students raises hands)
T: How many of you would go and be scared?
Students: (all raise hand)
T: Jen made a really good point and said, if you don’t go and they free the hidden children you will always feel like you should have helped and you didn’t and you benefited and you didn’t deserve to benefit. ...
(March 28, 2001, TL)

The above two excerpts illustrate the teacher asking the students to choose a character’s position they agreed with, but she did not go beyond this by asking the students to clarify or elaborate by supporting their choices.
Patterns of Student Talk

Student interactions were placed into two categories: (1) response to whom? (2) response stance.

Student Responses to Teacher

In the following excerpt, the teacher asked the students a more interpretative question.

T: What is his day like, [what] do you think? If you were Luke Garner for a day, what do you think you would do?
Kyle: I would be pretty bored, and like you said, he reads all his books, like many times, like a whole bunch of times, but if I was him, my day would pretty much be just sitting in the attic and reading books. That's about it.
T: Well, every once in a while you can peek out the vent. What else would be the high points do you think?
Emma: I think the books would be the high point-he can't go downstairs, and he just stays in his room all day, and he can't really get fresh air or anything.
T: What about contact with his family?
David: Well when no one is home and you know how he always wanted to, you know, he can't take a look out a window, but he is always like, sneaking to do it, I think sneaking is the highlight of his day.
T: Hmmm, Dana? (March 21, 2001, TL)

The students shared their personal responses relating to the story event without building on the responses of the other students. The conversational comments were mainly between the teacher and each student. Few stretches of conversation were between the students (s-s). Students seldom connected to each other's statements or expanded on them. Student responses were primarily efferent in stance (Cox and Many, 1992). The student comments were mainly simple retellings of main events that had already taken place in the story.
At times, students asked speculative questions. In the following excerpt, Emma asked the teacher about the protagonist's future.

Emma: What is he going to do when his parents die?
T: Good question, I mean nobody knows he exists, remember, even yesterday, I think, we talked about his mom writing to his grandmother, his grandmother doesn't even know he exists.
Jacklyn: I would change my last name.
T: You know that is a good point. It is kind of like a wild animal and you take care of it, and then you try to release it back into the wild. It doesn't know how to take care of itself, it doesn't know how to go out and kill for food. (March 21, 2001)

Instead of scaffolding and trying to build and expand the students' responses, the teacher shaped the students' responses by expanding on each question herself. Rather than promoting a collaborative, mutual construction of meaning, the teacher shares her interpretation of the passage Emma has introduced (Roser & Martinez, 1995).

Relationship Between the Teacher Strategies and Student Talk

During whole group discussions of the novel, students had opportunities to express their understanding of the novel. The teacher's discussion patterns seemed to correlate with certain patterns in the teacher-student and student-student interactions during whole group discussions. Her strategies for conducting the discussions of the read aloud book created a context in which discussions had moderate teacher input. During the discussions, the teacher's strategies focused on the students' retelling and description of specific events of the story. Recalling information in the discussions involved the students clarifying the story events as the teacher led the discussion questions and statements. At this level, the teacher focused more on giving each student an opportunity to speak, rather than focusing on
the content of their responses. On occasion, the students considered a character's perspective, but this was usually done with the teacher asking each student to choose how they would respond or react to a story event. As Langer (1994) suggests, "a thought-provoking literature class is an environment where students are encouraged to negotiate their own meanings by exploring possibilities, considering understandings from multiple perspectives, sharpening their own interpretations, and learning about features of literary style and analysis through the insights of their own responses" (p. 204).

In summary, literacy meaning-making in whole group discussions included using questions and statements to encourage students to retell the important elements in the story. The teacher often directed the topic and the teacher's questions called for describing or inferring responses. The teacher seemed to focus on monitoring the student's comprehension by focusing on details of the story.

**Student-led Small Group Discussions**

During student-led small group literature discussions three key circumstances occurred: (1) students directed the content and context of discussions, (2) students nominated themselves to speak verbally and non-verbally, (3) and students acknowledged each other's responses and contributed their own responses. Levels of stance were "primarily aesthetic" and "most aesthetic" according to the levels of stances by Cox and Many (1992).
The teacher’s philosophy for using small discussion groups in her classroom was:

Teacher: I didn’t do small group discussions all year—I try to vary the way we approach books throughout the year—we used that method twice but with a difference each time, with the Haddix books I gave the kids questions for more of a "free" discussion. (TQE)

Three times during the study the students participated in small literature discussion groups. Each session was approximately 20-30 minutes in length. I observed one group, which included the six focal students in the three small-group literature sessions. I was a participant-observer in the group and followed along with the teacher-led questions. As a member of the discussion group, my purpose was to act in a facilitative role during the discussions. I wanted to foster self-directed learning with the students and hear what they shared about the upcoming author visit.

The teacher-prepared questions (usually four) for the literature group sessions focused on the author’s writing style. The teacher’s role in the discussion group varied. She walked from group to group and listened and guided the groups on an ‘as needed’ basis. If a group was discussing and sharing, she spent less time in that group than if a group was not verbally responding or on task. Since I was in the small group with the focal students, she spent little time checking on these students.

Patterns of Student Talk

Interactional Patterns

Interactions in student-led discussions primarily followed a student-student (s-s) pattern. The following discussion segment illustrates this pattern:
Kyle: I know it was stupid.
Emma: It was for his own protection, but like still-
Kyle: because if the Jen girl can do all that, I think he can.
Jacklyn: Because they had him hidden for most of his life.
Emma: Yeah, basically cause they wouldn’t like let him do things that he probably could, even in the house.
Kyle: I think-
Emma: I think his dad is way over protective.
Kyle: Ah, yes, I think his dad was just protecting him because he cared about him a lot or something.
Dana: I think he was just like over protective, though, just, he couldn’t do anything, ever!
Kyle: Or, he just didn’t want to get the 5 million dollar fine.
(March 23, 2001, FG)

Interactions at this level were primarily s-s (student-student). At times, the teacher and I participated in the discussions.

Nominating Speakers

The students rarely nominated speakers during small group discussions. Dialogue occurred as the students responded to each other by entering the conversations in a self-regulating pattern. The dialogue was not dominated by a single individual and a flexible rotating leadership occurred naturally (Wells, 1995, p. 135).

Student Response

The students’ talk about the text during this level was “primarily aesthetic” and “aesthetic” (Cox and Many, 1992). In this excerpt the students were discussing a question posed by me after they had finished the questions the teacher had asked them to answer. The question I asked was, “Are you
excited about the author visit?" I wanted to change the focus from the book to
the author by asking the students what interested them in having the author
come for a visit.

   Dana: Books kinda reflect how the person is, so if it's a boring
   book, chances are it is going to be a boring author.
   Researcher: Really, you think so.
   Dana: Yeah.
   Emma: I don't think that is necessarily true.
   Jacklyn: I mean the person like-
   Dana: Well, if you have like-
   Jacklyn: If you have a really interesting personality, it is just the way it
   comes out in the books.
   Kyle: I remember I had that Aliki and she just wrote children's books,
   and I mean I know it was exciting for me and I was like in
   Kindergarten at the time.
   Dana: (laughs)
   Kyle: I read like two word book pages and stuff and it was great, but for
   sixth graders, I imagine it wasn't that exciting because they are into
   chapter books and reading stuff more, you know. (March 23, 2001, FG1)

The students shared their personal feelings and knowledge on authors and
books they had previously read. They showed agreement and sometimes
disagreement with the other group participants, but didn't change their
opinions based on one another. Rosenblatt (1978) stated that when readers
bring different literary and life experiences...sometimes the give and take may
lead to a general increase and even to consensus (p.146).

A little later, in this same discussion, I asked the students a
hypothetical question about what they would ask the author if she were
coming for a visit the following day. In this discussion the students spent
time making connections between the author, story, and their personal
experiences with books.

   Kyle: What made her write that book? What got her in the mind? Was
   it about China or about the population we chose or if something just
   pops in her mind?
   Jacklyn: I would ask her what time it really takes place in cause that is

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like what the big discussion is.

Emma: And do you ever write non-fiction books?
Kyle: Oh, I heard she is coming out with a sequel in like two months or something. Mr. M. got the first copy that was ever published.
Emma: Has she ever made picture books?
Researcher: So you would ask her if she has ever made picture books?
Emma: I love picture books [laughs].
Jacklyn: I love picture books that don't have any words and you have to try to figure out- [leaning forward]
Kyle: Yeah. (March 23, 2001, FG1)

In this excerpt, the students discussed the author's possible motivation for choosing the setting. They wondered about her body of work. During this dialogue, the students' body language showed excitement. They extended their thoughts into other authors' work and how it made them feel. After Emma said that she loved picture books, both Jacklyn and Kyle agreed. Body language changed in small group discussions. It was common for the students to be moving around in their seats, leaning over their desks in a tight circle and talking at a faster pace in comparison to the whole group discussions.

In the next excerpt, this conversation naturally led into the students relating the story to their own lives as they visualized an aspect of the setting of the story.

Kyle: Well like when I am reading a chapter book, like Among the Hidden, I picture my grandma's house out in the country.
Dana: [laughs really loud]
Kyle: And the house next to it, [I] just imagine the stuff [I] have seen before and just put it inside a book and-
Jacklyn: I always think of the houses across the street from where my aunt and uncle live, on the other street it goes down a little bit, there are like these huge mansions and I always think of those houses when like they talk about Jen's house.
Kyle: I always imagine those houses they build, those big housing communities and every house that looks like the other one.
(March 23, 2001, FG1)
In this excerpt the students describe the feelings the text evokes about houses. According to Rosenblatt (1983), “awareness that others have had different experiences with it [i.e, the text] will lead the reader back to the text for a closer look.” Thus, sharing responses with others may impact and influence students to consider varying viewpoints and to more critically examine their own responses. It seemed as if you could see the students recalling those images in their heads as they were sharing. They were not only engaged with the discussion, but they seemed more engaged with themselves.

Next, the students related specific incidents in the story to their own prior knowledge in the discussion as they talked about the alarm systems in the character’s house.

Kyle: And another thing, that alarm system they had inside the house, you know that had to be right now or maybe a year ago or two years ago or the future.
Jacklyn: I don’t think that is very accurate, that if a Baron sets foot on the lawn that it goes off.
Kyle: No, when he opened the door the alarm went off.
Emma: But the girl said, Jen said right when you get on their property.
Dana: I think she over exaggerates.
Kyle: Because right when she opened the door, remember that little (Kyle makes a beep beep sound)
Jacklyn: Maybe he couldn’t hear it.
Emma: Yeah.
Kyle: The only ones I know is when you walk into the door the person has to type the code in, they have like 30 seconds to type it in. And they don’t type it in like thirty second the police come. But, yeah, like right when you walk in the door you type it in. (March 23, 2001, FG1)

In this exchange, the students discuss the alarm system in the book and how it works. Then, they compared it to their own knowledge of how alarm systems work. Through inquiry, the students questioned whether the character exaggerated how the alarm system worked. They were thinking aloud and demonstrating how they constructed meaning from the text.
Students became more involved in the book by discussing the alarm system operations, which in turn, led them to enter the story world.

During the next turn in conversation, I asked the students the question, "What do you think would really happen if he got caught?" The students began to predict, reflect and respond together from the "most aesthetic stance" (Cox and Many, 1992).

Researcher: What do you think would really happen if he got caught?
Kyle: I think if I was a smart parent (laughs) I'd hide the kid in a special place or something, and after this whole thing kinda blew over a little bit, I would, I don't know, I wouldn't turn my kid in!
Jacklyn: What I would do is, if I had a third kid, not to be mean like to the father or anything, but I would kinda separate until-
Emma: YEAhhhh.
Jacklyn: I would have one and the dad would have one kid and that would, if it really meant that much to you then you could like keep all the kids and you could still spend time together, but it would just be living in two different houses.
Katie: Could the families like, they could have said that Luke was a cousin or something that lives with him.
Jacklyn: Uh-hum, or he could keep hiding him.
Katie: Uh-hum.
Emma: Would Luke be allowed to live like a normal kid or would he-
Kyle: Yeah, people would kinda know.
Dana: But that would be suspicious because like you know 12 year old kid just pops out of no where and if he was just born it would be-
Jacklyn: Fourteen year olds and twelve year olds, I mean there is kinda of a difference, but not really.
Dana: Well I mean, I mean they got, got the two older sons and this other son pops out from no where?
Kyle: And then if he did go to school, you know, he doesn't know about world history and stuff and maybe what grade would he be in, because he knows how to read and knows how to do math, and not like advanced math and stuff. (March 23, 2001, FG1)

In this excerpt the students went back to the story and extended the story with predictions of what they would do if they were the parent. They reasoned together the plausibility of the outcomes of their predictions. Students
showed evidence of lived through experiences as they described what they would do as parents. Students built connections together between the book and their own experiences as they synthesized the central problem of the story.

In the following excerpt the students were discussing why they liked to have books read aloud to them. This is another example of a lived through experience as they describe the book experience like it is a 'movie' going on in their minds. Jacklyn shared her thought and students built off her insight and shared their own perspectives.

Jacklyn: I get pictures in my head on everything that happens, it is like a little mo-v-ie I am watching.
Emma: Yeah, that is what I am saying, basically it is just a movie in your head. Cause like when you are reading it’s hard to imagine because you are like trying to read and imagine at the same time, but when someone is reading it to you it is like the picture just like comes up in your head. It’s not like you just try to imagine it.
Researcher: So, it is different when someone reads to you versus when you are reading it yourself?
Emma: Yeah, uh-hum.
Jacklyn: Cause you have to concentrate on the words you are reading so you can get the pictures in your head, but when someone is reading you can just like.
Katie: It is like listening to it.
Jacklyn: Yeah.
Researcher: But, does it depend on who is reading it?
Jacklyn: I like when [the teacher] reads.
Dana: She is really good.
Jacklyn: I don’t know, it’s like-
Kyle: She reads so slowly and so, she doesn’t miss a word. And she just keeps going every sentence and makes it more-
Emma: She just like acts it out and like if someone is yelling, she pretends like she is yelling and someone is sad, she pretends-
Jacklyn: Like in the book she was going like (softly) "beep beep beep [Jacklyn was mimicking the way the teacher had read aloud] and when he got in [the house] she got a little bit louder.
Researcher: Have you ever had teachers who didn’t read very well out loud?
Dana: Oh, yeah!
Emma: I liked my first or second grade teachers.
Researcher: Did it make a difference?
Emma: It's like it is so dull, just get it over with.
Jacklyn: I like it better when a lady reads because it is like, I don't know, it is just like-
Kyle: Maybe it is because a guy has a deep voices.
Emma: You can imagine, like when [the teacher] reads it, you can imagine a guy talking sorta like that. But if a guy is reading, you can’t imagine a girl having a deep voice like that.
Dana: I like my dad reading because my dad, he can like go really high, he can like talk in this high voice, sometimes he can make himself sound like a girl. It is funny. (March 23, 2001, FG1)

In this excerpt the students were interpreting, analyzing, and evaluating read aloud practices and presentations. The atmosphere was comfortable with students’ laughing and performing sound effects. Interruptions were accepted and the students built off of each other’s responses. Student felt free to make judgments and they supported their views by providing examples.

