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FEELING AND KNOWING:
A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
EMOTIONAL RESPONSE AND LITERARY COMPETENCE

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

Feeling and Knowing:
A Study of the Relationship Between
Emotional Response and Literary Competence

by

Gwen I. Moore

The method proposed by David Bleich in Readings and Feelings has been studied in a small group to determine if emotional involvement with literary works may be increased and, if so, what effect such increase would have on traditional literary competence. Results show that Bleich's method does increase emotional involvement with concurrent improvement in literary skills, particularly in the selection of more significant themes for student writing. Discussion of the method's application in regular classrooms is included.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Drs. Wesley Morris and Terence Doody for encouraging me through the long process of this study. Their suggestions helped me make crucial decisions that resulted in a dissertation with real significance to my life and future research.
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Introduction

The proliferating literary theories of the last few decades may seem to bear small resemblance to one another, but a common element in many of these theories is the assault upon the idea of a fixed, objective meaning which is contained within a literary text. Some theoreticians have been satisfied with merely demonstrating that such meanings are an illusion, but others have sought practical means of understanding and authorizing literary interpretation in the absence of absolute meanings. Of the latter, reader-oriented theories have appealed to a wide range of critics and teachers involved in American education, because these theories offer the possibility of a pedagogy based on the ultimate authority of the reader and his relationship to the text.

Of the two major currents in reader-oriented thought, the most theoretical and organized in its approach may be loosely termed reception theory, and its primary practitioners have been in Germany. Reception theorists run the gamut from such sociologically oriented critics as Leo Lowenthal, who has studied the reception of Dostoevski in Germany in order to trace social influence on literary reception, to Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, whose projects have been more
concerned with how the text affects the individual reader. It is Iser who has been of major influence in American critical thought, perhaps because he has never fully let go of the idea of a determinate text that controls and limits the reader's possible range of response. Iser speaks of "gaps" in the text which the reader fills, but the reader must fill these in accordance with the text's instructions.

The work of the American teacher and theoretician Louise Rosenblatt is similar to Iser's. In her 1938 book Literature as Exploration, Rosenblatt formulates the idea that no literary work really exists unless someone is reading it, and that it cannot be described without reference to the reader. Rosenblatt's proposals began receiving extensive notice only during the 1960's when emphasis started shifting from the close textual reading of New Criticism to theories that challenged absolute textual authority. Rosenblatt, like Iser, never completely let go of the idea of a determinate text and competent readings of it, seeming to fear that chaos might follow concerning the validity of all interpretation if such controls were removed. She views the universal fact of individual and often idiosyncratic interpretation as a lack in the students' intellectual functioning that requires remediation.

A much more radical departure into the subjective realm has been made by Stanley Fish, who, in his collection of essays entitled Is There A Text In This Class? carries the
idea of reader involvement to its logical end and concludes
that there is no determinate text at all, only an individual
reader's creation of a symbolic object from the marks on the
page that we call the text. Fish has not studied actual
responses of readers other than his own reading processes, nor
has he worked out a pedagogy based on the idea of the complete
subjectivity of response. He seems to stick on the thorny
problems of identifying the object of interpretation in the
absence of a determinate text and of thus authorizing any
interpretation. He does suggest "interpretative communities"
as a possible solution to the latter problem, but never works
out this idea in any detail.

Another approach to studying the reader is taken by
Norman Holland, a psychological critic who has studied the
actual responses of real readers over considerable periods of
time. In his books Poems In People, Five Readers Reading, and
The Dynamics of Literary Response, Holland presents a specific
and often quite complex system of relating readers' responses
to what he terms a reader's "identity theme," or the way a
reader's overall personality functions in the handling of the
entire contents of perception, not merely literary
experiences. While Holland's insightful analyses present
interesting possibilities for understanding how we may handle
fantasies through habitual psychological defenses, the theory
is finally reductive in its insistence on relating all aspects
of a reader's emotional and intellectual response to one
central and static core identity. The theory has limited usefulness for teachers, since it requires a profound knowledge of Freudian and later depth psychologies. Teachers using this method should also be careful not to try solving students' problems, since Holland's project is descriptive and not clinical. Identifying the way a personality works does not imply the necessity for change.

Studies with more immediate value for those interested in the pedagogical aspects of reader response are those by James R. Squire, James R. Wilson, and Alan C. Purves. Squire studied the reading responses of fifty-two ninth and tenth graders and reports the results in a document published in 1964 by the National Council of Teachers of English entitled *The Responses of Adolescents While Reading Four Short Stories*. Squire attempted to study response while the students read and so divided each story into segments and recorded the students' oral remarks immediately after reading each segment. The results were analyzed statistically, with each remark placed into one of the following categories: literary judgment, interpretation, narration, association, self-involvement, prescriptive judgment, and miscellaneous. The results show that by far the largest number of statements fell into the category of interpretation, not a surprising fact, since not only do most of us like to understand what we read, but present teaching methods emphasize interpretation of literature and hardly touch on the other areas, with the
possible exception of literary judgment. In addition to the statistical analysis, Squire investigated the personal backgrounds of thirteen students in an attempt to see how personal factors such as varied abilities, experience, and predispositions might influence response, since he found such a wide range of variation in response at the individual level. Unfortunately, Squire felt unable to evaluate the results of his investigation, since individual responses do not produce easy generalizations or lend themselves to the precise standards of rigid statistical analysis. Squire therefore concludes that literary analysis alone should remain the primary goal of English teachers. What I found most important in this study for my own work, however, is a demonstrable correspondence Squire discovered between self-involvement and literary judgment—the same readers tended to have both types of statements in their responses. Squire does not attempt to explain this phenomenon or to suggest any of its possible ramifications except to propose the use of more relevant materials for adolescent readers, but he does conclude that involved readers are "superior readers." Since my main interest in this study is to demonstrate how increased attention to emotional, subjective response, while valuable in itself, might also contribute to a student's interest in the traditional tools of literary analysis, this correlation is highly significant. Squire also concludes that students have trouble controlling affective impulses during the evaluation
of evidence and that they need help in learning to do so. While I agree that affective responses and intellectual interpretations are different types of possible response to literature, I do not feel that affective response can best be controlled or used by ignoring it in the classroom. Students may well have difficulty separating the two because they receive no training in identifying and making appropriate use of their emotional responses. I feel that it is only by acknowledging and discussing the subjective bases of all response, the teacher's and the critic's included, that the students can come to understand the link between emotional response and "objective" intellectual interpretation, and to know when each might be deemed appropriate.

James R. Wilson continues and expands Squire's initial inquiry in a study entitled *Responses of College Freshmen to Three Novels*, published by the National Council of Teachers of English in 1966. Wilson studied the written responses of fifty-four readers to three novels, using Squire's categories for statistical analysis. Wilson also studied the responses of nine students in depth, and his most interesting observations come from these studies. Because Wilson did not have in mind a rigid definition of valid interpretation, he was more willing to assign importance to the responses themselves as relevant to literary study. Wilson focuses more closely on the connection between self-involvement and literary judgment, and concludes that "an initial self-
involvement is necessary for effective interpretational processes. . . . That is to say, interpretation may be a secondary predicative process, impossible without self-involvement." Wilson places more emphasis on in-depth case studies of response, and in those in-depth studies finds that high levels of interpretational skill unify the processes of empathy and analysis. While it has probably been obvious to teachers for a long time that involved students produce better literary interpretations, there have been few methods proposed for examining or increasing involvement, other than the detailed proposals of David Bleich, which I will discuss later and use in this study. Wilson merely suggests that his findings might be a useful guideline for teachers, but I believe they strongly suggest the importance of experimenting with techniques for increasing and using students' emotional involvement with texts.

Alan C. Purves has continued these initiatives into the study of response, and has devised a much more elaborate classification system for the elements of written responses. He discusses this system in his report entitled Elements of Writing About A Literary Work, written with Victoria Rippere and published by the National Council of Teachers of English.

1 James R. Wilson, Responses of College Freshmen to Three Novels (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1966) 38.
in 1968. Purves' description of his category of "Engagement-Involvement" is significant:

'Engagement-Involvement,' the first category, defines the various ways by which the writer (student) indicates his surrender to the literary work, by which he informs his reader of the ways he has experienced the work or its various aspects. Often, engagement-involvement is the object of pedagogical disdain, since it can be highly subjective and unassailable by logic or persuasion. Yet much excellent criticism can evolve from a writer's attempt to discuss his involvement with the work or his private reaction to it. Certainly, that form of involvement that is the writer's assent to the work's existence, to the work as both literary event and literary fact, underlies all criticism.²

Purves acknowledges the subjective basis of interpretation, but he seems unable to work with his conclusions. He still defines fullness of response from the "objective" viewpoint of his categories, finding responses deficient that do not include an "adequate" portion from each category, and viewing a teacher's job as testing for and remediating such deficiencies. He offers no methods, however, for doing so. While I feel that all these categories may indeed be important for full and satisfying response to literary works, I find no justification in this study that takes into account the needs of the students themselves for increasing proficiency in any one of the categories. Teachers are still deciding what is important and why, and it is most often the categories that include intellectual interpretation.