Summary:

The classroom provides a communicative context as the teacher and students build knowledge together. Adults and students co-construct knowledge as they engage in meaningful discussions about the text. The different contexts in this study resulted in different responses in this classroom. According to Martinez and Roser (1991) “the extent to which adults can support and encourage growth in children’s responses through the organization and management of the setting in which the responses occur” is important. This data suggests that the teacher is a key member of this classroom community and in talking about the author’s work, she has the opportunity to promote children’s growth as responders to the author’s work.
Question Three

What did the students in this classroom learn and value during and following the author study/visit in literacy learning and understanding?

Assuming that an author study followed by an author visit taught the students something, my intent was to find out what that something was from the perspective of the teacher, students, author and other adults. In an effort to describe what students learned from this author study and visit, I first looked at the teacher’s expectations prior to start of the author study. During the initial teacher interview, one week prior to the author study, I asked the teacher her expectations of this author study/visit. She stated positive characteristics of a successful author visit:

- an electricity happens when an author visits a school
- an author visit is a good hook for reading more literature
- students who write, even reluctant student writers, take something away from the [author] visit
- if the author’s book is a ‘provocative book,’ and a ‘compelling read,’ students are going to want to read other works by the artist [author] or other things connected to that [genre]
- the writing workshop conducted by the author may help the student’s writing by changing the point of view in the[ir] story (March 20, 2001, TI)

The teacher further stated:

T: I don’t know if it is her writing style as much as the body of her work, she is a genius with coming up with provocative ideas, I am not really sure if her writing is up to the level of these great ideas. But, hopefully some of that will rub off on kids in finding their voice. I see that [voice] as a major issue with the seventh grader writer, that many of them have not found their voice. Maybe with playing around with ideas with her, dealing with discussing and debating some of the provocative issues that she raises will help them do that. (March 20, 2001, TI)

The goals suggested by the teacher stated that her purposes in embracing the author visit were to introduce the students to an author of a book they have
read, her body of work, writing ideas, and to provide the students the
opportunity to have the author personally support their writing during the
writing session.

Pre-existing Circumstances During the Author Study

The following influences were present during the author study.

- most students had prior experiences with visiting author programs
- author's books were not available from school and public library until end
  of study
- one student purchased a book during the book sale
- the booktalk influenced book selections for sustained silent reading and
  independent reading
- a continuum of stances toward the author's book were expressed in
  student journals

Student Prior Experiences with Author Visits

Most students in this class had prior author visits during elementary
school. Thirteen students had at least one, with only two students having no
author visits prior to this study. Yet, no class discussions or mention of
these experiences occurred during this study. I found this interesting since
they had prior author experiences with well known authors and not once did
a student share this during whole class discussions. After I heard focal
students in the small group literature discussion referring to previous author
visits and following the author visit, I asked the teacher to ask students three
questions to learn what prior experiences students had with author visits.
Overall, these students had much experience with author visits between
Kindergarten and Sixth grades. In fact, it seemed to be a consistent yearly
event for this district. The first question she asked the students was which
authors they had in prior author visits. Five students could not remember
the name of the author(s) who visited their previous school(s):

Katie: Yes, I remember there was an author that came but I forget her
name and the books she wrote. (May 29, 2001, SQ)

Brady: Yes, we had two, they were, I can't remember their names. The
first person brought in part of an asteroid, she also brought a book
about an asteroid that was in her backyard. The second was a guy who
wrote poems. I think his name was J. Patrick Lewis. (May 29, 2001, SQ)

These excerpts suggest that students may remember the content of an author
visit, book titles, and details, but not the author's name. The focal students
shared specific background experiences during focal group discussions.

Students in the focal group discussions gave details about their prior author
visits.

Another question asked which authors they would like to have for a
future author visit and the criteria for choosing that author. Student
responses focused on the following elements of literature: how well they
liked the author's writing, topic of the book, relating to the theme, and
humor.

Katie: Avi, because his books are really interesting and good.
(May 29, 2001, SQ)

Rachel: Brian Jacques. I love his books. He is a wonderful writer.

Joey: Matt Christopher because I read like every one of his books and
they're about sports. (May 29, 2001, SQ)

Josie: Jerry Spinelli because his books are really wild and you can
sometimes relate to them. They are fun to read and I want to know
where he gets his ideas. (May 29, 2001, SQ)

Brady: Greg Marsden because he wrote my favorite book, Tomorrow
When the War Began. I would like to know where he gets the ideas for
the book. (May 29, 2001, SQ)
Emma: Katherine Paterson because I’ve read 3 of her books and I’ve done research on her and I think it would be interesting to talk to her about what I read and researched about. (May 29, 2001, FQ)

Student responses indicate that students value many different elements of literature. These students selected authors based on prior reading experiences and what they valued personally. Both Josie and Brady stated they wanted to know where the authors got their ideas, which may have been a result of the author’s speech.

Circulation of Library Books Prior to the Visit

The school library owned 31 copies of the author’s books. During the time of this study, all books were checked out for classroom use by other teachers; therefore, students were unable to check a book out for personal reading. One student had a copy of the author’s books during the read aloud. She indicated her mom worked at the public library and that is how she got a copy of the book. Most of the time, the author’s works were checked out at the public library during the study. Students often referred to wanting to read the sequel, an unpublished version, but only one copy was sent to the school in an information packet provided by the author.

Book Sale

One student in this study purchased a book from the book sale. Overall, 8 students and 4 teachers had a book signed by the author. Initially, much time was allotted for book signing by the author committee, but after the book sale, as so few books were purchased by students, the time for book signing was reduced.
The teacher did not have the librarian do a “booktalk” with her class prior to the visit as did many other teachers. About one week prior to the visit, the teacher did her own booktalk during class. She began the booktalk by holding up each Haddix book and sharing the plot.

Teacher: I have a stack of Haddix books that I just pulled out of the library. I brought with them a sign out sheet, thinking that you might want something to read over Spring Break or you might be looking for something to read right now since you [we] finished Among the Hidden. (April 3, 2001, TL9)

The teacher shared each of the author’s books and summarized the plot of the book. The teacher explained to the students they could check out a book because she had the library check-out sheet with her. It is important to note at this time, it was the first time these books became available to these students, as they were checked out by various teachers prior to this day.

Teacher: If you are interested in any of these, I’m going to share these with all of my classes, so I don’t know how long they’re going to be available, but they are here. If you would like to sign one of them out, I can do that, I’ve got the sign out sheet from the library. So, all you have to do is let me know that you want one. (April 3, 2001, TL9)

As soon as the teacher finished the last booktalk, many students raised their hands to check out the author’s books. In all, 11 books were available and students checked out 9 of these books. During the time the teacher was checking the books out to students, the students looked at the covers, read the back of the book and flipped through pages in the books. Two pairs of students shared the book they chose with the student sitting beside them and they talked informally about the book. During this activity, the teacher and students are engaged and shared enthusiastically the author’s books.
Student Response Journals Prior to the Visit

The students were asked to keep an “author study” journal in which they could write anything they chose which pertained to the author study. Response journals are important for assessing the students’ engagement with and understanding of the literature. They provide an authentic ongoing record of students’ interests, responses, and personal exploration of the literature (Cox in Karolides, 1997, p. 43). The researcher stated directions at the beginning of the study and pasted the directions into the inside cover of each student’s journal: The written directions stated:

Directions: This journal’s purpose is to represent your feelings, thoughts, insights, and exploration in any form of expression you choose (diary, poems, free writing) in your understanding of the author’s work or your own changes in how you look at reading and writing. (March 19, 2001, FN)

During class sessions, students wrote in their journals 3-5 times per week, for 5-10 minutes, during the duration on the study. The teacher also suggested they could write in their journal at any other time of the day or night as there was no time or word limit. The journal was intended to be an open-ended response log with little guidance from the teacher or researcher. During the time of the study, the teacher did not write or comment on any of the students’ journal entries. The journal responses were separated into two phases. Phase One occurred during the first week of the study. Phase Two occurred after the teacher re-stated the directions and modeled responses for the students.
Student Journals: Phase One

Phase one occurred during week one. Students mainly recorded retellings of the story with plot developments described in chronological order. A typical retelling:

Josie: The chapters that we read today were about changes that happened to Luke's family. What happened was Luke has to stay up in his room in the attic because people were getting suspicious of why the blinds were always closed... (March 19, 2001, SJ)

Students also retold plot development followed by a prediction.

Tommy: Luke discovered that there was another boy that lived across the street. That family already had two kids. Luke knew he was hiding also. I think that Luke will tell his mother about the other kid he spotted. Maybe she would let them meet each other or stay with each other during the day so they would not become bored. (March 21, 2001, SJ)

Other retellings included a judgment statement made by the student. Brady shared a personal evaluation followed by a retelling of the story events.

Brady: I thought what we read today was very interesting. One day when Luke's family left he went downstairs. He turned the radio on and started to bake bread. A little later his dad got home and yelled at him to go back upstairs. (March 21, 2001, SJ)

At times, students wrote about personal associations and feelings they had which were evoked from the read aloud. Both Joey and Rachel made a personal connection to the book.

Joey: If I was Luke, I would work very hard to go outside and do stuff other kids do. If my parents wouldn't let me, then I would go outside during the daytime when no one is around. ...(March 19, 2001, SJ)
Rachel: I think it would be unbearable to be in Luke’s position. I would make a plan or run away. Find somewhere else to live. Or I would make up different things. Like making a different fort out of boxes everyday. I would try to get out too. At night. In the dark, just to be outside. (March 20, 2001, SJ)

However, one student, Dana, wrote aesthetic entries in his journal three days in a row.

Dana: I think that Luke’s life would be the absolute pits, a living hell. if you will. I mean, everything is right there in front of him, the yard, the windows, and the dinner table. It’s like offering a dog a cookie, but eating it yourself. If I lived knowing that I could never go outside, never eat with my family, or even look out a window, I would be pretty depressed. I think I would just have to break some rules, yet I wouldn’t want to because as far away as I would be from my family, I would miss them If I was taken away. (March 20, 2001, SJ)

Dana: Another hidden kid! But it is the cookie dog syndrome, again. The kids is right there. ... Back to the kid, I can’t help but to think about how Luke must feel about another kid like him. I would try pretty hard to get my parents to let me see the kid. (March 21, 2001, SJ)

Dana: All I can say are two words, dog-cookie. Luke was so close, close enough to reach out and grab the cookie, but alas, it was once again eaten. At this point I would be seriously considering suicide. What is the point of his life? He will always be alone, up in his room. He could run away and become a beggar, like the one he had seen, this way he wouldn’t be a kid coming out of nowhere. (March 22, 2001, SJ)

In Dana’s responses, his ideas were centered on the images, associations and feelings called to mind during his transaction with the text. He described what he saw and extended it to his own life and how he would handle the predicament. Dana was able to go beyond the action of the story and evaluate the predicament as if he were the character.
Other students shared specific feelings that were called to mind about the main character's predicament of aloneness in the book.

Josie: I feel very sad for Luke. He doesn't know anybody from the outside world. Also, he is not going to school. ...(March 20, 2001, SJ)

Beth: I feel sorry for Luke because of the way he has to live and that he can't even look outside is probably for him one of the cruelest punishment he could get. ...(March, 20, 2001, SJ)

The students also expressed their feelings of unfair societal issues as portrayed in the book.

Mark: ...The government stinks!... (March 20, 2001, SJ)
Beth: ... I think the population laws are really cruel especially for people with children over the limit. ... (March 19, 2001, SJ)

Aesthetic responses were given when students wrote about specific episodes which attracted their attention and related their own thoughts and feelings.

Tommy: I thought this book started out very strange. I think it is showing how a family had to hide, protect their children from the outside world. (March 19, 2001, SJ)

Josie: ... I thought Miss. Haddix didn't clarify things that well. But, I feel that the chapters told a lot of detail. (March 19, 2001, SJ)

Student were able to see beyond the events of the story and speak of the author's role (Hickman, 1992).

Student Journals: Phase Two

During phase two, the teacher restated the journal expectations to the class. The teacher said she didn't want the students to "summarize what was
read” and to “think about ways you might do that without just telling what happened” (March 26, 2001). The teacher restated the directions and purpose for the journals. She gave them suggestions of how to respond to the book. She modeled for them a creative response of how she would respond to the text. Following the repeated directions, the student responses became more judgment oriented, with raising of questions, making inferences, and predictions. Few retellings occurred in any part of the student responses after this point. Aesthetic responses increased as the students isolated specific episodes which attracted their attention and related their thoughts and feelings to these events.

There were a number of responses in which students looked at making connections between the read aloud and their own understanding of events in the story.

Emma: ...And it seems to me like the government has way too much power. I feel Jen’s pain totally. The other kids (shadow kids) seem too scared to do anything about it. They are too scared to take matters into their own hands. (March 27, 2001, SJ)

Emma shared her personal feelings and made judgments about the character’s actions. Emma’s writing seems to indicate that she could identify with the character’s feelings and why no actions were taken to prevent the pain and isolation of the character’s actions. She related to the character directly and made connections between the character and life experiences.

Other journal entries shared personal connections. In this excerpt, Angela begins by identifying with the character’s feelings, but isn’t quite sure if she agrees with his decision. Next, she compares the book to a movie she has seen. She considered what she might have done or felt if she had been in the character’s position.
Angela: ...I don't know if I would have made the decision Luke did. I would have had to think about it more. For Jen's dad, being a population police person, I thought it was great what he did. I wanted to know what happened to Jen's dad and Luke. It sort of reminds me of the movie, *Gattaca*, with how he had to leave it all behind. I really like the book. (March 30, 2001, SJ)

Angela used her own personal experiences to understand the characters in the story. However, at this time, Angela didn't make a judgment statement, she chose to think about her own choice. Angela seldom contributed to class discussions, but in her journal, she connected the story to her own thoughts and feelings. Therefore, though class discussions had little dialogue about the author's style of writing, student journals reflected aesthetic responses to the book and her writing. This is markedly different from class discussion where there was little or no dialogue about the author's style. During whole class discussions, only one comment was made in reference to the author. On March 26, 2001, Kyle stated, "Yeah, that could be a sequel for her" (March 26, 2001, TL4).

Three students made evaluative judgments about the quality of the author's writing. In this excerpt, Dana evaluated the author's writing style.

Dana: I can't believe Jen is dead. I hate it when authors kills off perfectly good characters. I think Jen should have lived. She herself should have chickened out and not gone to the rally. I think that would have made for a better ending. (March 28, 2001, SJ)

Dana analyzed the author's style of writing by evaluating her choice for the ending of the book. He included his own perspective in considering his choice for the ending and gave an interpretative account of how he imagined
it should end. In this excerpt, Josie begins by making a positive evaluative comment. Then she states she has questions for the author when she comes for the visit.

Josie: The chapters that we read today were very suspenseful. This is a very good book and I think that once I meet the author she could explain some of the questions that I have about the book.... (March 22, 2001)

In this entry, Josie makes reference to wanting to meet the author to ask a question, but she never signed up for one of the discussion groups to meet the author. Of all the students in the class, Josie read the most Haddix books, for a total of four. In another entry she states:

Josie: ...I liked how “MPH” brought out Luke’s feelings. MPH describes Luke’s reactions to things very well. And you can actually picture the book and you actually picture the book like a movie. You can stop and rewind, and pause just to get a better look at things. Not many of the authors that I read could actually see the book as a movie. I bet Luke is really confused, I would like to see inside of his head hearing his thoughts that nobody else hears. I really appreciate the way Margaret Peterson Haddix writes. She explains things very well and you can tell that she took time in writing the book and she took time to develop the story. (March 28, 2001)

This response exemplifies an aesthetic response with “imaging and picturing” (Cox and Many, 1992). She imagined what it would be like to be in Luke’s head and hear his thoughts. She considered the point of view of the author’s writing and positively evaluated her writing style. It appears, therefore, that these students are much more likely to refer to a book’s author in private writing than they are in whole-group discussions.
One student in the class extended her writing in the form of a poem and wrote one journal entry as if she were the character.

Katie: Going to the Rally doesn't feel right to me.
Not going to the Rally doesn't feel right to me too.
For all the Shadow Children, I must go!
But for myself let me be gone.
I hope my father doesn't find me
for if he does I think I won't be able to live my life.
(March 27, 2001)

In this highly aesthetic response, Katie was able to slip into the main character's shoes and relate what she imagines to be the character's underlying emotion, feelings and state of mind. Katie wrote:

Dear Journal, 3/29/01
I want to go to the rally but, I am a chicken! Jen's brave, why can't I be? I think hope that nothing happens to her.
But instead her own father told me she was DEAD! If it wasn't true then why would he say that? So I guess it's true, but I can't believe it. How could she leave me? Why did he leave me? I wish this is a dream and I would wake up and then show her my signal and she sees it and I see hers! I wish it was all a bad dream!

signed
Luke Garner
(March 29, 2001)

In this entry, Katie wrote as if she were the character in the book and took on his voice and point of view. She extended the story and proposed a hypothetical ending of her own choice.

The student journal responses were both similar to and different from the classroom discussions. Classroom discussions were mainly retellings of the chapters with some evaluative and generalizing particular incidents or characters' actions in the broader themes of human life events. The student
journals seemed to give the students a chance to state their private thoughts in a non-threatening manner. They explored characters’ perspectives and their own personal feelings without having to share them with other students in the class. Students such as Katie, who rarely participated in class because she was quiet, responded with personal thoughts about the book in her journal.

The teacher never asked the students to share their journal entries during the duration of the study. Nor did any of the students volunteer to share their journal entries during class. Journal writing was treated by the teacher and students as a private and personal endeavor. Prior to phase two when the teacher restated the directions, she had the journals in her hand and just prior to her giving an example, Tommy interjected for her to stop. He thought she was getting ready to read his journal out loud (it just happened to be the one on the top of the pile). The teacher stated that she wasn’t going to read his journal to the class, and she would never do that without his permission. He was very relieved, which suggests he valued his journal as personal.

Drama: Skits

Books become more real to children as they identify with the characters through creative drama (Huck, C. S., Helper, S., Hickman, J., & Keifer, B., 1997, p. 688). In Readers Theater, students take part of a text and transform it into a tableaux or skit which is preformed for an audience. By creating a dramatic interpretation, it encourages rereading, builds fluency, and aids comprehension through repetition and dramatization (Routman, 2000, p. 73).
The teacher began a drama activity a few days after she finished reading the book aloud to the students. She introduced the activity by stating:

Teacher: You are going to create a short drama based on the book.... think about the key scenes in that book... or create four or five tableaus. ...(April 2, 2001, TL8)

The teacher allowed the students to pick their own groups for this activity. During the work time for this activity, the students discussed plans, roles the students would perform during the drama activity, props, asked the teacher questions, and practiced. The teacher often touched base with each group. The students took on varying roles during the planning of the activity: planning the sequence, recording the skit on paper, designing and making the props. Other students may have only observed and allowed the other group members to take charge. On April 5, 2001, the students presented their drama to their classmates. The students were attentive as they watched their classmates perform the dramas. Since this activity was presented the day prior to Spring Break and presentations took place up to the end of the class session, no time was permitted for class discussions following the presentations.

Asking Questions About the Author

Students asked few unprompted questions about the author or her body of work during the study. Only once did a student speculate about the author. Jacklyn stated, “I want to know what she looks like” (March 23, 2001 FG). I shared with Jacklyn what the author looked like. She asked how I knew that and I shared my own experiences with Ms. Haddix. Jacklyn asked clarification and elaboration questions during our conversation.
Effects on Classroom Activities on Day of Visit

The Author’s Perception

I knew this author personally. In my previous doctoral studies I read her books and interviewed her for a class assignment. Ms. Haddix did an author visit in my class the previous year, and she recently attended the same children’s literature conference I attended. For this study, the only communication I had with the author was asking her for permission to include her in this study. We did not discuss any aspects of the study itself prior to the day of the visit. On the day of the visit, we only exchanged pleasantries. Two weeks following the author visit, I interviewed her about her views of authors’ visits and her impressions of this particular visit.

Participating in Visiting Author Programs

Ms. Haddix participates in visiting author programs often. She stated:

Author: I do them partly out of a sense of obligation because when someone says “Oh we love your books, we want you to come and talk about it” I kind of feel bad saying ‘no,’ and I think it's good for kids to see that there is a real person who creates books, because that was something that was kinda of a hang up for me as a kid, that I had never met an author. ... I never met an author and so when I was thinking about that, this is something that I would like to do, I had no idea what it would really entail and it didn’t seem like it would be a real person who would be able to do that. (April 30, 2001, AI)

Ms. Haddix does author visits to share the authoring process. As authors get students excited and interested in reading and writing through their own work, this enables students to see authors as real people and being an author as a real job. Authors seem to be viewed by many students and adults with some degree of luminary status. Roland Smith (1999) stated that when he was growing up, he did not have author visits [in schools], and as a result,
"authors took on mythic proportions in my young I-want-to-be-an-author-someday mind" (p.14). Haddix's comments also suggest this same notion and by doing author visits, she can share what a real author does in the authoring process.

Mrs. Haddix believes students learn from her visits. She stated:

Author: I think it's good for kids to see it is possible to be a writer and it's possible for a real person to be a writer, someone who has a family and has kids and, you know, goes to soccer games and that kind of stuff. I think it's good for kids to hear about the writing process from someone who is doing it on a professional level, that it's not just something that your teacher is making you do... (April 30, 2001, Al)

When authors come to schools, students may hear from the author how much time and energy goes into the writing of a story. They may see the similarities between an author and themselves as only the time spent on a writing piece. Haddix stated indirectly, "If I can do this, you can do this." which may empower students to write.

Ms. Haddix stated once she commits to an author visit with a school, the school usually discusses preparation activities but often leaves it up to her to plan the topic of her speech and the focus of the small group talks during the visit.

Author: It surprises me how often they want an author in, then leave it to me in terms of what I say. They really don't even care what I say as long as I come in and I'm the visiting author and I can give their kids something of a taste of what it's like to be an author, how I get my ideas, something like that. (April 30, 2001, Al)

Communicating and scheduling the day's activities in advance with the author helps the teachers prepare the students for the visit and what activities to develop for the students in the classroom prior to the visit (Schwartz,
By knowing in advance what the author will discuss, this enables the teachers to make sure the students are familiar with what the author will focus on during the visit.

In preparing for school visits with individual schools, Ms. Haddix states:

Author: It depends on what I am doing at the author visit and generally before I go to a school, I've exchanged at least 6 or 8 or even 10 e-mail back and forth with the person who is coordinating the visit, or sometimes it's from conversations, more and more to e-mail and that's just so much easier because I don't have to worry about catching a teacher, pulling the teacher out of class, you know, teachers can be very hard to catch or they don't have to worry about trying to catch me at the right time. Usually we kind of go back and forth about what it is exactly that they want me to do, what their goal is, what kind of things they want me to focus on. I need to know what books, if any, hopefully they have read some books, of mine that they've read, what they are interested in hearing about and then I kind of tailor my speeches according to what they want to know and what they're expecting.

She stated that this school prepared unlike most other schools:

Author: There really wasn't that much back and forth interaction and I did ask a couple times, now what do you want for this and it was kind of "we leave it up to your own discretion." So, I was a little bit unsure on some of that stuff but I don't know if it was that they were unsure or if they just kind of felt that they trusted me. It was different from pretty much any other school visit that I've ever done in that I only gave the one general speech and then the rest of it was the 2 writing workshops and then the 2 question and answer type sessions...

(April 30, 2001, AI)

This excerpt suggests that schools could ask the author what they see as successful formats and author activities. By doing so, this gives the school varying perspectives in planning the event. The author expressed the importance of having a question and answer session at this school based on student comments and questions from the student writing applications given to her by the librarian.
Author: They had asked for and originally were going to have 4 writing workshops and just the main speech and nothing, no real chance for the kids to ask questions or anything. I was glad that they did have the question and answer sessions and when I was looking at the forms that the kids had filled out to apply to go to the writing workshops, I noticed that a lot of the kids really seemed to want to know how I had written my books and it was questions that were more appropriate for the book discussion group and then I felt kind of bad because they really didn’t get a chance to have that in the writing workshop because I was focused more on their own writing.

This excerpt illustrates that students were interested in asking questions about the author’s books. While no students in my study chose to participate in a writing session, this may have been due to not knowing what the expectations for the session were. The teacher stated that during the writing session, the author would be working with a piece of the student’s own writing. This did not happen, the author taught mini-lessons on writing (plot and character development) and students worked on skills related to these topics.

Author Speech: Content and Style

The author’s speech presented an insight into her world as a writer. During her speech presented to the student body in the school auditorium, Ms. Haddix spoke about the following themes:

- childhood memories of reading and writing
- her realistic view of the writing process she used in writing books
- the magic of writing books
- the stages of the writing process from “idea, plot, metaphor to the book itself
- how she came up with the ideas for each of her books and how they each related to an experience in her life
- college, work, and family background
- the publishing world
- hearing voices in her head as the characters talked to her
- her future releases of books (author speech document)
The author spoke with enthusiasm and candor in her speech. During the speech itself, I noted in my journal “all eyes were listening attentively as the author spoke.” During her speech, she used many personal examples as she conveying her writing strategies and experiences as an author. For example, she shared with the students how she came up with the idea for the novel, Just Ella. She first described how she got the idea for the book, from a well-loved Cinderella puzzle her daughter played with. One day while watching her daughter play, she started thinking of how Cinderella had such an easy life after the fairy godmother “just swoops in.” She stated:

Author Speech: And then, almost instantly after I thought that, it was like I heard a voice in my head protesting, “Wait a minute, you don’t know how it really is. I was used to working constantly. So you think it was easy just sitting around once I got to the castle? And if you think I look vapid—what do you think the prince was like?” (April 18, 2001)

After hearing the voice of Cinderella speak to her, the author stated:

Author Speech: “I don’t like to talk about it too much, because people quickly stop saying things like, “Gosh, what a creative idea for a book!” and quickly start giving me looks like, “Gosh, you’re really weird.”” (April 18, 2001)

She proceeded to say the voices were so persistent in her head that it interfered with her daily thoughts. By speaking honestly and sharing some of the actual thought processes she experienced, the students were able to hear first hand the process of constructing ideas for her books. She continued:

Author: It broke into my regular scheduled thoughts so often that I started worrying about myself a little bit... It was weird, but it was also fun... before long I knew I was going to write the Cinderella’s story for her. (April 18, 2001)
By sharing the stories behind the stories for her books, the students were able to get a clearer idea of the writing processes Ms. Haddix experienced during the writing of a book. As Ms. Haddix spoke to her audience, students seemed attentive and to be listening to her every word. Not once did I see students inattentive by talking or giggling with friends during the author presentation. Observing the assembly provided insight into how the author emphasized to the students the importance of using their own past experiences in their writing and how thinking about the idea is the first and sometimes the hardest, process of writing. As the author talked about the authoring process, frequently stressing that writing is hard work, she shared with the students that writing involves many processes. She stated:

Author Speech: What is incredible is that, after writing all those books, and doing all that hard work, and rummaging through dictionaries and griping at the grammar check on my computer, and occasionally disagreeing with my editor, I still do believe that writing is magical. At several stages-getting the first spark of an idea, suddenly seeing how a plot twist can work, suddenly having the exact metaphor to describe whatever it is I’m trying to describe—at those stages, I do feel I’m in the presence of something magical or mystical or maybe even sacred. (April 18, 2001)

By sharing with the students the writing process from beginning to end and the persistence an author endures throughout all the stages of the writing process, a realistic view of writing emerges.

Small Group Reading Session With the Author: Kyle and Emma

Two students in this class signed up to attend a small group reading session with the author. The session lasted about 40 minutes in length and about 25 students from seventh and eighth grades attended. All students had the opportunity to sign up for either a reading or writing session, but only
two students chose to attend the reading discussion group from this class. Emma wanted to attend both sessions in reading and writing, but had to choose between the two, and she chose the reading session. Following the morning assembly where the author spoke to the whole student body, and prior to the reading discussion session, I talked to both students about the speech and the upcoming reading session.

Between the author speech and the small group session, Kyle and Emma reflected on the speech with me in the hallway. Both students were positive about the speech given by the author. The author speech generated possible questions from both students for the upcoming small group session.