Most important for this project are the works of David Bleich, whose three books, Readings and Feelings, Subjective Criticism, and The Double Perspective outline a pedagogical method for eliciting and studying emotional, subjective response to literature and offer a theoretical justification for doing so. While Squire, Wilson, and Purves all acknowledge the importance of emotional involvement with literary works, they seem unable to do much with their conclusions, perhaps because of the ineffable quality of emotional experience. Bleich says that:

In some sense, all emotional experience is ineffable; but this ineffability vanishes when a reader seeks either to share his experience by articulating it to others or to understand his experience by articulating it to himself. Once an experience is subject to articulation, it loses its intractable quality and becomes susceptible to systematic comprehension.3

Bleich's Readings and Feelings offers a detailed method for such a systematic inquiry into emotional experience.

In Subjective Criticism, Bleich maintains that the desire to interpret experience is an inner need motivated by our nature as language users. An essential aspect of being human is the use of language to organize and thus integrate both real and symbolic experience. Only as children name aspects of their world do they begin to gain some control over the chaos of data that daily informs their lives, and their

3David Bleich, Readings and Feelings (Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 1975) 112.
frustration is lessened accordingly. We continue using language to sort experience into categories that are arbitrary but meaningful, applying this process to increasingly complex experiences. (The languages of visual art and music are additional ways of organizing experience, but they are not universally acquired.)

Bleich emphasizes the absolutely subjective nature of our interpretations and avoids Fish's problem of what we are interpreting when we seek meaning in a literary work by emphasizing that we are interpreting or resymbolizing not the text itself but the symbolic object that is our recreation of the text. The text itself is a physical object made of various materials, conventionally some arrangement of ink on paper, but now often electronically generated signs that are interpreted without printing. By whatever medium, signs are inscribed that also have arbitrary but socially conditioned meaning. As the signs pass through the reader's visual field, some generate sensory images, some elicit conceptual thinking or a combination of both, and all are additionally capable of causing emotional response. (Some are virtually ignored at the conscious level during this process, depending upon the reader's skill and level of concentration.)

The symbolic object is the sum of all these mental re-creations and their accompanying emotional tones, and this response to a text is what we interpret. It is both conventional and subjective, since, while language is socially
acquired, no two readers ever have exactly the same referent for any sign.

Subjectivity does not imply for Bleich that knowledge or interpretation is invalid; it merely means that we must share our subjectivities openly and negotiate intersubjectively for meanings. It does not imply that a text has no meaning, but that it may generate many meanings, depending upon each reader's prior experience and knowledge. Open-mindedly listening to the meanings others have constructed when encountering the text, along with some attempt at explaining how these meanings occur, gives us an enlarged "menu" for selection.

In *Readings and Feelings*, Bleich outlines the pedagogical method mentioned above for eliciting and studying emotional response. He goes on to emphasize that since all humans are self-motivated to make meaning of experience beyond the initial emotional reaction, the next step after examining emotional response is to see its connection to intellectual interpretation.

In *The Double Perspective*, a later work, Bleich is more interested in studying response and student writing as tools for students to acquire self-knowledge. I, however, have preferred to explore the connection between emotional response and what we have traditionally thought of as literary competence and the tools traditionally provided for helping
students organize their literary experiences with assigned reading.

There is much debate concerning literary competence in contemporary theoretical and pedagogical literature. Many questions immediately come to mind in this regard. What is literary competence? Who has it? Who says? Should we teach it? Can we teach it? If so, why? No simple definition can take into account all the ramifications of these very valid questions, but for the purpose of this study I am using a definition that consists of three parts, as follows:

1. The ability to make a meaning for a text that is to a large extent unified. This of course means to most English teachers the presentation by students in an essay, exam answer, or research paper of an effective thesis and the relation of all parts of the writing to that controlling idea. (I also became interested during the study in seeing if emotional response could be integrated into this unity, or if it might need to be discussed separately in initiating the interpretive process.)

2. The ability to make meaning for a text that is somewhat inclusive. (That is, it includes adequate details from the text in support of the thesis.) The different types of writing about literature mentioned above will of necessity include different levels of detail from the literary text, but a certain amount of reference to the text must exist to support the main idea. Sheer volume of detail does not
indicate competence, indeed it may indicate the opposite, but the type of details selected and their use in relation to the main idea is an important part of my definition. As Squire says in discussing his categories of literary response,
"...a well-argued essay on a literary work may be largely devoted to one category or one subcategory, such as tone, the writer's impressions, or the derivation of symbols. The essay need not be a complete treatment of the work by the writer, but if it is well argued, it will be rhetorically effective and coherent."

A student writing about Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," for example, may choose to focus on the contrast between what we normally consider reality and illusion. Textual evidence to support this idea should include mention of Emily's refusal to bury her father and to her keeping Homer's body, since these are obvious ways in which Emily seeks to ignore or interpret reality in a way outside the social norms. Other examples might include the townspeople's manner of dealing with the smell around her house, their acquiescence concerning her taxes, or the pharmacist's selling her the poison without justification. If the student used few of these textual details, relying instead on general statements, I would consider the controlling idea to be significant but weakly supported. An essay on tone, however, might omit the details

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so necessary to the first paper, concentrating instead on the highly evocative descriptions of dust, decay, and unpleasant smells recurring throughout the story. The point to be considered in evaluating the inclusive aspect of an essay is what kind of evidence best supports the student's purpose as stated in his thesis.

3. The ability to make a meaning for a text that has some depth and significance. I include this because a student essay may be well organized and include a number of relevant details but be based on such main ideas as "Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily' is about a stubborn woman" or "The meaning of Hemingway's 'A Clean, Well-Lighted Place' is that some people are kind and others are not." While the essays produced may be both unified and sufficiently inclusive, they are trite and belabor the obvious.

The above definition includes Squire's categories of interpretation, narration, perception, and literary judgment. It omits the categories of associational response and self-involvement, since these types of writing about literature would not be considered part of traditional literary competence. Traditional tools for teaching students to write about literature have included the following ways for grouping textual materials:

1. Around one or a combination of the categories of construction, including but not limited to recurrent types of imagery, recurrent use of figurative language, use of place or
time, stylistic patterns, or point of view.

2. Around an independent system of thought such as Marxism, structuralism, or Freudian psychology.

3. Around the theme considered within the text when it is not associated with moral or ethical concepts but is presented as descriptive or non-judgmental. An example is the theme of generational change when the inevitable quality of such change is emphasized rather than the presentation of either generation as better or worse.

4. Around moral and ethical concepts considered within the text, such as the idea of women's oppression in "A Rose for Emily" presented as misguided or evil.

5. Around the actions and motives of a character or group of characters.

This listing is not, of course, exhaustive, but is intended to suggest the types of perspectives we have traditionally used for organizing texts into meaning. For this study, literary competence is considered to have increased when a student's work includes more relevant textual details with a tighter focus around a central, significant organizing perspective. While competence beyond the most basic level includes the ability to understand and write from a large range of these perspectives, exercises in this study concentrate on organization around a central theme, since the students did not have the necessary technical training to use the other categories. Time did not allow my teaching of other
techniques, and limiting myself to this basic definition helped control the study's scope.