Kyle: She answered a lot of the questions [I had], it was a good speech.
R: Why did you think it was good? What made it good?
Kyle: It was like six pages long and she didn’t look down at the whole thing the whole time, she looked up, and she like had the whole thing memorized!
Emma: I thought it was kind of weird, she was telling it like in a story, like she was reading a book or something. And, I was kinda upset because I read Don’t You Dare Read This Mrs. Dumphrey, and I was hoping she would like- [talk more about it]
Kyle: Well ask a question [at the reading session] and she’ll answer that.
Emma: I am going to ask her about that.
Kyle: And she spoke so clearly too, so I like remember every single word she said.
R: What was the most interesting thing that she said?
Kyle: Oh-
Emma: I think it was the settlement place and how everyone acted so weird. ...
Kyle: I liked when she said that she got pretty much all her books from her family [life]. (April 18, 2001, SI)

The speech generated certain kinds of talk from both students. Kyle focused on the speech itself and the author’s presentation of the speech; whereas,
Emma focused on the how the author got her ideas and how she wanted to know more about those ideas. When I asked both students if they wished they would have signed up for a writing session, they both said they would rather discuss the author’s books. Kyle stated:

Kyle: No, I just like this [reading session].
R: Why not?
Kyle: The writing group, I don’t know, I just really want to discuss about the books. (April 18, 2001 SI)

Prior to the speech, Kyle only wanted to ask the author how she got the one idea for the setting of the book Among the Hidden. However, after hearing the author share the rest of her work, he became interested in asking her questions about ideas for all her books. He went beyond the information she shared in her speech and built off the speech and planned to ask more detailed questions.

R: Do you have any questions planned to ask the author?
Kyle: I am going to ask her, I know she got the ideas for that book Among the Hidden from the population police about her kids, but I also wanted [to know], in China, if that inspired her a little more to write the book, [will] ask about that.
Emma: Not really, not exactly sure. Does it have to be about Among the Hidden?
Kyle: No, it can be about any book you want. I am going to ask about Running out of Time too? About like, how she felt. Didn’t she get that motivation out of that camp?
R: For Running Out of Time?
Kyle: Yeah.
R: She went to a reenactment settlement where people come to visit.
Kyle: Yeah, I don’t know, I haven’t finished the book yet, I am on the fifth chapter, so I still have more to read yet. But, I will think of a question? (April 18, 2001, SI)
During the reading session, both students were highly engaged and asked the author questions about her books. Emma asked the most questions of all students present. The questions she asked were:

1. Do you have a favorite book?
2. Who are your favorite authors?
3. In Don’t You Dare Read This Mrs. Dumphrey, was it based on your real life?
4. Do you ever think you won’t get an idea?
5. When you are writing, do you ever get frustrated?
6. What was the plot of Turnabout?

In questions, 1-5, the questions asked reflected Emma’s curiosity to know more about the author’s personal reading preferences, how she got the ideas for her books briefly mentioned in the speech and how she managed the authoring process. Emma seemed to move beyond the theme of the speech and focus on particulars of the author’s life and work. None of Emma’s questions were discussed or answered during the author’s speech. Nor, was any mention of these topics discussed in class prior to the author visit. Kyle asked the author two questions. He asked:

1. I know in Among the Hidden you got the idea from having a lot of children. But, did you ever think of children in China?
2. Is it [Among the Hidden] going to be in the movie theater?

Kyle had a specific purpose going into the session; he wanted to know if the population laws in China had anything to do with her idea for the setting of the book. This was discussed in detail during class sessions throughout the read aloud sessions. The teacher had planted this seed about the setting
during the beginning chapters of the book. Once the setting question was
answered by Ms. Haddix and she explained that other students in schools
asked that same question, Kyle seemed satisfied.

**Effects on Classroom Activities Following the Visit**

The teacher stated that, overall, the students responded to a greater
complexity of the author's work following the author visit.

- students shared their thoughts and opinions of the author visit
- students modeled the book's plot in their own piece of narrative writing
- students related and compared literary element in subsequent books back
to the previously read book, *Among the Hidden*, by this same author
- seven students identified a Haddix book as one of the best books they had
  read for the school year

**Student Responses Following the Author Visit**

**Student Journals**

Two days following the author visit, the teacher asked the students to
write about the author visit in their journals. This was a different activity
since she was very direct in the questions she wanted the students to respond
to. This writing had a different purpose than the journals prior to the visit.
The same journals were used, but with a different purpose. For this activity,
the teacher asked the students to think about the author visit and to respond
to the following questions. The teacher gave the students as much time as
they needed to respond to the questions.

1. What did you like about the whole experience, the work preceding it and

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What students valued most from the author visit

- skits performed by students in various language arts classes
- author speech

Ten of the fifteen students stated the skits performed by the student body were the best part of the author experience. The end of day assembly included skits of the author's books performed by the student body. Each drama presentation drew on the knowledge and experiences of each group's performers.

Emma: My favorite part of the author visit was the skits and plays in the afternoon assembly. They were so funny! (April 20, 2001, SJ)

Dana: I enjoyed seeing the kids perform, and performing myself. (April 20, 2001, SJ)

Emma and Dana's excerpts suggest that the social interacting and personal connections made through the drama were enjoyable. The drama presentations drew on the knowledge of the author's books and the experiences of the students. Having the opportunity to perform for the author, teachers, and student body was rewarding because they had chances to create voices other than their own.

The author's speech was the second highest rated activity. Four of the fifteen students indicated they liked the author's speech best.

Greg: It was fun meeting the author and hear how she made her books and what she had to say and told us. It was interesting that the simplest things inspired some books like a puzzle and other books like
Among the Hidden was inspired by a big decision she is trying to make. (April 20, 2001, SJ)

Greg’s excerpt suggests that students valued the author’s speech. Greg recalled specific examples and found the experience enjoyable and informative.

What Students Learned From the Author Visit

- insight into the author’s world
- recalled specific ideas the author stated in her speech
- tied the theme of the author’s speech to their learning from the visit

Overwhelmingly, thirteen of the fifteen students indicated they learned something from the author visit. The students cited specific pieces of information from the author’s presentation which suggested they had an insight into the author’s world. Student responses were directly linked to the author’s theme in her speech, which concentrated on how she got the ideas for her books.

Beth: I learned that MPH [author] gets her ideas from the more unusual places, such as from a Cinderella puzzle and from thinking about having more children. (April 20, 2001, SJ)

As this excerpt illustrates, the author’s modeling of the process of authoring impacted the students as she shared her background knowledge and experiences in writing. Another indication of awareness of ideas was when students recalled specific ideas stated by the author.

Kyle: What I learned was that most of the stories come from the things around you. For example, most of her stories came from her family and places she has gone. (April 20, 2001, SJ)
Joey: ... from now on when I have to write a story of my own, I would think about some life experiences. I would also think very hard about what I'm writing. (April 20, 2001, SJ)

Both students tied the theme of the author's speech to their own learning and planned to transfer her writing strategies to their own writing processes. In contrast, two students indicated they did not learn anything from the author visit.

Josie: I really didn't learn anything. The speech that she gave sounded like she had done it many times before and she was bored. (April 20, 2001, SJ)

Josie indicated the speech was boring; however, Josie read the most books by this author following the author visit. Josie may not have been interested because the author discussed most of her books, and Josie had no prior experiences with the stories since the class had not read or discussed the books in class.

How Students Would Change the Author Visit

- varied activities with the author

Statements from students for this question varied. Students suggested a range of changes for the author visit. The most frequently cited change was to use a variety of the author's books in the drama performances. Seven of the nine skits focused on one book, Among the Hidden. Students suggested adding another reading group to the author schedule, one which was informal and just question/answer session. Following the author assembly, no time was allotted for questions by the student body. Students stated they wished they could have asked the author questions. One student stated that students needed to read more than one book in class by the author. Since the
author shared her whole body of work during her speech, students who were not familiar with her work were unable to connect as much as a student who was more familiar with the author's body of work. Considering the wide range of responses, this suggests that middle school students vary in what they view as important in a guest author visit.

**How Students Would Change Their Participation in the Author Visit**

- sign up for a writing or reading group
- apply to more than one reading or writing session

These responses suggest that in retrospect many students would have participated more in the small group sessions if they had known what to expect once they heard the author share her work. Once they heard the author speak and entered her world as an author, their perceptions may have changed about the author's body of work or the life of the author. The curiosity of wanting to know more about the author's body of work may have evolved following the speech.

**Student Member of the Author Committee**

- format for classroom activities and day of visit would vary

Students suggested they would make changes to the author visit schedule and events if they were a member of the committee. Spending more time with the author and having time to ask the author questions were foremost.
Joey: I thought the author committee could have had something so that everybody could meet her. I would also like to have longer assemblies when an author comes because I want to be a sports writer someday so I need some advice or know how the author writes. (April 20, 2001, SJ)

Angela: ...next time, maybe the students could ask questions. There were some things she didn’t share that I would have liked to know. I didn’t like how she had a long speech prepared, it was as if she was trying to act out being an author. (April 20, 2001, SJ)

These responses suggest the students had a vested interest in this visit. Having a chance to ask questions following the speech was important to students. Having more time with the author in an intimate setting where students could ask questions following the author speech would enable students to interact and ask questions. Giving students ownership in the planning of the visit could have increased interest and motivation.

Second, varying the activities for the day was suggested by students. Comments included students suggesting changes to the visit:

Kyle:...have her do more fun things because all she did all day was make a speech and answer some questions. (April 20, 2001, SJ)

Brady: I think it would be cool if there was a small contest where a few people could win a free book. (April 20, 2001, SJ)

Three students stated that the afternoon assembly had too many skits on the same book.

Rachel: Maybe if we did this again we wouldn’t have so much Among the Hidden stuff. (April 20, 2001, SJ)

Josie: My advice is that they should have set up things to do in the writing and reading groups so they have something to do. Also, they should have 2 tableaus per book because two groups could tell the story rather than 6 groups telling the same story over and over again. (April 20, 2001, SJ)
Of the nine drama presentations, seven were on the book, *Among the Hidden*. During the assembly, students made comments about the repetition of skits. Students in this class were most familiar with this book, since it was the read aloud book by the teacher. Students who had not read the other two books on which skits were performed, stated they had no idea what was going on in the skits because they had not read the books.

Student responses reflect the students' opinions and suggestions for future author visits. Students related their comments to their own preferences. Patterns emerged of what students valued from this visit. When comparing assigned questions and the free-response journals, the assigned question responses were less elaborate, while the free responses were richer and students were more engaged even though the teacher gave students as much time as they needed to finish their responses.

Whole Class Discussion Following the Author Visit

Immediately following the written responses in their journals, the teacher and students gathered in a circle and discussed the visit. The teacher asked the students what they "enjoyed" and "didn't enjoy" about the author visit. One category emerged from the data.

- personal insights from the visit were expressed

Group discussions elicited different responses from the students. Responses in journals, small-group discussions, and interviews indicated that the students were engaged in the author visit, however, the participation in whole group discussions seemed to be contrary to that due to group dynamics. The following are some typical attitude statements made by students:

Greg: I like how she was telling us how she wrote her book.  
(April 20, 2001, TL)

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Joey: I thought about how she had some experiences with her family, how she got the population police idea and how she got those experiences and not just making them up. She actually had that happen. (April 20, 2001, TL)

Overall, student comments focused on where the author got her ideas for her books. Students recalled connections the author made to her own life and the stories she created. Less positive statements focused on the speech itself.

Josie: I thought her speech was like done over and over again, like she did it so many times, it was like she doesn’t even care.

Kyle: [comment is about small group session] I kinda thought it was boring because if someone asked her a question she would take like three minutes to answer just one and then it would go back and forth the whole time, It was just kinda boring. (April 20, 2001, TL)

Less positive comments indicate the students may have felt the author patronized them. Taken together, students seemed as if they expected to be entertained as a comedian or a movie star would do; whereas, Ms. Haddix’s shared her ideas for her books. Kyle, who seemed attentive during the small group session, may have been impatient since his focus was getting his questions answered, and once this occurred, he was finished.

Student Interviews

Formal student interviews of all the students were conducted three days following the author visit. The purpose of the interviews was to see what effect the author visit had on student’s attitudes towards reading and writing. Three-fourths of the students stated they learned how to get ideas for their own writing and linked the theme of the author’s speech back to their own writing. Examples of those are:

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Emma: ... you have to look around to get ideas and not get ideas from somebody else's writing or some other books, and [now] it's a lot easier to get ideas for writing than I use to think it was. (April 21, 2001, SI)

David: It takes a long time to think of something, like 4 years to be able to even put a letter down and that it's harder than I thought. I figured you know, you get paid a lot of money if you sell a lot of copies and you just like lay around the house until you think of something and then write it down. And that's what I thought it really was. (April 21, 2001, SI)

Five students stated they learned about the author's work, but did not learn anything about their own writing. Mark stated he learned how the author got her ideas, but when I asked him if that would change the way he thinks about writing, he stated:

Mark: No, because most of the ideas for my stories, I just write and start out with one idea and as it goes along I just think, hey, I could add this on. (April 21, 2001, SI)

Next, I asked Mark, 'Is there anything you would change in your own writing now that you have heard an author speak?' He indicated:

Mark: Not really, I mean, my writing stayed the same and it will like always stay the same. (April 21, 2001, SI)

Kyle also stated he would not change his writing.

Kyle: No, I have been writing that way all of my life, so I don't think I'll change...I write my own little way, I don't know how, but I do. And she writes in her own little way. (April 21, 2001, SI)

This suggests that the author's speech may not have had an impact on them. They may not have connected to the author.
The students who stated they would change their writing stated for example:

Tommy: ...to write and then think...like in school you don't necessarily have a lot of time to think about it, but like how to summarize what you think would be a good idea before you start writing. (April 21, 2001, SI)

Rachel: ... go through my writing and fix all the mistakes or change the ideas. (April 21, 2001, SI)

David: ...put a little more effort into it [writing], make it more creative, more of my own. (April 21, 2001, SI)

Brady: ...try to use different variety of stories. (April 21, 2001, SI)

These excerpts suggest that students focused on how they would get ideas from the theme of the author's speech.

Fourteen of the fifteen students said they planned to read more of the author's work following the visit. Responses fell into two categories:

- After the author described her books, students wanted to read additional books
- Based on student comments and the skits performed, students thought they would read more books

Students seemed motivated to read additional books by the author following the author's speech.

Jacklyn: I want to read Turnabout, when she described it, it sounded like a really good book... (April 21, 2001, SI)

Brady: Right now I am reading Running Out of Time... I thought that was really cool how she got the ideas for that book. (April 21, 2001, SI)

Other students influenced students preferences for reading additional books.

Emma: I want to read Turnabout, that seems like a really good book because there was a bunch of kids that read it and were talking about it
in the little group discussion thing, so I am probably going to read that one. (April 21, 2001, SI)

Rachel: I want to read *Turnabout* and *Just Ella* from my friend.

Jacklyn...I heard that they're really good books and sound interesting. (April 21, 2001, SI)

Students related the author visit as contributing to classroom learning prior to the visit. Responses to the question, 'Did you understand the book the teacher read in class better now that you’ve had the author visit?’ indicate students better understood the story after the author shared her ideas for her books. Example from students:

Kyle: Yes, because all the explaining and everything kind of made you look at all the stuff you’ve never looked at before. (April 21, 2001, SI)

Brady: Yes, it is easier to understand once you know how she wrote it. (April 21, 2001, SI)

In retrospect, all but three students stated they wished they would have signed up for one of the small group sessions. Students who stated they still would not have signed up for a session said they thought it might be “boring” or “didn’t want to spend the additional time,” and “didn't want to make up the work in other classes” (April 21, 2001, SI). Reasons for signing up fell into three categories:

- would have learned more information
- would have the first time, but I forgot to fill out the application
- only read two books, didn’t feel like I knew enough about her

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Most students shared this experience with their family and friends. It was conveyed as a positive experience with students stating:

Angela: I said that she talked a lot about how she got her ideas and they were pretty cool and like what she looked like and some of the books that she talked about. They said (friends) that is was interesting hearing her and they learned a lot more about what she wrote. (April 21, 2001, SI)

Kyle: I talked to my parents about it, they said it was pretty cool. I told them she came in the morning, said a really good speech and then I was in a group... (April 21, 2001, SI)

Emma: [friends discussion during lunch] Afterwards, all of them wanted to be in, yeah! [discussion group] They were talking to me about it and they were like “Ah, I wish I could be in that, “They just asked me what it like overall. I told them she smiled the whole time and that her answers to questions were extremely long. But, she was really nice and stuff... (April 21, 2001, SI)

That students shared the author experience with friends and family which suggest this was a meaningful event and the author visit had an impact on students. When I asked the students if they had since thought about the visit, (five days including the weekend) responses were divided between 7 saying yes and 8 students saying no. Those eight who had responded are as follows:

Emma: I think I have one of her books at home, so like, and I don’t remember if she mentioned it or not but I kept thinking about that the whole time, like I tried to remember if she said anything about it or not, I think I should have brought that in to get her to sign it. (April 21, 2001, SI)

Beth: Yeah, a little bit, I was kinda thinking that was cool and they should do those more often, because it’s really interesting to hear what the author is thinking, everything like that. (April 21, 2001, SI)
Five students said they were planning to read the sequel to the book that was read aloud in class by the teacher. When I asked the students what they thought of the author's work, each student expressed a positive attitude. Most responses focused on her creativity and how interesting her ideas were for her books. Other comments included that it takes a lot of time to think, plan, write, be a good writer.

Connections to the Author's Body of Work Following the Visit

The teacher assigned a narrative writing piece prior to the author visit. Students continued working on this piece following the author visit. The students had not written a narrative writing piece since the beginning of the school year, five months earlier. In the initial teacher interview in March, I asked the teacher if she thought any students would model the author's writing?

Teacher: I think some will.
Researcher: Do you think some kids will write stories about the things her books are about?
Teacher: Seventh graders really don't write stories because we can't do a lot of story writing, but I think it will creep into things, like when jumping into poetry, we'll see some of those ideas brought up, yeah, I expect to see the influence of her visit permeate the rest of the school year. (March 20, 2001, TI1)

At one point, a conversation during the whole class discussion was presented in which a student asked what would happen if twins were born. Two students used this idea in their narrative writing pieces, but modeled the author's plot development. One student began his narrative by modeling the author's plot prior to the visit, while the other student changed his initial topic after the author visit and followed with modeling her storyline. Appendix D includes their writing. Examples of modeling the author's story
include a similar story with similar and different character names. Brett wrote, "Her name was Jen, I thought that you were that one kid across the street." Chris wrote, "Then the population police came over to Luke's house." Both students changed the stories little, but the ideas belonged to the author.

During subsequent class sessions following the author visit, the teacher stated the students made connections by relating the author's work to the literature [science fiction] studied in class.

T: We're working on science fiction right now and we've talked about Among the Hidden as an example of science fiction and it's come up in reference [by students]. I mentioned that we did plot structure today just to review and kids talked about explication and rising action and all that stuff in reference to Among the Hidden. So, it's been referred to. I don't know in great detail, but it is being referred to.

This data suggests that the teacher believes the author visit did influence classroom activities following the visit. These activities involved modeling the author's writing, reading the author's books and relating the author's work to class discussions following the visit. During the last week of school, six weeks following the author visit, students responded to an "end of year reflection" that was annually administered by the teacher. One question asked students to identify the three best books they read and seven students stated a novel written by Ms. Haddix. Another question asked," What has helped you the most with your writing?" Josie stated:

Josie: What helped me the most was having someone help me make changes in my writing and having met an author really helped because I saw how she got her ideas. (June 8, 2001, teacher email).
This excerpt suggests that the author's body of work and author visit may have had more than an immediate effect. The author stated that an author visit could effect the motivation for reading and writing after the visit.

Author: I do think that kids having heard an author or met an author in person, are more likely to, then when they see one of that author's books in the library or wherever, you know, in the book fair order form or something, they're more likely to say, "Oh, this is, you know, someone that I've just heard," so they're more likely to look for those books and to read those books. I do think that happens. There is a bit more motivation, a personal connection and a better understanding of who that author is. (April 30, 2001, AI)

When I asked the author if she had anything she would like to share in the interview, she stated:

Author: I hope that the kids did learn from it. But, you never know. And a lot of it, you don't necessarily see the impact right away, it's just like a lot of the books that they're reading may have an impact on them long-term, but you don't know that right away. And they may not even know that right away, it may be something that they just remember and then years from now they'll think, "Oh yeah, I can do that too or maybe I will major in English instead of Computer Science or whatever. (April 30, 2001, AI)

This point, made by the author, suggests that effects of the author visit occur over time and cannot be measured in a specified time frame.

Effects of Circulation of Library Books After the Author Visit

Following the author visit, circulation rates school-wide were few with a total of 12 books being checked out of the library from April 18, 2001 until the end of the school year. Because of these small numbers, the trends in circulation suggest that students were not motivated to check a book out of the library for additional reading following the visit. Moreover, I heard very
few comments from students in having difficulty checking the authors books out of the library or being unable to get one from the public library. I am not sure if the students considered this option or not. The librarian stated no students mentioned the author visit for the remaining seven weeks of school. Little evidence of an impact was shown in the circulation rates and library discussions of this school-wide. Few books were available in the school and public library for students to check out due to teacher's use of the books in classrooms. Just as Staas' (1987) findings, library book check out was very controlled in the schools and this affected students chances to read books on their own by this author.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative inquiry was to describe and explore the impact of a school author study/visit on seventh graders' literacy activities as they occurred in the context of one classroom. This study sought to understand the learning opportunities planned for the students by the teacher and how these learning opportunities were shaped and co-constructed by the teacher, students and other adults before, during, and after the author visit.

Guest author visits are gaining widespread popularity in schools across the country. Many schools are hosting author visits as part of their literacy curriculum; however, relatively few research studies have been conducted on author visits in a school setting. Two studies were located after a comprehensive search. Both Staas (1987) and Simon's (1995) studies investigated what children learned from a visiting author program in whole school settings. An emphasis on the planning stages was prevalent in both studies and the general learning effects on the students and adults in each setting were described. However, no study, to the best of my knowledge, is available which reveals the process from beginning to end of an author study/visit in one naturally occurring classroom environment. Though
professional resource books and journal articles exist which describe author visits in schools and classrooms, the emphasis seems to be on the planning and little on the effects of student learning. I feel it is important to note that most books and articles I have read on author visits seem to presuppose that author visits are important to student learning and emphasize how a successful author visit hinges on the planning prior to a visit. This section contains discussion and interpretation of the key findings of the study. The themes that emerged from this study are discussed, along with connections between the themes and literature related to author visits in schools. The following are the research questions which serve as the organizational frame for discussion of findings: (a) What learning opportunities occur as a result of an author study in a classroom?; (b) How will these opportunities be shaped and co-constructed by the students and teacher or with other adults?; and (c) What did the students in this classroom learn and value during and following the author study/visit in literacy learning and understanding?

Method of Study

This study is a qualitative descriptive study of literacy activities in one seventh grade language arts classroom. Field work consisted of a transactive cycle of gaining access, collecting data, and data analysis. Data was collected over the course of seven weeks through field notes, audio tape recordings, interviews, and photocopied documents. Data was analyzed using a constant-comparative method. As the researcher, I participated in the role of
participant observer; however, I only participated in the small group discussions with the focal students and talked informally with students before and during class sessions.

The conceptual framework for this study consisted of a social constructivist view of teaching and learning. Children construct knowledge from new experiences by relating them to past experiences. Thus, the teacher's discussion strategies, patterns of teacher and student talk and the quantity of teacher and student talk were noted and coded. Additionally, I examined the relationships between the teacher's observed practices and her stated goals concerning the author study/visit. Therefore, when the teacher and students responded to a piece of literature, they did so as a cultural and social event.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Theme One: Preparation and Planning As Central to Success of Visit

The planned activities by the author committee encouraged students to explore their literary understandings of the author's body of work. Activities planned by the author visit committee reflected collaborative planning between the author committee and staff. My observations were consistent with Staas (1987) and Simons' (1995) findings that author visits follow three separate stages. The first stage consisted of advance planning by the author committee. The second and third stages were planned by the classroom teacher and consisted of activities related to the day of visit and follow-up activities.

Overall, the organization and implementation of activities exploring the author's work affected students' literary understanding. According to the
literature outlined in Chapter Two, a successful author visit should have advance preparation: inviting the author, learning about the author through biographical information, ordering the author's books for sale to the students and staff, students and staff reading books written by the author, launching book-based projects, preparing the schedule for the author day visit, and publicizing the visit to the students and community (Buzzeo & Kurtz, 1999; McElmeel, 1994; Smith, 1999; Schwartz, 1995; Simons, 1995; Staas, 1987). This committee planned and arranged these events successfully as well as scheduling two large group sessions, four small group sessions, an autograph session, and a student lunch with the author.

During stage two, the classroom teacher prepared the students for the author visit with many activities, most of which were related to one read aloud book. Students were exposed to the author's body of work during the booktalk; however, no background information on the author was shared during the duration of the study. According to Buzzeo & Kurtz, 1999; Calkins, 1986; McElmeel, 1994; Smith, 1999; Schwartz, 1995; Simons, 1995; and Staas, 1987, this stage is pivotal because students must study the work of the authors and be prepared to "raise questions about specific techniques used and decisions made by them in their work" (Vandergrift, 1980, p. 200). If students have read more than one book and discussed the author's body of work prior to the visit, the author has a foundation to build a discussion on and the author and students have a connection with each other (Smith, 1999).

The committee prepared for the author visit by reading the author's books, having literature discussions following each read aloud, and concluding with webbing the themes of Ms. Haddix's body of literature.
Overall, the committee and teacher seemed more prepared than the students due to their preparation activities prior to the author visit.

**Theme Two: Discussion Patterns Appeared Along a Continuum from Teacher-led to Student-led in Literacy Understanding**

A continuum of responses and interactions in this classroom from teacher-directed talk (whole group discussions) to student-led talk (small group discussions) were found. The findings from the data suggest that student-led discussions and a higher level of engagement in whole group discussions help to build literary understanding. During classroom activities, student responses indicated:

- talk was more elaborated in student-led discussions.
- students made more connections between the story and outside experiences in the student-led discussions.
- students shared more aesthetic responses in the student-led discussions.
- students discussed the author's style, raised questions, and clarified for understanding in student-led discussions.
- students built off each other's ideas during the discussions in both formats, but mainly in student-led discussions.
- students reflected on their own thinking across all discussions.
- students asked questions about confusing aspects of the text across the continuum.
- students related stories to their own lives across the continuum.

Research on discourse in classrooms suggest that engagement in classroom talk elicits different responses in different contexts (Cazden, 1988, Wells, 1999). Traditionally, response to literature has been driven by “right”
answers to teacher’s questions (Routman, 2001). Researchers who have studied the teacher’s role in classroom discussions (Knobel, 1993) have found that teachers have a difficult time making the transition from “gentle inquisition” to the “grand conversation” approach. Knobel found that students frequently respond to the teacher, rather than to the text, regardless of the teacher’s efforts to value the student responses in the discussion. This frequently occurred in this study. The findings from this data suggest that student-led, small-group discussion are valuable because as shown in this data the student’s natural responses to the literature were more aesthetic. Students in small group discussions shared aesthetic responses while discussing the author’s work: author’s style, raising questions, clarifying their understanding, reflecting on their thinking, and asking questions about confusing aspects of the text. Responses were shared by students and related to their own lives in student-led discussions. The students had more choice, control, and opportunities to respond to the literature. Deeper engagement and personal involvement took place during student-led discussions as the students co-constructed knowledge by making connections between the story and their own outside experiences. Small group participants were more willing to take risks in conversations and considered the views of others as they engaged in conversations. However, discussions between the teacher and students in which they share views and clarify for understanding can enhance the ability of the students to reflect on their own literary experiences with the reading selection. According to Rosenblatt (1983), awareness that others have had different experiences with text will lead the reader back to the
text for a closer look. By sharing responses with others, this may impact and influence students to consider varying viewpoints and to more critically examine their own responses.

Because personal responses to literature are an important part of a literature-based program, the levels of questioning and the sharing of personal experiences can directly affect the development of comprehension. During whole group discussions, the author's background (biographical) and her writing style were rarely mentioned. During the seven read aloud discussions the teacher shared only one personal experience about the book. Following her comment, students shared their own personal insights about the same event. During the whole class author visit discussion two days following the visit, in which the students and teacher discussed the author visit, twice the teacher shared her personal thoughts on the author's presentation. Both times, she stated positive comments in response to negative student comments. During the preparation for the author visit, the teacher seldom shared her own personal experiences of previous author visits or author contacts. However, during informal conversations with me, the teacher shared previous experiences with various authors she had heard speak or met during author visits and conferences. During these conversations, the teacher was excited about the author visit and described how the previous year's author visit impacted students and their writing. The sharing of previous author experiences with the students may help students better understand what to expect the day of the author visit and to know what effect it had on the teacher and previous students' reading and writing preferences. If the teacher's enthusiasm carries over into the classroom setting with students seeing her own passion while sharing her past experiences and
personal insights, then possibly more students may take fuller advantage of such optional opportunities as the writing and reading discussion groups.