Any student who is minimally literate may have an emotional response to a literary work, and that response will be valuable in providing self-knowledge of the student's history as a language user in relation to his encounter with a text. It is frustrating to students, however, if they cannot further organize their perceptions and reactions into meanings which they find intellectually satisfying. Even students who react strongly on an emotional level may often still wonder what a text "really" means, since they may be able to establish only the most rudimentary intellectual interpretation (or none at all, when faced with poetry). They are hampered in making satisfying meanings (satisfying to themselves, as well as to the teacher) by their limited knowledge of how works are constructed and the vocabulary of traditional literary analysis. If, as Bleich maintains, we are all self-motivated to use language in organizing experience, giving students new critical language and perspectives would neither limit nor diminish the importance of their emotional responses, but would instead offer them additional possibilities for meaning construction which they may accept or reject in their own intellectual reshaping of a work. I would hope to see the motivation for acquiring and using these tools come from within rather than being imposed from the outside by a teacher, and that increased attention to
affective response and its relation to intellectual analysis might aid in this motivating process. Bleich says in this regard:

The overall aim is to provide a means for presenting literature in a way that will produce an internal motive for reading and thinking about literature. This motive is the awareness that reading can produce new understanding of oneself—not just a moral here and a message there, but a genuinely new conception of one's values and tastes as well as one's prejudices and learning difficulties. In confronting literature from this point of view, we are not so much shifting the habits of literary study as we are expanding them. Careful and precise reading can never go out of style, and the techniques that have accumulated toward this end remain as valid as they ever were. But if careful and precise reading is the only thing stressed in class, students and teachers alike easily lose sight of why one should read carefully...In place of this moral and pedagogical authority brought to bear on any alert student who asks, 'Why should I read so carefully?' this approach makes it possible to enlarge students' understanding of their own behavior and thereby motivate them to read carefully on their own, without external threat.\(^5\)

While I certainly hope that an internal motivation for careful reading and skillful writing can be achieved, I believe that some external motivation may also be honestly used and discussed with students. The above questions relating to our justification for teaching literary competence may best be answered by openly acknowledging that there is a group (professionals of all kinds, teachers included) that knows what literary competence is (and language competence in general) and has used it to get through the university and

into certain jobs and professions that have social status. We should say honestly that academics have the power in our society to define literary competence, and we must teach it quite simply to share that power. Whether or how they use this knowledge will then be up to students, not us, to decide. To have these skills ourselves, along with the accompanying rewards, and then suggest that it is chauvinistic to teach them does not strike me as good faith on the part of teachers.

As a very practical matter, then, I raised the question of how we might put reader response theories to work in our classrooms to help students gain the skills they need. It is for the purpose of exploring this question that I designed the following study, hoping that open acknowledgement and study of emotional response might form a basis for increased ability in intellectual interpretation and analysis. Chapter One describes the design of the small group study I conducted in order to examine Bleich's method in some detail. Chapter Two gives a statistical, quantitative analysis of the results, while Chapter Three gives qualitative, in-depth analyses of the work generated by the six students who took part in the study. It also includes a summary of my own work done in response to the group assignments. Chapter Four describes use of the method in teaching regular college freshman and sophomore classes at Angelo State University, and Chapter Five presents my conclusions and their implications for teachers.
The actual student essays, response statements, questionnaires, and evaluations may be found in the Appendix.
Chapter One
Experimental Design

General Scope and Method of the Study

If we hope that increased emotional involvement with a text may form a bridge to increased literary competence in addition to being a worthwhile experience in itself, then we must ask ourselves first how we may achieve this increased level of involvement. David Bleich has carefully and specifically outlined one possible method in Readings and Feelings, which I have used as the basis of this study. So I was seeking answers to two separate but related questions:

1. Can self-involvement with a text be increased by this teaching method?

2. If it is increased, what effect will that process have on students' acquisition of literary competence as herein defined?

A group of six readers read and responded to five short stories and two poems over the period of a semester, from January to April, 1994. We met once a week for discussion and written assignments, with most of the work being done during
the meetings to relieve the students of additional outside assignments, since they were busy with other "real" classes. They participated in this study on a voluntary, "for pay" basis. This necessarily and regrettably limited the amount of time I could spend with the students to a single meeting of two and a half hours per week, both because of monetary considerations and because the students could only find one night a week when they were all available. I asked the students at the beginning of the study to fill out a questionnaire designed to elicit background information concerning their reading habits and their feelings about public disclosure of private emotions and associations. They responded to Story One with no preparation by the teacher and a very open-ended assignment designed to find out how they wrote about a literary work before any teaching method was tried. I presented the second story with the traditional methods used to increase literary competence—that is, we discussed the story in class and two or three possible critical perspectives were introduced to help the students organize their perceptions. There was also a general discussion of ways to produce literary meanings by unifying the work around a central theme and supporting that theme with specific textual detail. The students then wrote an essay discussing the meaning of the work.

Before I used Story Three to generate essay topics, we discussed affective and associative responses at length,
relying on the work of David Bleich in *Readings and Feelings*. Exercises using these types of response covered several group meetings. I tried to shed light on emotional response and rescue it from the vagueness with which it is associated. I introduced specific ways to discuss emotions, with feeling words such as fear, joy, hate, like, love, sadness, etc., and I encouraged the students to use these and the often avoided first person pronoun. I explained associative response, and encouraged students to associate their reading to personal experience. We read a poem and wrote purely affective response statements, then two poems for associative responses. We read two stories and wrote a "most important word" essay on the first and a "most important passage" essay on the second. The purpose of the response statement, according to Bleich, is "to record the perception of a reading experience and its natural, spontaneous consequences, among which are feelings, or affects, and peremptory memories and thoughts, or free associations. . . . Essentially, the response statement tries to objectify, to ourselves and then to our community, the affective-perceptual experience, rather than the story." The purpose of the essays on "most important word" and "most important passage" was to examine the subjective basis of what we choose to focus on in a story.

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In teaching the last story, I combined both methods by discussing the story in terms of emotional, subjective response and traditional interpretive categories. The students wrote an interpretive essay that sought to combine and show the relationship between the layers of emotional response and intellectualization. Throughout the study, we discussed our responses, both emotional and intellectual, as a group, and explored their subjective bases. (A much more detailed discussion of classroom procedures, entitled "What Really Happened," is included at the end of this chapter.)

Reporting Results

The students' work is analyzed in two ways. The first type is a simple statistical analysis in which statements on the three major essays (Essays One, Two, and Three) are coded according to the methods and categories in Squire's and Wilson's studies. These categories and a brief definition are as follows:

I. Literary Judgments: Direct or implied judgments on the story as an artistic work, including such generalized comments as 'It's effective' or 'It's good,' where the statement appeared to refer to the literary or aesthetic qualities, rather than to judgment on specific situations in the story. Also, specific reactions to language, style, characterization.

II. Interpretational Responses: Reactions in which the reader generalizes and attempts to discover the meaning of the stories, the motivational forces, and the nature of the characters, including references to evidence from the stories marshalled to support interpretational generalizations. Three types are found: interpretations
of characters or plot, interpretations of ideas and themes, visual reconstructions of scenes which seemed to represent visual interpretation of specific facts.

III. Narrational Reactions: Responses in which the reader reports details or facts in the story without attempting to interpret. This factual retelling may occur when the reader has difficulty in comprehending.

IV. Associational Responses: Responses in which the reader associated ideas, events, or places, and people with his own experience other than the association of a character with himself. These associations are direct, e.g., 'This is like my home' or inverse, e.g., 'These are not like my home.'

V. Self-involvement: Responses in which the reader associates himself with the behavior and/or emotions of characters. These range in degree from slight to intense and may be expressed through identification or rejection.

VI. Prescriptive Judgments: Responses in which the reader prescribes a course of action for a character based on some absolute standard, e.g., 'She ought to do this,' 'He must do this.'

VII. Miscellaneous: Responses which were not coded elsewhere.7

I used Squire's categories instead of Purves' much more detailed coding method because I could measure the relationship between interpretation and emotional response sufficiently without the more complicated subcategories. I coded responses at the sentence level because all parts of compound/complex sentences fall within the same category. The overall number of statements recorded therefore relates to the complexity of sentences, which is significant in comparing numbers of statements. Coding sheets for each essay are

7Squire, The Responses of Adolescents While Reading Four Short Stories (Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 1964) 17.
included in the Appendix, along with the actual student essays, so those interested may check my coding.

The material generated on the response statements and the "most important" essays are not included in the coding, as they are not concerned with traditional skills and would not be expected to correlate with the other essays. The numbers are compared to determine if there is any statistically significant change in the categories into which the statements fall from the first essay to the final one. I was particularly interested in any increase in statements coded interpretational, associational, and self-involvement, and what, if any, their relationship might be. I hoped to raise the number of associational and self-involvement statements without lowering those coded interpretational. Rather than losing interpretational statements, I hoped that increased self-involvement would produce fuller interpretation, since Squire, Wilson, and Purves all established a positive relation between these types of response.

I make a further statistical analysis by counting the details from the text included in each essay and comparing to see if students' use of details changed, and if so, in what direction. I hoped the students would use details more thoroughly but also more selectively. I then enumerate the details unified around the students' controlling ideas to see how many are related and how many superfluous. These comparisons are done for each individual student and for the
group as a whole. Finally, I compare thesis statements based on their significance or depth. My own work is not included in the statistical analysis.

The second type of analysis is qualitative rather than quantitative, and includes numerous quotes from the actual student essays as well as a description of each student based on the beginning questionnaire and my perceptions during group meetings. This type of lengthy case study analysis seeks to explain the statistical findings and to answer such questions as "What type of student changed his or her writing most during the study? What type of student might gain personal insight from this teaching method? Who might gain in literary competence? What type of student might be inhibited by this method?" Given that people need to interpret at infinitely varied levels of intensity, when is it desirable to increase a reader's involvement with verbal experience?" In addition to my analyses, the students were given a brief evaluation at the end of the study, and pertinent details from these are included. In this section I also present a summary of my own work in the group. While I may be accused in this regard of subjectivity upon subjectivity, I thought it would be of some interest to see how Bleich's method worked on a person with long-standing habits of writing and thinking about literature.

Support for the design of this study, which is certainly more hermeneutic than empirical, may be found in Robert Holub's *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction,*
Norman Holland's *Five Readers Reading*, in the studies of Squire, Wilson, and Purves, and in the works of David Bleich. Holub has noted that purely empirical studies have often produced only the obvious, and says that "If empirical research in the future is to play a useful role in larger critical projects involving response and effect, it will have to assume a more modest and ancillary function. Studying actual readings of a given text can be and has been a beneficial undertaking for exploring the dynamics of the text and the sociology of the reader."

Holland has presented in-depth studies of a limited number (five) of students' responses, feeling that "If I could discover the dynamics of response for this group, the same principle should hold, 'mutatis mutandis,' for anyone." While I did not seek to establish so general a principle about emotional and intellectual response, I did feel that my conclusions from a similarly small group studied in depth could yield significant results.

Squire, Wilson, and Purves all found that statistical analysis alone could only present partial and at times misleading conclusions (Purves 49, Wilson 11, and Squire 15) and should therefore be accompanied by some in-depth,

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*Norman N. Holland, Five Readers Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975) 42.
qualitative studies. Purves suggests in Literature and the Reader that, "The next direction in research, thus, might well be exploration into the complex system of literary response. Such exploration might well employ the case-study technique of exploring many aspects of the responses of a few individuals. This technique should be combined with multivariate analysis, multidimensional scaling, partition analysis, and other more sophisticated statistical treatments." Since Purves, Squire, and Wilson all establish with elaborate statistical methods the relationship between emotional response or engagement involvement and traditional literary competence, I chose to limit my quantitative analysis to the simple comparisons described above while focusing on the more elaborate and detailed case studies.

Selection of the Readers

I selected as readers six students from the local university (Angelo State University) who were declared majors in subjects other than English. Entrance requirements at Angelo State included either graduation in the top quarter of

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the senior high school class or a composite score on the SAT or ACT as follows:

Top quarter-------no minimum
2nd quarter--------750 SAT or 19 ACT
3rd quarter--------920 SAT or 23 ACT
4th quarter--------1100 SAT or 28 ACT

The rationale for such selection was that students majoring in English already engage strongly with verbal, symbolic objects and have a fairly high level of traditional literary skills. While I believed that all types of readers might benefit from this teaching method, I wanted to examine the results for students who are not already what we refer to as "heavy readers." I performed the exercises along with the group because students respond more openly if the teacher is also willing to share personal responses.

Composition of the Group

To recruit students, I posted notices in the Student Center, and had a large pool of applicants to draw from. (The fact that I was paying $10.00 per hour for group work undoubtedly caused this enthusiastic response to my ad.) The final group selected consisted of four female and two male students, ranging in age from twenty to twenty-four. Majors included education, psychology, marketing, math, and economics. All the students were Anglo Americans from the local area with the exception of one female student from Bangladesh.
Selection of the Stories and Poems

Story 1. "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" by Ernest Hemingway

Story 2. "The Son From America" by Isaac Bashevis Singer

Poem 1. "The Widow's Lament in Springtime" by William Carlos Williams

Poem 2. A choice of either Frost's "The Road Not Taken" or "The Meal" by Suzanne E. Berger

Story 3. "The Destructors" by Graham Greene

Story 4. "A Teenage Wasteland" by Anne Tyler

Story 5. "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner

I chose these particular stories and poems because I felt that each provides possibilities for rich literary experience by its capacity to generate varied and strong responses.
What Really Happened
A Detailed Description of Class Procedures

Jan. 26.--The students filled out a questionnaire designed to
gauge their reading interests and general attitudes about
reading and English classes. We also had a discussion of what
the study was about and how we would proceed. I explained
that no payment would be made to any student until he or she
had satisfactorily completed all the assigned work. I told
the students that since no grade could be given that reflected
their efforts, I expected them to do their best on each
assignment. I would let a student know if he or she was not
doing suitable work, and if the work was not done over to my
satisfaction and improvement made in future work, no payment
would be made. Students signed a contract acknowledging their
understanding of this arrangement.

From the discussion of their feelings about English
classes in general, I could tell that although these students
had been successful in passing required courses, most of them
disliked traditional English classes. The most common
complaint was that these classes were boring. The students
felt that their own responses or feelings and ideas about
literature were not sufficiently taken into account, and
speculated that they might like English classes more if they had an opportunity to discuss literary works from a more personal perspective. They agreed, however, that while they might like the idea of talking about what they read in a more personal way, they were intimidated at the thought of actually sharing personal experiences in a classroom situation. They felt that the small group arrangement and the fact that they would not receive a grade might help them open up. They also felt that they would need guidance in responding subjectively and emotionally in an appropriate manner. I assured them that the kind of responses I sought were feelings and associations related to their experiences with texts, and that this was not a therapy group or an invitation to unfocused emotional indulgence with a captive audience. I explained that all emotional response would be examined as it formed a background for more traditional types of literary analysis. While a great deal of valuable self-knowledge would be possible, such knowledge was not the final goal of the study.

Feb. 2--The students read Story One, "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," and wrote an essay based on the general questions "What do you think this story is about?" or "What does this story mean?" The purpose of this assignment was to assess the students' approaches to making meaning from a text before they were presented with any teaching techniques and to establish a base-line for later comparison. Unfortunately, two of the students understood the first question to call for a narrative
re-telling of the story, and one wrote an answer to both questions separately, while the other simply re-told the story and stopped. The question of what a story is about does not automatically mean to students that the concern is for analysis instead of simple narrative.

Feb 9--We discussed literary competence as defined in this study, particularly the importance of unity in students' writing about literature and the ways of using textual details to support main ideas. I gave the students a copy of Story Two, "The Son From America" by Singer, and asked them to read it before the next group meeting.

Feb 16--We had a very good discussion of Story Two in terms of main ideas or themes. We listed all the themes generated by the group and talked about which details supported each one. The students were anxious to discuss their own feelings about these themes and the main characters as they related to their lives, but only in general terms. For example, a theme several students constructed as they read the story concerned the change that occurs when a young person leaves home and lives in another culture, and most of the students related this to their leaving home for college. They also focused on the religious aspects of the story in relation to their own religious backgrounds but with no mention of specific personal experiences. They made general statements like "Once I left my hometown, it's never been the same when I go back to visit, because I've changed but my family and friends haven't," or
"Like Samuel, I don't practice my religion as strictly as my parents, but I still believe in it."

Feb. 23--The students wrote an essay on the "meaning" or major theme they experienced as they read Story Two. They knew there was no "right" answer and that they were free to choose any theme that seemed important to them if they could support with detail its being generated from their experience with the text. The purpose of this assignment was to see what the effect would be on student writing of a traditional discussion, the kind I might have in a regular classroom situation.

Mar. 2--I was now ready to begin introducing Bleich's method, so I passed out copies of pp. 33-39 from Readings and Feelings. This section covers "The Affective Response," in which Bleich says ". . . the respondent, more than just telling what he sees in the poem or what he thinks the poet says (though this kind of information is inevitably used,) describes the actual affect he felt while reading the poem."¹¹ Bleich gives examples and analyzes two affective responses in detail. We read and discussed this material, then I passed out copies of the poem "The Widow's Lament in Springtime" by William Carlos Williams. We read the poem and wrote affective response statements in class.

Mar. 9--We had a short discussion of the feelings elicited by Williams' poem, noticing how different students had

¹¹Bleich, Readings 33.
experienced different feelings and what past experiences might contribute to these differences. I handed out pp. 39-48 from *Reading and Feelings* in which Bleich discusses "The Associative Response." This type of response statement is based on important inter-personal relationships and the feelings and thoughts these relationships evoke in connection with the text. After reading and discussing these pages together, I gave the group two poems, Frost's "The Road Not Taken" and "The Meal" by Suzanne E. Berger. We read the poems, chose one, and wrote an associative response statement.