**Theme Three: Effects on Reading and Writing**

Throughout the study, I asked myself over and over how the effects of this author study and visit extended student knowledge in reading and writing. Were the teacher’s goals stated at the beginning of this study met? Did exposure to a real life author and her body of work motivate students to read, write or value writing? In turn, did this experience strengthen the connections students make in their own reading and writing? In essence, did any transfer occur? The indicators from the data suggest connections were made in reading and writing. The students in this study:

- experienced the work of an author during the study and extended this knowledge through the author sharing her experiences.
- recognized that stories come from the author’s life experiences.
- learned what a real author does in the authoring process.
- were better able to understand the read aloud once they heard the author share the writing process of the read aloud book.
- were still reading the author’s books at the end of the school year (six weeks following the visit).
- modeled the author’s plot structure in a narrative writing piece (two students).
- in the ‘year end reflections’, listed one of the author’s books as the best book they had read that year (seven students).

My findings support both Staas (1987) and Simons’ (1995) findings that an author study/visit affects the attitudes and connections made by students in reading and writing. An overwhelming conclusion of this study indicates...
students learned how to get ideas from their own experiences for writing. Students stated they enjoyed the speech given by Ms. Haddix which indicates that her sharing of ideas, struggles, pleasures, and rejections may have revealed to students that writing is hard work, but rewarding. By the author answering questions in the small group sessions, this enabled students to discuss books they knew with the author. Ms. Haddix scaffolded the discussions by building on student questions and this prompted students to consider other facets of her work that they had not addressed in class or on their own in their journals. The two students from this research classroom who participated in these groups received a fuller understanding of the author’s work and may have worked in their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Overall, students’ private responses, (journals, interviews) rather than public responses (whole group discussion) voiced positive statements about the author’s body of work.

Findings were inconclusive regarding the effect the author visit had on students’ reading and writing interest. The students who read more than one of the author’s books (during sustained silent reading and outside of the classroom environment) during and following the author visit, did not attend the small group sessions or consistently state positive comments. Josie, who read the most copies of the author’s books before and following the author visit, did not sign up for a small group session, and stated few positive comments in her journal entries and the whole group discussion following the visit. Josie stated following the visit, “I really didn’t learn anything. The speech that she gave sounded like she had done it many times before and she was bored” (April 20, 2001, SJ). Kyle, who seemed the most excited about the author visit from beginning to end and attended a small group session
seemed content getting his one question answered during the author session. He modeled the author’s plot in his story, but stated he may read the sequel to the book read in class, but didn’t plan to read any other books written by the author following the author visit. This suggests that the success of the visit may not be apparent to the observer. Josie’s or Kyle’s interests may or may not develop at a later date intellectually or through experiences in ways that are opaque and are not discernible to the teacher or observer. Or, perhaps the visit wasn’t a success for Josie. Such conclusions are beyond the scope of this study. The findings suggest an immediate effect, but cannot tell us if there will be a lasting effect. To answer this questions, a longitudinal study would be needed.

**IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM PRACTICE**

Based on my theoretical stance, a way to allow for more elaboration during a classroom author study/visit would occur through a social constructivist lens in which more emphasis is placed on the ways in which the teacher and students construct meaning together. The active involvement of the students in building their own understanding of the world through dialogue is crucial to learning. Therefore I believe that teachers who are familiar with author visits and have students who have had past experiences with authors in their school, should start by learning what their students already know and using that foundation to build new concepts while preparing students for the author visit.

Unlike Staas’ (1987) and Simons’ (1995) studies, this study takes a different track by detailing one teacher’s preparation before, during, and following the visit and the effects on students’ reading and writing literacy. Generally speaking, the observed author study explored the teacher’s and
students' understanding of the activities and books read in preparation for the author visit. Findings from this study may be informative to teachers interested in implementing author visits in their school or classrooms. Specifically, the stance and approach used by the teacher, teacher planning and preparation prior to the visit and follow-up activities largely determine the success of an author visit. Notably, several observed teacher practices emerged from this study that can be used to plan a more student-elaborated author visit:

- provide a variety of opportunities for students to engage with the author's body of work.
- provide effective communication with the author prior to visit for suggested activities.
- communicate to students about author's biographical information.
- provide the sale of the author's books prior, during, and following the visit; provide a flier with books available, summary of books, and cost of each book.
- provide booktalks early enough in author study to allow ample time for reading the author's work.
- provide students with a schedule of events or post "author day" schedule in classrooms, hallways, cafeteria and library.
- encourage all students to apply to participate in a small group session and give each student an application
- coordinate with other schools in the district the author visit date for library book availability.
- provide ample opportunities for students to interact with the author.
- provide time for student questions following the speech.
- consider having the author come for more than one day or meet with various grade levels in classrooms.
discuss the author visit immediately following the visit with students. In future studies, the emphasis on these particular strategies or a combination of these strategies observed in this study could further illuminate potentially fruitful author studies.

Teacher Stance

The teacher's stance or perspective toward knowledge building affects student engagement. Generally speaking, students respond to the teacher's approach. As I have observed author visits in this research and in my own school experience, I have found that when the teacher shows excitement, students become excited and when the teacher ties in past knowledge, the students make more connections, which in turn provides students the opportunity to make connections themselves. Few references in the literature mentioned the importance of the classroom teacher's perceptions and practices in the implementation of activities in the classroom throughout the author study. However, the teacher's overall approach and belief that an author visit makes a difference seems central to the success of an author visit.

The richness of students' experiences seem to come from the ways in which teachers view these experiences. Essentially, how the teacher supports and promotes the author visit affects student's responses to the event. The teacher's enthusiasm, past knowledge, planned activities, excitement about the literacy possibilities that students may take from the author visit, the willingness to let the students talk about their own experiences, the willingness to draw on resources for classroom use, and the support of each student's individual responses all impact student learning. While there were a variety of activities during this study, the degree to which students built off
prior knowledge was limited. In order to have an increased impact on student responses, the teacher might connect the author’s book to other books written by the author, other genres related to the author’s work, or to other books previously read during the school year. Just prior to this author study, the teacher had the students do a research project on an author of their choice. “Current theory and practice in literacy education emphasizes the importance of student independence, autonomy, and choice (commonly referred to as "ownership") (Dudley, 1995). For that three week activity, the students were required to research the author, read three books, make a poster with information about the author, include a quote by the author, and describe the author’s books. Students presented their compiled information with short oral presentations about each author and recommended one of the author’s books for their peers to read. It was clear from these data that prior connections seldom entered into the author study, suggesting that teachers might try connecting the students’ prior experiences to other author studies because students in this research seemed more knowledgeable about the authors previously studied than about Ms. Haddix. Having learners take ownership of the classroom assignments may allow them to identify and decide for themselves relevant learning goals in an author study. This could motivate them to apply what they have already learned to present learning goals (Ngeow, 1998).

The implementation of various activities does not guarantee the success of an author study, rather, the teacher’s point of view towards the author experience, student learning, and connections between each determines success as students build knowledge. This suggests that teachers

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might try building off previous knowledge, such as asking students to share journal entries and sharing of insights from small group discussions during whole class discussions.

**Follow-up Activities**

Data from this classroom suggest that teachers should do effective follow-up activities following the author visit. The visit should not end when the author visit is over (Buzzeo & Kurtz, 1999; McElmeel, 1994; Schwartz, 1995; Simons, 1995; and Staas, 1987). In order to have an increased impact on student interest, it appears that teachers could extend the experience by having students read other books by the author, refer back to the author's experiences and use the author's writing ideas as a springboard for subsequent student writing. It was clear from these data that engagement following the author visit did not lead to further support of the writing curriculum in the classroom to strengthen the connection that students could have made to the author's writing. This suggests that teachers might try providing students with a variety of opportunities to engage with the author's body of work to support this experience. Being familiar with more than one book may be necessary if the author's presentation emphasizes more than one book. Logically speaking, following the author visit, the most opportune time to reflect on the visit is as soon as possible. Once teachers have prepped students, excitement is peaking, thus, the best opportunity for student learning is when students' feelings are fresh and emotions heightened. Classroom interactions promptly following the author visit provide the foundations for construction of meaning, aesthetic responses, and building new knowledge from what students have just learned.
Discussing the author's work immediately following the visit gives students the opportunity to share what they learned from and about the author and its relation to reading and writing literacy.

Preparation and Planning

Sufficient communication between the school and author is needed during the planning stage of an author visit. Since most authors have done many author visits, asking them for suggestions on the planning could benefit both teachers and students. If teachers know ahead of time what the author will be emphasizing, they can better prepare their students prior to the visit. If Ms. Haddix had stated her concern with having only one general speech, the committee might have considered changing their planning of the schedule after hearing the author's prior experiences of students often wanting to ask questions afterwards. The timing of activities such as books' availability in the school and public libraries, the book sale, booktalk, and the presentation of the schedule to students is essential to the success of the visit. The author's books should be available prior to and following the visit. In this study, a shortage of books school-wide contributed to students not having opportunities to read the author's work throughout the author study. Due to the high demand of books prior to the visit, teachers alone rotated the library books for classroom preparation. During the same time period as this visit, another school in the district was also having this author visit their school; therefore, the public library's circulation of books became meager to none. An author flyer can benefit student interests. Distributing an author flyer before the visit to introduce families to the author could involve the family and student in the special event. A book sale information sheet of the books and

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prices, along with book summaries could spark interest and enthusiasm among students. In order to have an increased impact, having books on sale prior, during, and following the visit when excitement is peaking, could support student interests in the author’s body of work.

Having the author visit schedule posted, spending time discussing the author events, past author visits, and students having a paper copy of planned events are important to the success of the author visit. Providing information sheets, applications for small group sessions, and a biographical handout for the students to keep may contribute to the students being better prepared for author visits. Students need a variety of opportunities to read and to respond to the literature for an author visit. Providing opportunities with more than one of the author’s books could have expanded the students experiences with the author’s body of work.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Several findings from this study have implications for further research. Similar to both Simons’ (1995) and Staas’ (1987) studies, the finding of this study reveal relatively short term effects of the author study/visit. Because of the narrow focus and limitations, the results of this study cannot be generalized to elementary or high school grade levels. First, there is a need for a study on the long term effects on students’ reading and writing motivation from an author visit. Second, throughout my observations, I saw how the group dynamics of the class affected student responses and participation. While this was not the subject of this study, another study could provide insights into expected norms and stances within the middle school culture of peers and how that affects student response.
This study was conducted in one classroom. The advantage of studying one classroom was that I could spend more time with one group and know it well. However, only looking at the events in one classroom prevented any critical comparisons. A richer description could have occurred if I had observed two classes with the same teacher or various classrooms in this school. With the author visiting an elementary school in this district near the same time period, I could also have compared planning and student effects in both schools. Other researchers might want to pursue such opportunities for comparative study.

Similarly, further research on staff development seems warranted. The classroom teacher, librarian and staff viewed this visit as a positive experience. By having many staff members on the planning committee prior to the visit, a vested interest and sense of ownership ensued from these adults. Positive comments were made about the author's speech and small group sessions. Student comments were shared among teachers following the visit. With the growing use of author visits in schools, there is also a growing interest among children’s literature scholars in the effect these visits have on student literacy. Scholars and researchers need to continue to seek out and illuminate successful teaching techniques and student learning in author visit programs in schools.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORMS
Dear Parent or Guardians,

My name is Susan Hayward. I am a doctoral student working with Dr. Janet Hickman at The Ohio State University. I am studying the process of learning and teaching reading and writing in the middle grades. Beginning in March for approximately 6 weeks, I will be documenting reading and writing activities developed by your child's teacher, Mrs. Thimmes. The goal of my study is to understand the ways through which children learn and develop as readers and writers during an author study in the classroom. I believe this study will add to the body of research on author visits by helping teachers develop a protocol in how the presence of an author shapes student discussions in reading and writing, to stimulate interest in reading, to support teachers' efforts to encourage reading and writing, and to offer insights into the creative process of writing. During the duration of the study, I will participate in the classroom as an observer and assistant. I will assist Mrs. Thimmes during classroom activities when needed.

I would like to request your permission to interview and conduct focus group discussions with your child as part of my research activities. I plan to interview students after the author visit and do a total of five focus group discussions, one a week after the author visit. Some examples of possible questions for the interviews and focus group discussions are: Do you understand the book better now that you've had an author visit? What did you learn from the author about her work? What will you change about your own writing now that you have heard the author's suggestions? Do you think differently about your own writing now that you have heard an author share her work? I will audio tape your child's participation in classroom literacy activities; to take photographs of language arts projects; and to have access to your child's written work and make photocopies of it. The audio tapes, photographs and copies of written work will be used for research purposes only and will not be shared in any way with the school for evaluation purposes. The audio tapes and photographs will be kept in my possession until my dissertation is approved. I will erase the tapes and shred the documents. Your child's name or the teacher's name will never be used on any information that I present in professional conferences, journals, or courses. Your child will not take part in any activities beyond normal classroom practices.

The purpose of this study is to observe the normal routines and activities developed in the classroom, and the teacher and children's participation in reading and writing activities. I will participate in conversations with your child and other students about their written work and writing activities only for the purposes of understanding their process of engaging in reading and writing activities, and to assist them when asked for help. Your child may participate in a focus group discussion outside of the classroom, but the affect on instructional or class time will be minimized.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 740-153-7524, or Dr. Janet Hickman at 292-8317, or Mrs. Thimmes. If you agree to your child's participation, please have your child and yourself sign and return the attached consent form to Mrs. Thimmes. I will send you a photocopy.

Sincerely,

Susan Hayward  
Doctoral Candidate  
The Ohio State University

Dr. Janet Hickman  
Principal Investigator  
The Ohio State University

Language Arts. Childrens Literature. Reading 614-292-0711  
English Education. Foreign Language Education. Social Studies Education. Drama Education 614-292-2445

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CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN
SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH

I consent to participating in (or my child's participation in) research entitled:

A Descriptive Study of Literacy Learning and Teaching During an Author Study/Visit

Dr. Janet Hickman or Susan Hayward has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my (my child's) participation. Possible benefits of the study have been described as have alternative procedures, if such procedures are applicable and available.