Mar. 23--We had a brief discussion of the associative responses, once more emphasizing how personal experience affects our feelings about a text and hence what we choose to focus on when constructing meaning. I handed out pp. 49-61 from *Reading and Feelings*, which includes a discussion of how subjectivity influences what we see as most important in a text. Specifically, this section focuses on exercises Bleich uses where students pick a "most important word" in a text and write a response discussing the use of the word and why it is most important. Bleich gives two ways of approaching this assignment, the first being a more traditional, "objective" way of discussing what we read, based, as he says, on the ". . .assumption. . .that the author is reporting on the interaction of real people and that this author is
communicating a judgment that the interaction is tragic."\textsuperscript{12}
(This statement refers to the assignment as Bleich used it based on the text of Lawrence's "The Rocking Horse Winner.")
He further says that "If there were not this assumed separation of the author and his work, the author could not have this 'view' of his characters. L (the student writing for Bleich) followed the common perceptual habit of breaking up his experience of the story into himself, the author, the author's opinion, and the 'facts' that the story relates."\textsuperscript{13}

The second way of approaching the assignment about importance is based on the more subjective idea that our experience of the work is really what we are writing about, and the importance to the story is a result of importance to the reader.\textsuperscript{14} After discussion of these ideas, I gave the students the story "The Destructors" by Graham Greene and asked them to read it and write a "most important word" response outside of class.

Mar 30--We did not meet.

Apr. 6--Students turned in "most important word" essays, which we discussed along with reasons for selecting that particular word. I read my response and discussed my subjective experience of the story in some detail. I gave students pp. 63-66 from \textit{Readings and Feelings}, which discusses the

\textsuperscript{12}Bleich, \textit{Readings} 52.

\textsuperscript{13}Bleich, \textit{Readings} 52.

\textsuperscript{14}Bleich, \textit{Readings} 57.
"most important passage" exercise, an extension and expansion of the "most important word" response. We read the story "A Teenage Wasteland" by Anne Tyler and wrote "most important passage" responses in class.

Apr. 13--We discussed our "most important passage" responses. We had a lengthy discussion of the story and the varied responses to it. This story elicited strong response because the students felt very close to the experiences it relates and were eager to share their impressions. We noted that while several students chose the same word in the previous exercise, each student chose a different passage from this story. We concluded that the reason for this is probably because a word is often repeated several times in a story, hence taking on importance just from repetition, but no passage is repeated, so we had to use other criteria for our choices.

I handed out the story "A Rose for Emily" by Faulkner and a variety of critical materials related to the story (specifically, "An Interpretation of 'A Rose for Emily'" by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, "Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'" by C.W.M. Johnson, and pp. 21-40 from Norman Holland's book Five Readers Reading, in which he analyzes the story from a psychological perspective. Students were asked to read this material and be ready for discussion at the next group meeting.

Apr. 20--We went over the material about the story and discussed it in detail. (The students were generally baffled
by Holland's analysis and thought it was quite bizarre.) We discussed what the students felt were the most important themes and evidence from the story to support these selections. I tried to encourage both traditional responses that analyzed the story from an "objective" point of view and subjective responses that included personal feelings and associations. I pointed out ways that these might be related, focusing on how the students would select one theme from among many possibilities presented by the story, and what subjective criteria might influence their decisions. While students had no trouble with the concept of basing traditional analysis on subjective experience, they had a great deal of difficulty actually bridging that gap and combining the two. The final assignment was to write an essay discussing the most important theme of "A Rose for Emily," being sure to include a clear thesis and at least four specific examples from the story in support, and at least one personal association that the student felt might have influenced his or her choice. We wrote this essay out of class, with instructions to spend no more than one hour and fifteen minutes on the assignment.

Apr. 27--Students turned in their final assignments. We discussed their feelings about the way the study was conducted and the students filled out a short evaluation.

The overall reaction of the students was that they would enjoy a full course in which they explored subjective responses to literary works, but that they would need a small
group in order to feel comfortable sharing personal experiences. They all felt that we had only made a start in using this technique and expressed a wish for more time to explore the material in depth, particularly to allow for more feedback on their writing and ideas from both the teacher and other group members. I had mistakenly felt that they would all be in a hurry to turn in the final assignment, pick up their money, and leave, but I was happily surprised when they all stayed a full two and a half hours discussing their reactions and ideas about this group and their experiences in traditional English classes. One student, Mr. M., stayed even after the others left, and we talked about his theory that most students only respond in ways they think socially acceptable. All the students seemed genuinely sorry that the study was over and reluctant to let go of the experience we had shared. They left addresses and asked that I send them a copy of that portion of the study dealing in detail with their individual writing and my overall conclusions.
Chapter Two

Statistical Analysis

The data are presented here as they pertain to my major areas of concern:

1. Changes in numbers of interpretational responses and the relation of such changes to responses coded associational or self-involvement.

2. Significance of themes selected by students.

3. Unity of the writing.

4. Use of supporting details from a text.

Changes from Essay One to Essay Two should indicate results of traditional discussion of the material. Changes from Essay Two to Essay Three should indicate results of using Bleich's method, and changes from Essay One to Essay Three should indicate results of using both methods.

Analysis of Data Based on Coding into Categories

Each of the three main essays was broken into separate responses at the sentence level (coding units), which were classified into one of the six categories as described above.
The following Table 1 gives the results of this classification by number for the overall group, while Table 2 represents the same analysis by percent.

Table 1  
Numerical Classification by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Essay 1</th>
<th>Essay 2</th>
<th>Essay 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretational</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrational</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary Judgment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associational</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Involvement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescriptive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2
Classification into Category by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Essay 1</th>
<th>Essay 2</th>
<th>Essay 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretational</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
<td>87.1%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrational</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary Judgment</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associational</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Involvement</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescriptive</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** These percentages are based on the number of total responses on each essay.

One of the most significant changes demonstrated by the data is the increase in statements coded interpretational. From Essay One to Essay Two, after a discussion based on traditional methods of analyzing a story for its theme, there was an increase of 36 statements coded into this category. The change in percentage is from 69% of 128 statements to 87.1% of 141 statements. This increase should be expected, considering our concentration in group discussion on interpreting the story's thematic possibilities. There is only an additional increase of 6 statements in this category from Essay Two to Essay Three, after introduction of methods to increase emotional involvement in a work. This change
represents a loss in percentage of interpretational responses, from 87.1% of 141 statements to 75% of 172 statements. This change can be accounted for by noting the increase from Essay Two to Essay Three in the number of statements coded literary judgment, associational, and self-involvement. The total number in these three categories on both Essays One and Two is 7, while it increased to 39 on Essay Three, when the assignment included instructions for writing these types of statements. So while there is a loss in interpretational statements, there is a gain in statements marked literary judgment that correlates with increased self-involvement. In-depth analysis of the individual essays is necessary to explore this point further, primarily because there is a great deal of variation in the types of statements that may be coded into any category. (Many of the statements coded as interpretational on the first two essays, for example, were borderline between interpretational and narrational, or were used to support main ideas that were obvious and superficial.) Time is also a factor in this loss of interpretational statements; when students add personal experiences or emotional response without being given more time for writing, they necessarily must reduce interpretational remarks.

The number of purely narrational statements decreased from 33 to 11 (a net decrease of 22) from Essay One to Two, and from 11 to 2 (a net decrease of 9) from Essay Two to Three. These changes indicate that the combined effect of
both teaching methods helped students avoid falling back on a simple retelling of the story from lack of understanding.

Analysis of Data Relating to Significance of Main Idea, Unity, and Use of Supporting Detail

The following Tables 3 and 4 are a numerical and percentage representation of changes in these areas from Essay One to Two and from Two to Three. The number of statements is different from the number of supporting details; supporting details are textual, and more than one may be included in a statement.

Table 3  
Numerical Chart of Changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Analysis</th>
<th>Essay 1</th>
<th>Essay 2</th>
<th>Essay 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of essays (out of 6) with a significant thesis</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of statements related to the thesis</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of supporting details used</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4

**Percentage of Change**  
**Three Areas of Literary Competence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Essay 1</th>
<th>Essay 2</th>
<th>Essay 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significance of main idea</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2 of 6)</td>
<td>(3 of 6)</td>
<td>(6 of 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statements related to thesis</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(38 of 128)</td>
<td>(98 of 141)</td>
<td>(123 of 172)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of supporting details out of those possible*</td>
<td>127%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(98 of 77)</td>
<td>(94 of 138)</td>
<td>(75 of 215)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These percentages were determined by counting all the details in each story and dividing that number into the number of details used by all the students on that particular essay. Since students repeated details from writer to writer, the percent is over 100 on Essay 1.

The first obvious change is in the significance of the main idea. Only two of the students used a significant organizing idea on the first essay, when they wrote without preparation or instruction, and those two ideas were only marginally significant. This number increased to only three on the second essay, but after doing the exercises from Bleich's *Readings and Feelings*, all six students selected organizing ideas of some depth.
There was also a notable change in the number of statements the students related to main ideas. On Essay One, 30% of the statements related in some way to the thesis (38 of 128), on Essay Two, 70% were related (98 of 141), and on Essay Three, 72% were related (123 of 172.) The most dramatic change is from Essay One to Essay Two, after the traditional discussion of the story related to analyzing its themes. I point out, however, that while the students related many more statements on Essay Two to their main ideas, most of these main ideas still reflected an inability to focus on a significant aspect of the story.

There was also a marked change in the number of sheer details from the stories used in support, from 98 on the first essay, to 94 on the second, to 75 on the last essay. The change in percentages is even more dramatic. On Essay One, the students used 98 out of 77 details, or 127%, on Essay Two, 94 of 138, or 68%, and 75 of 215 possibilities on Essay Three, or 35%. While the number of details used dropped sharply, the ability to relate these details to the main idea increased. It appears from these data that while Bleich's method was very effective for helping students focus on significant aspects of a story, traditional methods worked best for increasing unity and judicious use of supporting details.

While the above generalizations can be made based on statistical analysis alone, it is only by turning to individual analyses of the essays, student by student, that
the real significance of these findings can be discovered. This is true for a variety of reasons, two major ones being the high degree of uniqueness in individual responses coded into any one category and the degree to which one student's essays in such a small group may influence the statistical outcome.
Chapter Three
Qualitative Analysis

Each student's work is first presented according to numerical changes in the same manner as charted for the group in Chapter Two, with an in-depth analysis following.

Student 1: Ms. H

Table 5
Ms. H: Numerical Classification by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Essay 1</th>
<th>Essay 2</th>
<th>Essay 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretational</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrational</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary Judgment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associational</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescriptive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6
Ms. H: Numerical Chart of Changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Analysis</th>
<th>Essay 1</th>
<th>Essay 2</th>
<th>Essay 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significant thesis</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of statements related to the thesis</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of supporting details used</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General Summary of Student Questionnaire

At the time of the study, Ms. H was a junior at Angelo State University, majoring in Early Childhood Development, with future plans to teach second grade or open her own daycare center. Previous work experience was in the secretarial field. She reported seldom reading unassigned books for pleasure and information, but when she did, it was usually fiction. The last book she read on her own was *A Time To Kill* by John Grisham. Ms. H made an interesting statement in response to question seven, "Do you enjoy analyzing what you read, or does analysis interfere with your pleasure?" She answered that "Often I find myself analyzing what I read but I would prefer not to." She said that she didn't always feel a need to understand or "fix a meaning" for what she read, but usually felt that it was necessary. She reported sometimes analyzing movies if there was "something symbolic;" she
mentioned it either to herself or to a friend. Her favorite movie was "A Perfect World" and her favorite book *A Time To Kill*. She stated that everyone could find his or her own meaning for stories, novels, or movies. Ms. H preferred discussion courses but said that her participation in discussion depended on the class and the instructor. She had never attended a support group or been in therapy, and talked about her feelings and personal experiences only around people she was "close to." In response to question eighteen about the appropriateness of sharing personal experiences in a classroom setting, she said that "I feel personal experiences should be shared. To me they are more helpful and interesting than theory."

My general impression of Ms. H throughout the study was of a young woman with a basically optimistic, "upbeat" personality who strove to please those around her. She rarely shared personal experiences with the group, but her essays and other written work were more revealing.

The most significant change H made from Essay One to Essay Two in the categories was in the number of interpretive statements. After the traditional discussion, her interpretive statements almost doubled, from 15 to 29. This increase may be due to the type of discussion, or because any discussion of a text will dramatically increase the amount a student has to say. As I had expected, the first essays were all limited in both quantity and quality, since few
undergraduate students not majoring in English acquire the necessary skill and confidence to write a proficient literary analysis without some preparation by a teacher.

In H's first essay, the problem begins with her inability to select a significant aspect of Hemingway's story in order to focus her perceptions. She says that "The story, to me, is about two men who are lonely, and one man who is not." While this statement could be generalized to produce a deeper analysis addressing themes and causes of human loneliness, H does no substantial interpretation. This illustrates a problem inherent in statistical analysis of response which often causes misleading conclusions. While I coded 15 of H's statements on Essay One as interpretational, upon examining the quality of those statements, it becomes apparent that there are degrees of interpretation which the categories do not address. The category of interpretation as described by Squire includes "reactions in which the reader generalizes and attempts to discover the meaning of the stories, the motivational forces, and the nature of the characters,..." (emphasis mine).¹⁵ By this definition, I coded all the statements from the following paragraph as interpretational:

The waiter and the old, deaf man are parallels. Both of them are lonely, insomniacs, and both very much need the cafe. The waiter shows this by his insistence on keeping the cafe light and clean. Because the cafe is the only thing worth anything in his life he takes pride in the fact it is not a run down bar. I think the fact he insists upon it being

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¹⁵Squire, Responses of Adolescents 17,18.
light has to do with him being an insomniac and sleeping through the real light of the day.

(NOTE: All quotes from student work are given exactly as written, without the repetitive use of "sic" to indicate errors.)

In this passage, H "attempts to discover the . . . motivational forces, and the nature of the characters,. . . ." but she never breaks through into interpretation of motives on any but the most rudimentary level, nor does she address any larger issue with relation to the story, describing in the remainder of her essay the differences between the young waiter and the older one. She achieves some unity but never infers any larger theme from these obvious differences. As she reported on her questionnaire, however, she wished to interpret, and this essay shows her attempting to do so with few apparent tools to help her construct a satisfactory meaning. (She expressed her own frustration with the assignment, saying "I don't really 'get' this story," and "I know my essay isn't very good."

There is the expected increase in both quantity and quality on Ms. H's second essay. She begins with a simple statement of what she sees as the theme, stating that "The theme... has to do with tradition versus change. The son in the story represents this change where the parents represent tradition." She follows through on the rest of the essay with illustrations of this idea, using specific evidence from the story. The essay is not only more centered around a unifying
idea, but the writer seems more present in such statements as "Just moving from one place to another puts one through many emotional experiences," "America is constantly growing and progressing, and to keep up with this way of life one must also grow and progress," and later in the essay, "Religion and tradition means stability and it is all they know." I coded these statements associational because they "associated ideas, events, or places, and people with his (her) own experience. . . ."16 Although H does not directly say that it is her personal experience of moving, for example, that has taught her how moves are fraught with emotional experience, she obviously refers to her general experience of the world in such statements.

In her conclusion, H seeks to expand her idea of tradition versus change, and here she clearly involves herself in such a statement as "I feel he also learned a lesson of happiness: You don't need money or possessions to achieve it." While I did not code this response as self-involvement because I think it is still an attempt to find the meaning "in" the story and not a response "in which the reader associates himself (herself) with the behavior and/or emotions of character,"17 the subjectivity is apparent. It is very close to direct self-involvement, lacking only an acknowledgement

16Squire, Responses of Adolescents 18.
17Squire, Responses of Adolescents 17, 18.
that H agrees with or is "like" Samuel. The overall tenor of the essay includes more attempts to generalize the story's theme, and the subjective bias of the respondent in doing so is clear.

Introduction of Bleich's method strengthened H's tendencies toward both interpretation and self-involvement. The first exercise is from Readings and Feelings, pp. 33-39, and asks students to describe the actual affect experienced while reading a poem. The text we used was William Carlos Williams' "The Widow's Lament in Springtime."

H's response to the poem, though once again rudimentary, is interesting, because although she misses the apparent literal meaning, she is still able to respond on an emotional if limited basis. (I discuss "literal meaning" in Chapter Four.) Her main feelings while reading are expressed as concern and sympathy for the narrator, for even though H cannot determine the reason, she thinks that the speaker is sad and feels "that there is no joy left in the world." H carefully guards against the revelation of any personal feeling the poem may elicit by focusing on the speaker and feeling sorry for her. It may be that lack of conventional access to the signs blocked deeper personal response, since intellectual re-creation and emotional response are so integrally related. Not understanding that the poem's signs suggest the death of a loved one makes it less likely for H to have personal feelings stirred about similar situations, so
the feelings remain unfocused. She says that she is curious to know "...the reasons behind the speakers sorrow." True to her answer on the questionnaire and to her attempts at interpretation on the first two essays, H shows a strong desire to make intelligible meaning for herself but is unable to do so.

H's second response statement is to Frost's familiar poem "The Road Not Taken." The assignment was made after reading and discussing pp. 39-48 of Readings and Feelings concerning associative response. This type of response grows naturally from affective response and concerns important relationships in our lives with which we associate certain feelings and events. The specific assignment was to choose between "The Road not Taken" and "The Meal" by Shirley Berger and to write a response including associations to important relationships in the student's past. H's choice of Frost's poem is in itself significant. I picked it intentionally because I felt that any college student could relate to making choices that close off other options, while Berger's poem concerns an obviously unhappy family and might be relevant only to certain group members. We usually know about the past of only our most intimate associates, so I cannot judge H's reasons for choosing the Frost poem, but from my limited knowledge of her I would have been surprised had she chosen "The Meal."