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study and that any questions I have raised have been answered to my full satisfaction. Furthermore, I understand that I am (my child is) free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to me (my child).

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: 3/19/01  Signed: ____________________________

Signed: ____________________________  (Student Participant)

Signed: ____________________________  (Principal Investigator or his/her authorized representative)

Signed: ____________________________  (Person authorized to consent for participant)
APPENDIX B

TIME LINE OF STUDY
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>METHOD and FOCUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Human Subjects Review</td>
<td>Ohio State University and Site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-February to March</td>
<td>Field entry: develop rapport with the teacher and students as well as negotiating placement and use of audio equipment. Interview selected participant (teacher).</td>
<td>observation, participant observation and audio taping of language arts lessons (activities), fieldnotes, self-reflective journal, typing transcripts, ongoing member checks, peer debriefing, interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March through Mid-April</td>
<td>Ask the teacher to help identify the focus group students. Formulate emerging hypothesis around the use of author studies being used in the classroom. Begin to look for patterns that are emerging. Ongoing data analysis.</td>
<td>observation, participant observation, collection of documents, audio taping of lang. arts lessons, field notes, self reflective journal, focus group identification, focus group discussions, author study journal, typing transcripts, ongoing member checks, peer debriefing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-April through Mid-May</td>
<td>Formulate emerging hypothesis around the use of author studies/visit. Continue to look for patterns that are emerging in author studies/visit. Ongoing data analysis. Interview selected participants (teachers). Conduct member checks. Type transcripts.</td>
<td>observation, participant observation, collection of documents, audio taping, of lang. arts lessons and focus group discussions, field notes, self reflective journal, interviews with participants, member checking, begin data analysis and writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-May through Mid-June</td>
<td>Peer debriefing, triangulation of methods.</td>
<td>data analysis and writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-June through December</td>
<td>continue data analysis and writing</td>
<td>data analysis and writing, peer debriefing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure B.1: Time Line of Study
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Teacher Interview Protocol Prior to Visit

1. How should children's literature be used in the classroom?
2. How do you choose the books you use in your language arts classroom?
3. What do you think you can give the students in this study?
4. Why did you invite an author to come to your school?
5. How will you design your author study?
6. Taking into consideration the school curriculum, what will you do as a teacher to prepare your students ready for this event?
7. What goals are you trying to achieve in this author study?
8. What learning opportunities do you think will occur in reading and writing?
9. What opportunities are planned for the author visit to ignite interest and enthusiasm for reading and writing?
10. Do you think the students will respond to a greater complexity of the author's work after the visit?
11. Do you think the motivation in reading and writing will change as a result of the author visit?

Teacher Interview Protocol Following Visit

1. How has this author visit impacted your practice as a teacher/librarian?
2. Did you achieve the goals you were trying to achieve in this author study/visit?
3. What learning opportunities do you think will occur in reading and writing as a result of the author visit?
4. What opportunities from the author visit ignited interest and enthusiasm for reading and writing?
5. Do you think the students will respond to a greater complexity of the author's work after the visit?
6. Do you think the motivation in reading and writing will change as a result of the author visit?
7. What impact did this have on the students? Did you notice any differences with the students before, during, and after the visit?
8. Are there any follow up activities planned?
9. What worked well and didn't work in the planning of the author visit?
10. Surprises? Disappointments? Things you would do different the next time? Is there a next time?
11. Anything you would like to add?
Student Interview Protocol Following Visit

Reading
1. Do you understand the book better now that you’ve had an author visit?
2. Are there any books you would read again after meeting the author?
3. Of the books you’ve read by this author, which one was your favorite? Why?
4. What do you think of the author’s work?

Writing
1. Is there anything you would change in your own writing, now that you have heard an author speak?
2. Is there anything you appreciate about own writing as a result of the author visit?
3. Have you learned anything about writing from the author?
4. Do you see yourself as an author?
5. Do you think differently about your writing now that you have heard an author speak?

Author Visit
1. Did you learn anything from the author about her work?
2. What did you wonder about during the visit?
3. What was your favorite part of the author study/visit?
4. How did you feel after meeting the author of a text you have read?

Anything else you want to share?
Librarian Interview Protocol

1. How should children's literature be used in the classroom?
2. What do you think you can give the students in this study?
3. Why did you invite an author to come to your school?
4. How will you design your author study?
5. What goals are you trying to achieve in this author study?
6. What learning opportunities do you think will occur in reading and writing?
7. What opportunities are planned for the author visit to ignite interest and enthusiasm for reading and writing?
8. Do you think the students will respond to a greater complexity of the author's work after the visit?
9. Do you think the motivation in reading and writing will change as a result of the author visit?
Author Interview Protocol Following the Visit

1. Why do you do author visits? How do they benefit students in reading and writing?
2. How do you prepare for an author visit? Do you plan anything to ignite interest with the students?
3. Do you prepare differently when you give a presentation at a middle school?
4. What do you think you give students in an author visit as the author of a book they have heard or read? Is there a message you are trying to convey to students?
5. Do schools ever ask you to give them suggestions for the planning of an author visit?
6. What can teachers do to make an author visit successful?
7. The librarian said that you mentioned this was a “unique” schedule, what did you mean by that?
8. Were the amount of books you signed about average?
9. Did you think the students were prepared?
10. Did you feel over or under scheduled?
11. Did you think there was enough student interactions with you?
12. How do you feel about classroom visits?
13. Did you view this author visit as a successful? Would you change anything based on your experiences in other schools?
14. Have you had any student interactions since the visit? email or letters?
15. What learning opportunities do you think will occur in reading and writing as a result of your visit?
16. Do you think the motivation for reading and writing will change as a result of your visit?
17. Is there anything else you would like to share?
When Zook was born he had a identical twin named Luke. When they got older, Luke was allowed to do a lot because everywhere he went people thought he was Zook. But if Luke went outside Zook had to stay inside. Same for the opposite. One day Luke looked out the window and checked to see if everybody had left. He was in the living room and decided to look out the window. He looked at the Sports Family House and in the window he saw a face. He knew that everyone in the Sports Family House had left to go to work and the two boys went to school. So Luke was so curious that he knew that he had to go over. But if he wanted to go over he knew he could not. Because he looked just like his brother. But his brother was at school. So when he went over to the house he was very careful. When he got there the door was locked. We didn't know any other way to get in so he broke the screen and unlocked the door. He stepped inside and heard a Bip Bip Bip. He saw someone on the computer. But before he could say hi, he found himself on the floor. He noticed that it was a girl. So Luke explained himself and then she let go. Her name was Jen. "I thought that you were that one kid across the street," Jen said. "I am and I'm not." "I'm his identical twin" Jen was shocked but then she realized that she had to turn off the alarm. She typed in the password, but it was to late. She called her dad and told him to turn it off. So after that Jen and Luke started to talk and were good friends. One day Luke went to Jen's house. Jen was typing on the computer and Jen was setting up a rally. Luke couldn't go but Jen didn't understand why he couldn't. So Luke left. Three days had passed and there was no sign of Jen. So Luke told Zook to stay in the house so he could go over. He ran over and broke the screen and walked in. Bip Bip Bip! Luke darted over to the computer and turned it on and typed in "hello." Then Zook was at the house and saw a car pull up at the Sports Family House! So Luke ran as fast as he could to save Luke but it was too late. Zook had found Luke with a gun in his face. Zook charged at the man and tackled him. The gun flew out of his hand and fell on the ground. BANG! The gun had set off and hit Zook. As he lay on the ground there was a long pause. Then the man hid and then told Luke to hide in the closet. Then he heard the worst sound he had ever heard in his life. "Population Police Open Up!" After the man got off of the population police he came and let Luke out. Then the man explained him self and Luke found out that he was Jen's dad. Jen's dad told Luke that Jen had died and he worked for the population police. There was a stall for a little while. After he thought of what Jen's dad had done for Jen he knew he wouldn't hurt him. "Why," he said. "Because I don't think that it is fair for third children to be trapped for the rest of their lives and hiding from everything!" Luke thought that he was the only one that thought that way but now he knew different. "Zook! What am I going to tell my family and what am I going to do?" "I will take the full blame and you are free!" "What do you mean?" You are Zook because you look just like him and know one will know that!" Finally a little joke over Luke. After Luke told his parents what happened they were MAD! After the hour thing blew over Luke lived his life the way he always wanted to. He can now go outside and do whatever he wants without the feeling he will get caught. The End.
Among The Twins

One day, Luke, a hidden child, made sure all of the people in the neighborhood were gone. He counted thirty-five. He snuck outside and ran to the house that he saw the face in his vent. For some weird reason, he rang the doorbell. No one came to the door. All of a sudden, he saw a light flicker on. The door opened. There stood a fifteen year old boy with old clothes and dark hair. The boy that opened the door asked Luke "Who are you and what are you doing at my house?" Luke stood there for a minute, and said nothing. Then he said "are you a shadow child because I am." The boy was in shock. Then Luke asked "Do you have two brothers?" He replied "yes." Then he figured out that the boy was a twin. Luke got asked to go inside, the house was so big and was very nice. Luke asked if he was a baron and he was. They had a conversation and got to know each other.

It started to get late. Luke decided to go home. When he got to his door step, he realized that his parents were home. He didn't know what to do. His parent were watching T.V. He snuck past them and darted to his room. When Luke got to his room, he looked out the vents. As he looked closer, he saw the population police at that boys house he was at earlier. They are the police that catch the third child in families. More known as the shadow children. Luke was one of them, same with the boy he saw earlier. All of a sudden, the boy he saw got taken away by the population police.

Then the population police came over to Luke's house. He never knew it. The population police asked to search the house. After awhile, they found Luke. He was taken away. From that day on, Luke's family would never be the same again.
**STUDENT/TEACHER SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:30-8:30</td>
<td>Staff/Author Continental breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45</td>
<td>Students report to 1st period (leave books in class) -&gt; auditorium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00-9:30</td>
<td>Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:35-10:08</td>
<td>period 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:11-10:44</td>
<td>period 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:47-11:20</td>
<td>period 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:24-11:48</td>
<td>period 5A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:48-12:12</td>
<td>period 5B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:16-12:40</td>
<td>period 6A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:40-1:04</td>
<td>period 6B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:08-1:41</td>
<td>period 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:44-2:17</td>
<td>period 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:20-2:53</td>
<td>period 9/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:53-3:27</td>
<td>Afternoon announcements (leave books in class) -&gt; auditorium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00-3:40</td>
<td>Assembly (in L.A. classes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:45</td>
<td>Students report back to 9/10 to get books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:45</td>
<td>Dismissal bell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HADDIX SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:30-8:15</td>
<td>Arrive, join staff for breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:15-8:45</td>
<td>Book signing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00-9:30</td>
<td>Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:40-10:20</td>
<td>7th grade Writing Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:35-11:15</td>
<td>8th grade Writing Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:24-11:48</td>
<td>8th grade book signing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:48-12:40</td>
<td>MPH lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:40-1:04</td>
<td>7th grade book signing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15-1:55</td>
<td>8th grade Writing Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:08-2:48</td>
<td>7th grade Writing Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30-3:40</td>
<td>Assembly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other points to think about**

- Application for workshops
  - distribute in L.A. classes
  - extras available in the library
- Get preliminary tally of students who want Haddix
  - through L.A. classes
  - sign-up for book signing time
- What group members are doing what??
- Presentation to staff -> handout of schedule
- Study Halls in library -> move

**Figure E.1: Author Visit Schedule One**
APPENDIX F

AUTHOR VISIT SCHEDULE TWO
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student/Teacher Schedule</th>
<th>Haddix Schedule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:30-8:30</td>
<td>staff/author breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45</td>
<td>students report to first period, leave books in class, go to auditorium assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00-9:30</td>
<td>period 1/2, 9:35-10:27 block 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:35-10:08</td>
<td>period 3, 10:28-11:20 block 3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:11-10:44</td>
<td>period 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:47-11:20</td>
<td>period 5A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:24-11:48</td>
<td>period 5B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:48-12:12</td>
<td>period 6A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:16-12:40</td>
<td>period 6B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00-1:41</td>
<td>period 7, 1:08-2:00 block 7/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:44-2:17</td>
<td>period 8, 2:01-2:53 block 9/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:20-2:53</td>
<td>period 9/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:53-3:57</td>
<td>p.m. announcements, leave books in 9/10 class, auditorium assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00-3:40</td>
<td>assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:40</td>
<td>students return to 9/10 class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:45</td>
<td>dismissal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30-8:25</td>
<td>arrive, join staff for breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:25-8:45</td>
<td>book signing in library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00-9:30</td>
<td>assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:40-10:20</td>
<td>a.m. writing workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:35-11:15</td>
<td>a.m. book discussion group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:24-1:04</td>
<td>lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15-1:55</td>
<td>p.m. book discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:08-2:48</td>
<td>p.m. writing workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00-3:40</td>
<td>assembly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure F.1: Author Visit Schedule Two
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Sign-ups for author visit

1. STAFF MEETING PRESENTATION (3/28) . . . Kristin & Andrea

2. BOOK SALES (in library)
   Tuesday 4/3 . . . 5A - Alison . . . 5B - Alison . . . 6A - Suzie E . . . 6B - Suzie E.
   Thursday 4/4 . . . 5A - Sandy . . . 5B - Sandy . . . 6A - Andrea . . . 6B - Suzie E.

3. BOOK SIGNING (in library - Wednesday 4/18)
   8:15 - 8:45 Sue, Andi, Lisa
   ***Elaine - take Andi’s bus duty
   5A - Erik
   6B - Sandy

4. A.M. INTRODUCTION - Jen

5. P.M. INTRODUCTION / DRAMA / ASSEMBLY - Melanie and Susie L.
   (1 drama/L.A. teacher)

6. GIFT TO HADDIX ???????

7. BREAKFAST PLANNING / SETUP / DECORATE (teacher’s lounge)
   Tuesday 4/17 p.m. - Suzie E., Elaine, Lisa, Erik
   call PTSA - Kristin
   Wednesday a.m. - Erik and Kristin

8. DISPLAYS (in library)  ***have teachers submit work to the library by the
   end of school day on 4/17
   Tuesday 4/17 p.m. - setup - class members other than Suzie, Elaine, Lisa

9. LUNCH (in library) ?????????

10. RESCHEDULE LIBRARY STUDY HALLS - Lisa

194
Application for Writing Group with Margaret Peterson Haddix

Name Emma ___________________________ Grade 7th

Language Arts Teacher _________________ Period 1/2

Please list some things you think might be interesting to discuss in the writing group:

- How do you come up with ideas for your books?
- Have you ever written any books about your family?
- What is your favorite book and why?
- What is your favorite book that you have written and why?