I began to notice a pattern in H's work while analyzing this response, one I would call a strong emphasis on the
importance of human relationships and, more specifically, on what gives these relationships stability. H's feelings of sympathy in her response to the Williams poem show this interest, and it becomes much more overt and developed in this second response. She says that the first two lines of Frost's poem reminded her of moving to California to live with her best friend and her choice to return to Texas, a choice that made her question her independence, but which she made nevertheless because she was not happy in California. That personal happiness is more important that proving herself to others was a recurrent theme in H's work. She did say that she wonders how things might have turned out had she remained in California, and there is a sense of regret that these paths are mutually exclusive, but the regret is not strong enough to make her question her choice.

Her next associations are to her grandparent's home, where she was "safe and peaceful," followed by a non-specific reference to moments "I had wished I would have done something else after the fact," once again emphasizing close human ties and regrets for lost opportunity. Mention of these regrets brings H back in the next association to happy memories of "clean-up day" in grade school. It seems that H relies on close relationships with friends and family to deal with common human problems, and there is no feeling of great stress or anxiety in the response, only mild regret. Her final specific association is to a time when she lived in Germany
and to the many good friends she was forced to leave behind there. She says that even though she realized how things change and that she could never re-create the time with those friends, there is a feeling of acceptance that allows her to experience the inevitability of loss without undue discomfort.

She responds finally to the last stanza, and here states that the poem "...reminds me of the choice I made in my college degree. I had to choose between money and happiness. I realize that many people would rather have money, however, I just would not have been satisfied. I realize in my life as well as the speakers this choice will make all the difference."

H clearly acknowledges her subjectivity in this response, relating to the speaker because they have both been forced to make choices that will dramatically shape their lives. In H's case, the choice was to major in Early Childhood Education, a path that she felt would give personal satisfaction but at the loss of financial gain. In the group discussion after turning in the written responses, H emphasized that she was advised by some against her choice, but that she had no significant regrets because she felt she would be rewarded by the pleasure of helping children learn. This importance for H of human relationships as a stabilizing factor in a difficult world of change was a focusing idea in all her remaining assignments.

Our next assignment followed a discussion of pp. 48-61 from Readings and Feelings in which Bleich discusses the
function of subjectivity in literary judgment and analyzes responses to Lawrence's "The Rocking Horse Winner." These responses asked students to discuss "the most important word" in the story, and my group did the same exercise using Graham Greene's "The Destructors."

H chose the word "destroy," acknowledging the subjective nature of that choice by prefacing her remarks with "in my opinion." The first use of the word caught her attention because it is in reference to plans by Trevor for destroying the old man's house, and H says she simply cannot imagine herself ever doing anything "as damaging as this." She finds motivation for T's action in his having lived through a war, and his anger is what she sees as his driving force. Her emphasis is once again on the consequences of events in terms of human happiness or its antithesis. The next use of the word shows H's continued interest in the war's consequences in terms of the childrens' development. She says, "This sentence ('Even the grown-up gangs...would hear with respect of how Old Misery's house has been destroyed') furthers my idea of the damage the war causes. In a war, the people who have conquered are the winners. I feel the boys are too young and innocent to be able to distinguish the difference between war and what they do." As the destruction of the house continues, H says that Trevor is so driven it is "a little scary," reminding her of a person "out of control." The issue of loss of control correlates with H's interest in human relations,
since it is strong human bonds that she repeatedly alluded to in her work as allowing us to maintain control and ultimately sanity itself. To lack such a supportive but also restraining structure is for H both frightening and sad. H's final use of the word reveals her repugnance for such chaotic destruction, particularly as it is manifested by children. She emphasizes this feeling by concluding that "This story is depressing to me. There is too much destruction in this world in which adults cause, and to see children creating such a mess is very upsetting." Of course, in reality, children are both destructive and creative, lovers both of order and of chaos, and "creating messes" is their natural occupation. The extent of the mess created by the children in Greene's story is far beyond what we consider "normal boundaries," and this is what H found so disturbing. It is only through socialization that children learn to channel drives into acceptable, "creative" ways, through strong relationships with nurturing adults that they learn to control their "messy" tendencies as they mature. H says that Trevor, being a child, is "innocent," but she fails to recognize that innocence is only a function of adults' sheltering their children from certain experiences, and the children in the story are far from innocent in the sense that she intends. She feels that the war, which causes a breakdown in normal human structure, is responsible for the boys' anger and their acting upon it without control, once more associating human relationships with order and social
control. For H, lack of socially produced order is both scary and depressing.

These ideas are present in statements from H's next response, a "most important passage" exercise based on "A Teenage Wasteland" by Anne Tyler. (Readings and Feelings 63-66). H chose a passage dealing directly with the issue of parental control of children:

At home, Donny didn't act much differently. He still seemed to have a low opinion of his parents. But Daisy supposed that was an unavoidable part of being fifteen. He said his parents were too 'controlling'--a word that made Daisy give him a sudden look. He said they acted like wardens. On weekends, they enforced a curfew. And any time he went to a party, they always telephoned first to see if adults would be supervising. 'For God's sake!' he said. 'Don't you trust me?'

H says that the passage is important for her because "it seems to sum up the whole story." She goes on to say that all teenagers think their parents are too controlling, but that Daisy should have "remained constant" during this period of Donny's life. H points out the many uses of the word "controlling" in reference to people who do not want to be controlled, and concludes that "What is really needed here is some control and consistency." She associates control with "confidence and strength," and says that parents must demonstrate such qualities if young people are to develop them. Once again, H. expresses the idea that order and stability are products of close human relationship, but in this case there is a failure on the part of adults to provide
the necessary structure, and H attributes Donny's problems to this failure.

H's final essay is both an expression and culmination of these relationship and control themes and a much improved piece of writing in traditional terms. In preparation for the essay, students read Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" and the critical articles by Brooks, Warren, and Holland. We discussed how the story might generate such ideas as denial of reality and its destructive results, the suppression of women, and the Old South versus the New South. I emphasized that these were only a few of the many possibilities, and that the students were free to write on any idea that seemed important to them in relation to the text. The assignment was to discuss the most important theme, including at least four relevant examples from the story and at least one personal association that might have influenced the choice of theme.

H chose the theme of denial, and associates it in her essay to the loss "of several friends my age" and the difficulty she first experienced in accepting the finality of their deaths. Speaking in general terms, she goes on quickly to say that "However, this denial soon passes and the normal person turns back to reality" (emphasis mine). This personal reference is brief and seems to be included only because of the assignment, and H hastens to assure the reader that, unlike poor Emily, she dealt with her grief normally.
H's first example of denial deals with Miss Emily's refusal to bury her father, but H says she gave in "because of the town's consistency," once more emphasizing that stable human relations are agents of sanity. She next discusses the issue of the property taxes and how the townspeople were unsuccessful in this situation. H's final point concerns the smell around Miss Emily's house. Something H said in class discussion is especially relevant in this regard, as I feel it shows the subjective force behind her choice of theme. She said that the townspeople obviously knew the smell was that of a decaying human corpse, because she had smelled one, and that "you never forget that smell." It had not occurred to me, as many times as I have read this story, that the people absolutely knew there was a body in the house as they sprinkled lime in the darkness of night; I just supposed that they were vaguely aware of something dead, perhaps an animal. The issue did not leap out at me because I have never smelt a decaying human corpse, but H was adamant on this point. For H, this was the key to the story's importance, which is not Emily's denial, but that of the townspeople. In her conclusion, she says:

"...it is obvious to see that Miss Emily is living a life of illusions. However, it is not only Miss Emily who is living this way, it is the whole town, they allow this way of life to exist. The entire town was able to smell the terrible scent of Homer's corpse, yet they made themselves believe it disappeared with the use of lime. The town, as well, let Emily get away with not paying taxes. I feel that some of Miss Emily's behavior could have been prevented if the town showed a
little interest in her as a person and not as simply a main attraction" (emphasis mine).