Please write your reasons for wanting to be included in this group:

I've never really been that interested in reading or writing until I thought that maybe if I meet a famous writer I could see where they are coming from, and if I talk to her she might be able to change my mind.

What do you hope to learn about writing in this group?

- where she gets her ideas for books.

Where do you get your writing ideas?

I just sit and start writing. I never stop my pencil. Then after I stop writing, I can edit it and it just turns into pretty good.

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Haddix Discussion Groups

Your Name ____________________________

Language Arts Teacher ___________________ Period ____________

What Haddix book would you like to discuss? ________________

What's one question you would like to ask? ________________
APPENDIX I

AUTOGRAPH REQUEST SLIP
Autograph Request

Your name___________________________

Name as you want it to appear in book (print neatly):

_______________________________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>NO. PAGES</th>
<th>DATE FINISHED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anne of Green Gables</td>
<td>L.M. Montgomery</td>
<td>524 pages</td>
<td>5/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wrongs of Woman</td>
<td>Edith Wharton</td>
<td>379 pages</td>
<td>5/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Tale of Two Cities</td>
<td>Charles Dickens</td>
<td>1016 pages</td>
<td>6/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moby Dick</td>
<td>H.G. Melville</td>
<td>264 pages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tell-Tale Heart</td>
<td>Edgar Allan Poe</td>
<td>61 pages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Gatsby</td>
<td>F. Scott Fitzgerald</td>
<td>216 pages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Odyssey</td>
<td>Homer</td>
<td>232 pages</td>
<td>5/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Aeneid</td>
<td>Virgil</td>
<td>202 pages</td>
<td>5/28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Divine Comedy</td>
<td>Dante Alighieri</td>
<td>219 pages</td>
<td>6/5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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APPENDIX K

END OF YEAR REFLECTION
END OF YEAR REFLECTION
2001—READING/LANGUAGE ARTS

NAME: Emma

WRITING
1. How many finished pieces of writing did you do this year?
   9 pieces of writing; I keep the ones in my folder
2. What are the three most important things you are able to do well as a writer? Finish a piece of writing not just give up on it. Give a lot of detail. Organize my writing.
3. What are three things you wish you could do better as a writer?
   - Improve writing, spelling and write longer pieces of writing.
4. In the past year, how have you changed or grown as a writer? What have you discovered about yourself as a writer? I have learned I like writing. So far I have written a lot more when I start a piece of writing I can find
   what has helped you the most with your writing?
   - Having so many chances to write.

READING
1. How many books did you read this year?
   24 books
2. List all the different kinds (genres) of books you read.
   Young adult books, real stories, fiction and nonfiction.
3. List the three best books you read this year. Next to the titles, talk about the most significant things you remember from each.
   - The Book Thief — important — the way the girl took care of her brother when her mother was away.
   - The Taste of Everyone — I didn't like it
   - Among the Hidden — How Luke ran away and learned to live on his own.
4. In what ways have you noticed your reading affecting your writing? and/or your writing affecting your reading?

Reading and writing go hand in hand. I find that I learn more by reading and writing about the same topic. This helps me to better understand the material.

5. Did you get more out of / enjoy novels read aloud and shared with the whole class or ones that you selected and read independently? Explain why.

I prefer reading novels that I selected and read independently. I find that I learn more and retain the information more effectively. Reading aloud with the whole class can be a break from reading on my own.

YOU
1. What is your greatest strength as a learner?

Reflecting on things I did through the year.

2. What value do you see in acquiring the skills of reading and writing?

VERY IMPORTANT! You will need these skills in life.

3. Did you always put forth good effort and strive to do quality work in this class? Explain how and why.

I tried to put forth good effort, but I didn't always do my best. Reading was important to me, but I didn't always put good effort into it. I wish I had put more effort into my reading and writing.

ME
1. What is something I did in this class that helped you as a reader or writer?

You helped me in writing and reading by making me do so much on my own.

2. What could I have done differently that might have helped you more? Be specific and honest. Give reasons for your suggestions.

Maybe gave up more choices in the books I read. Sometimes I would pick books because I didn't like the book I was reading.

3. How do you feel about the informal manner (sitting in circle, working on carpet, etc.) in which LA was conducted this year? I thought it was a great idea. I got to interact with more people that way.
APPENDIX L

AUTHOR BOOKS
BOOKS BY AUTHOR


Sample Transcript, Field Notes, and Reflection

Excerpts From:

Session 1 Transcript and Field Notes
Classroom Observation
March 21, 2001
8:45-9:30 (Taped)
Lesson on Among the Hidden

T: We are going to read first and finish up some things for quality night. You can get comfortable and later you will need your response journal.
T: We talked, I don't even know if you remember this, I know that in your subconscious you know it, but I don't know if your remember us talking about it, early in a book, an author usually introduces characters, kinda sets up the conflict a little bit, sets the story for you, sets the tone, puts it in a time and place. I think that from conversations we have had earlier, that you have a pretty clear idea of what the issue is with his family and who the characters are. Do you have a sense of setting? Do you have a sense right now of where and when this story is taking place?
David: In the 1040's or 1950's.
T: Why do you set it there?
David: Because they were doing a lot of demolishing in the woods to make neighborhoods.
Dana: I think it sometime in the near future, like the government has been taken over or maybe something, it seems to be like a Socialist government. So
T: Ok, uhm, Kyle, what do you think?
Kyle: I like said with him, it is the future, they had to put a like a law because the population is so big it just couldn't be so many people, it would be madness.
T: Any other ideas about time, those are good ideas.
Joey: Any time really.
T: Well, could it be any time?
Joey: I don't mean any time, I mean like in a certain time, like 1950.
T: You lived in the 1990s, was it like that?
Joey: Laws weren't like that, there we no laws about having two maximum kids in a family, that's not how it was, not here.
T: Ok, well not here, that's a good point because a part of setting is time but part of it is place. Where do you think maybe this story is taking place? Do you have a sense of that?
David: I think maybe Canada.
T: Why do you say Canada?
David: It is a nice country.
T: David, are you performing or are you thinking here?
David: I think China.
T: I think there might be a good reason to suggest China, but do you know what that reason might be?
David: no
T: Mark, why did you suggest that to him?
Mark: Because it is overpopulated
T: Do you know anything else of what is going on in China in terms of their population?
Mark: They are only allowed to have one kid
T: Yeah, there are measures in place, opposed by the gov't about how many children you have. There are a bunch of people who had their hands up?
Joey: Maybe it takes place somewhere out West, maybe because it is warm and out in the country out west it is woods.
Emma: Southern, not south like Texas.
T: Like South America
Emma: Maybe, but where it is warm and a lot of trees.
T: well, is there a difference?
Dana: Can I say something about time. I don't think it could be in the 1950s because the people doing construction, they have bulldozers and a pickup truck and they would have those in the 1950s.
T: Well, the 50s were not as dark ages as you may think, I think there are clues that would say this isn't 1950s.
Kyle: I think it could be like 1980s to the future because the book is fictional non-fictional, fiction it is not a real story so the author can use her imagination.
T: Ok, so the story might be about ... I want you to keep you eyes and ears open as we continue to read so you can put this in a time and place. The setting hasn't really been laid out like it is frequently in some books, think about that as we are reading. One more thing, to think of really fast as we bring ourselves back into the story, yesterday Luke mentioned two things that he had never seem that brings home how isolated he is around him. What did he mention that he had never seen in person.
Katie: Never seen another person
Greg: Bulldozers
T: Maybe there is more than two things, you mentioned a couple things I wasn't even thinking about when I asked the question.
Brady: Like, cars on the road
T: Pardon me,
Brady: Like cars on the road
T: Cars, he had model cars. And he was wondering why he was wondering he was playing with those because he had never, he would
never be in one, he would never drive one, he’d never seen one. There was something else, when the letter came, remember the letter that came from the government.
Katie: never seen their mailbox
T: He had never seem their mailbox because it was a mile down the road. It was in the country. Speaking of the letter, what the news in this letter.
Ella: —
T: ok, (rephrased what Emma had said) too much power to the government. It sounds like the government got an awful lot of power, at least this government does.
T: Ok, let’s read, gotta cover some ground here 8:59 a.m.

Teacher reads aloud to the students (8:59)
The tax bill arrives...Luke could see Matthew’s hang-dog expression

T: What’s a hang dog expression?
David: sad-like expression
Mark: droopy
T: Yeah, yeah, like a droopy old Bassett hound with all parts of his face hanging down.

Teacher continues to read aloud to the students...Luke: but maybe he thought the people were thinking about buying the houses.

T: Why do you think he came to that conclusion?
Kyle: because he lives in that house
T: Yeah, but why does he think maybe those people are buying those houses?
Who were the people going in? Matt?
David: The people who came in the car, and the car was driving slowly and people driving slowly in the neighborhood means they are probably means they are looking at houses.
T: Well who is the lady that they are following?
Don: the real estate agent
T: Yeah, the real estate agent.

Teacher continues to read (9:08)... Luke turned his face to the wall until she left

T: Do you think he really meant that?
Student: yeahhh
T: Why? What does he got in his life right now, now that his mother is working.
Tommy: confusion
T: why confusion?
Tommy: I don’t know, he does, well, I don’t know, he does and he
doesn’t know exactly what is going on.
T: In terms of what? What do you think he doesn’t know about?
Tommy: I don’t know, like, he doesn’t know, like, who exactly is going
to move there, but he knows they are going to be rich and stuff.
T: ok, What is his day like, do you think. If you were Luke Garner for a
day, what do you think you would do?
Kyle: I would be pretty bored, and like you said, he read all his books,
like many times, like a whole bunch of times, but if I was him, my day
would pretty much be just sitting up in the attic and reading books.
That’s about it.
T: Well, every once in a while you can peek out the vent what else,
what would be the high points do you think? Emma?
Emma: I think the books would be the high point. ..he can’t go
downstairs, and he just stays in his room all day , and he can’t really get
fresh air or anything.
T: What about contact with his family? David?
David: Well when no one is home and you know how he always
wanted to, you know, he can’t take a look out a window, but he is
always like, sneaking to do it, I think sneaking is the highlight of his
day.
T: hmmm, Dana? (interruption on the intercom from office calling
Francisco to the office) Josie, you were going to say something?
Josie: I would feel neglected...love... (can’t hear all her words)
T: Well, you know what, you have a place to live, clothes, and food, but
it does feel like neglect, doesn’t it? You feel awful to be shunted into
that attic, but what does he have to look forward to?
Emma: eating, the next day
T: yes, the next day which will be the same as this, I mean it’s not like
in four year going off to college or in whatever, there is nothing for
him to look forward to.
Ella: ...What is he going to do when his parents die?
T: Good question, I mean nobody knows he exists, remember, even
yesterday, I think, we talked about his mom writing to his
grandmother, his grandmother doesn’t even know he exists.
Josie: ...I would change my last name...
Emma:...
T: You know that is a good point, it is kind of like a wild animal and
you take care of it, and then you try to release it back into the wild, it
doesn’t know how to take care of itself, it doesn’t know how to go out
and kill for food. David?
David: Uhm, I don’t think it can be a future, because don’t that have
registrations on everybody that is born now?
T: birth certificates like?
David: Yeah
Many speakers at once...
T: Yeah, but you know what, they always have had that, wait a minute, they have always have had that.
David: oh
T: I don't know if always, but, I don't know when that kind of thing started, but I know that there are records of like my grandparents, their birth, thing were registered at the courthouse, their marriages were registered at the courthouse. Amy, what were you going to say?
Amy: At the beginning it doesn't day if he was born at home, or a hospital.
T: So, nobody, so they knew that they had to keep it a secret, so they wouldn't have done that.
Josie: That means that his mom would have had to stay home so no one would see her when she pregnant.
T: right, and she said that she did when she started showing and she didn't go out.
Yeah.
T: Let's go on, and read. Let's see if we can read one more chapter before we stop. (9:16)

Teacher stops after coming to the word cracklings and asks, “Do you know what cracklings are?”
Student: crackers?
T: no,
Josie: they are popcorn things
T: No, they are things when you butcher a pig or a hog, uhm it is like the skin and a layer of fat that
Student: pork rinds
T: Yeah, kinda like pork rinds, yeah, uhm baked.. or fired and it gets kinda hard and crunchy, uh, it is very much like pork rinds.
Student---
T: yes, you eat it. That's what she gave him.

continued to read

T: that's the end of the chapter, you know what you guys have to do, five minutes in your journal, what are you thinking.

Sample Field Notes on Session One
(transcribed observations written in field journal)

8:58
Students in circle, they tend to sit in the same seats or near the same area, I do not think they are assigned, but a first come in room basis.
Students
-attentive as teacher reads, no interactions verbal or not verbal with anyone else
-many have pencils they are playing with

9:03
-wait time is 0-1 seconds
-Eric has water bottle
-Doug is writing on shoe
-Matt is playing with journal, writing on it.
-Teacher sitting in chair, relaxed, reading book.

9:08
Teacher enters room from outside,, students not phased by door opening/closing.

9:10
-teacher starts to talk before students finish their complete thoughts/utterances of last sentence, cuts them off.
-wait time 0-1 seconds before next question-students talk without raising hand, eye-contact from teacher or she calls name
-teacher asks questions on top of each other
-the students seemed to really pay attention, many kept eye contact with teacher. They didn’t watch each other or make non-verbal/contact with classmates.

9:16
-still attentive listeners
-lots of outside movement in and out of room

9:25
relax, move around, talk to neighbors, sharpen pencil

Session One Reflection
(Observations written in journal)
-nurturing environment
-respect for all
-attentive listeners
-teacher does seem to clip their responses

She values her opinions over theirs, they spend a lot of time on setting, too much for such a small issue. The focus is on the setting instead of how they feel about Luke being held “secret” in a house. Kids are very attentive, hardly any non-verbal interaction between students, They can recall details quite well from prior day’s reading.
-listen well to one another
-more efferent responses
-a great session today, very nice protocol for responses during q&A discussion time.
-homework policy
-What is pause?
I have been thinking differently about teaching. I didn’t initially like idea of read-aloud with no books for students. But it works.

-not all students participate, she doesn’t seem to try to get input from all.
-Kyle talks a lot
-little/no homework
-little grading

She is quick to start and spends a lot of time on lesson, with little time on management

I do not like the constant in and out of people. Too much movement.