Insanity in the story is a result, for H, of missing personalities. While I would not go so far as to call this H's "identity theme," it was surely an issue with real importance for her. Because I encouraged her to focus on what mattered to her in the texts, she was able to follow this idea throughout her work and to improve both the quantity and quality of her writing. Her second essay, written after the traditional discussion, was much improved in terms of full development but not in depth. After the subjective exercises, she wrote a more unified essay with a real attempt to generalize the theme to larger human issues.
### Table 7

**Mr. M: Numerical Classification by Category**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Essay 1</th>
<th>Essay 2</th>
<th>Essay 3</th>
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<tr>
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<td>19</td>
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<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8

**Mr. M: Numerical Chart of Changes**

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<th>Area</th>
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<th>Essay 2</th>
<th>Essay 3</th>
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</thead>
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<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of statements related to the thesis</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of supporting details used</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
General Summary of Student Questionnaire

Mr. M. was a senior marketing major at the time of the study. He had worked as a water-ski instructor and planned to work in marketing for a body-building supplement manufacturer or a home-car stereo manufacturer. (He is now actually working for the Social Security Administration here in San Angelo). M said that he did read unassigned books for pleasure and information, that he read mostly fiction, and that the last book read was *Rye of the Hunter* by Dennis McKiernan. He stated that analysis interfered with reading pleasure, and he only felt a need to understand a work if it was assigned by a teacher. He did report, however, that he analyzed movies. His favorite movie was "The Terminator" and his favorite book was Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. He preferred discussion to lecture classes, and reported a high degree of participation in classroom discussion. He had never been in therapy or attended a support group, but said that he talked easily about his personal experiences and feelings. His answer to the last question concerning the appropriateness of classroom discussion of feelings and personal experiences was that "I will usually talk about anything that does not reflect poorly on me, so long as I have a willing audience. I like a setting where laughter is common."

My overall impression of Mr. M was of a young man concerned with "masculine" subjects as defined by his culture,
but with a great deal of interest in exploring ideas and feelings if the situation was non-threatening. He told me in conversation that his father was a coach at a large West Texas high school and that his mother taught there. Much of what I later learned about M was in private conversations after other group members had left. I came to find him a very interesting person with a lot on his mind that he did not reveal in the group discussions.

The greatest change in M's work from Essay One to Essay Two was the addition of three interpretive statements, two purely narrational statements, and two that I coded as associational. There was an attempt to flesh out Essay Two with details from the story, probably since I emphasized in the discussion the use of specific supporting details. In both Essay One and Essay Two, M came close to determining a significant main idea with reference to the text, but did not go on to explore the ideas with any depth or unity.

He says in Essay One that Hemingway's story is "... about the unhurried waiter. He is insecure, and one of his insecurities is fear of the dark. That is why he wants to be in a well-lighted place." M says that the unhurried waiter is "nerdy" because he doesn't want to leave work and go enjoy himself, and he views the old man who comes to the bar as merely the focal point for conversation between the two waiters. He states that the "married waiter" represents a person who works merely because money is necessary to live,
but would rather "...fish, watch sports, and just have fun." I got the impression that M viewed this attitude as a kind of norm against which the older waiter is less than what he should be, or deviant in some manner. Deviant was a word that came to have increasing importance in analyzing M's work. He says that the "unhurried waiter" works because his job gives meaning to his life, or because it's "the right thing to do." He doesn't want to close because someone may need the cafe, and M says that "If the unhurried waiter successfully helped the patron to feel better and solve his problems the unhurried waiter's day will have been made." Far from admiring the waiter for his desire to help others, M classifies him as "insecure" or "nerdy," a person who doesn't know how to enjoy life in the ways M suggested the other waiter might. M associates working from a sense of duty with being a sort of social outcast (a nerd), and mentions that the job in the bar is unusual but good for him because of his insomnia. There was a concern even in this first essay with issues of normalcy, but no apparent recognition of this interest or attempt to develop it with reference to the story.

In Essay Two, after class discussion of the story's possible themes, M still had trouble focusing on and developing an idea. He states in his introduction that "The main idea of 'The Son from America' is, to use a cliche, 'money can't buy happiness.' More specifically, it relates to other sayings like 'ignorance is bliss' and 'what you don't
know can't hurt you.'" Since the latter two cliches have no necessary relation to the first, it seems that M was unsure of what the story's importance might be, and so threw in whatever he could to fulfill the assignment. M did not seem at all involved with this story, as if there were really nothing in it that aroused his personal interest. There is one interesting passage where M infers that in New York, the son "surely saw all manner of worldly devices. He also saw human suffering such as orphans, homeless people, and winos." Since there is no mention in the story of what Samuel actually saw in America, it is significant that M chose these particular images from the borderline of "normalcy" to illustrate Samuel's life experience. The remainder of the essay merely describes the differences between Samuel and the villagers and concludes that "since the villagers have no serious social problems, no new social structures arise to meet their needs. Therefore, they continue to live their traditional existence." This sounds like a statement straight from a sociology textbook, and M told me later that in fact he had just completed a sociology course and that might be why he was interested in social norms and deviance. I point out, however, that many college students take sociology courses and are not particularly affected one way or another, certainly not enough to carry the ideas over into their English classes, so it seems more likely to me that the course brought into the foreground an already established interest of which M was
unaware. I feel this to be true even more because in later private conversations, M often expressed a fear that I would think he was "weird" because of things he shared in his responses.

M's response to "A Widow's Lament" is brief but reveals a great deal about the way he thought. The first five lines merely suggested to M that some memory gives the woman discomfort. The next two lines brought to his mind long-term commitment, while lines 9-19 made him think of "being so distracted that I would not notice other things." The rest of the poem made him think of "utter despair," which he reacted to with the rather flip statement that ". . . if you're gonna go, at least go how you want." He thought of suicide at the end of the poem, an act we might well consider the ultimate deviance from social norms or from ordinary, logical functioning. It is here that I really began to notice M's interest in what lurks beneath the surface of our ordinary, day to day experience, and his reactions of both fascination and then, finally, disgust. He says at the end of this response that "I have not had a lot of experience with death. This poem did not have much personal significance to me. I tried my best, but I'm not real emotional." Then, after drawing a line across the page, he went on to say that "I feel sorry for the woman, but I also thought--Get a hold on yourself, suck it up." That is, at least apparently, a more "normal" way to deal with grief than "sinking into the marsh,"

or it would seem so to a young man who had little personal experience with the real agony of loss.

M's next response is to "The Meal," an interesting choice since this poem is clearly about family tension while Frost's poem is not necessarily concerned with unpleasant relationships but with life choices. M says the poem is about "...being all dressed up, having to be very polite, and hating it." This is not an unusual reaction for little boys at being stuffed into formal clothes and their activities restricted, but the emphasis M placed on this memory in relation to the poem is notable. The poem deals with meal time in a household where there is no perceptible emotional warmth, but where the children must look and behave perfectly. The tension and lack of love in the poem are palpable in such images as those of the scrubbed, perfect children sitting rigidly while their father carves the Sunday roast. While there is no indication in his response that the tensions in M's family were nearly so great, he says that the poem reminded him of Christmas dinners when he and his two cousins were made to dress up and endure the meal before they could open their presents. He particularly remembered that "We had on sissy shoes that were smooth on bottom instead of 'tennie shoes' with good 'grips.' Nerdy shirts and pants of odd colors and materials instead of blue jeans and T-shirts." In other words, the boys were out of their "normal" clothes, forced to conform to their parents' standard of what
constituted appropriate clothing for Christmas dinner. He goes on to say that "We would eat very quickly so we could open our presents, but we still had to wait for the adults to finish. We would go (sneak) outside to run around, and purposefully get our clothes dirty to get even with our moms for dressing us like that. We never got in trouble because it was Christmas and they did not want to make a scene or spoil our happiness." Again M uses the word "nerdy," this time to indicate his dislike for something that marked him as outside the usual norms of his peer group, and he speaks of rebellion against the parents, particularly the mothers, who enforce their standards. When M says that the parents don't want to "make a scene" on Christmas, he once again emphasizes the importance of keeping things at a certain emotional level on the surface.

In M's next assignment, the "most important word" in Greene's "The Destructors," his interest in social norms became overt by his choice of the word "deviance." He acknowledges that it is only used once in the story, in the form of "deviation," but he says that the entire story is about deviant behavior. The reason he says the behavior is deviant is important. The boys destroy the house but do not steal anything, and even burn the money they find. For M, the motive of robbery, while it would not excuse the crime, would make it less perverse. In reference to the statement by one of the boys that he has not heard of going to prison for
breaking things, M responds that "...they should go to prison." They have broken the social code and they should be punished.

M's personal reaction includes the statement that "This story appealed to me because I like being a destructor." He would like to tear down a house, but says he won't do so because "I know it is wrong, and fear legal consequences." He then relates a personal experience from his adolescence when he destroyed his first bicycle (he is the only student to include a personal experience when it was not a specific requirement of the assignment). He and his cousin took a heavy pipe and beat the bike until it was in pieces, and M says that "it was fun." The point of the story for M was that when his mother found out, she made him pay her fifteen dollars for the bike because she had been saving it for her grandchildren. M still expressed some anger over the incident, because he felt that the object he destroyed was worthless (it had been left to rust for years) or he would not have destroyed it. He says, "The point is, I would like to destroy something, but I limit it to things with no value; therefore, I have no bad conscience about it. These boys destroyed something valuable, so I judge the deed as being 'bad.'" M clearly did not wish to be seen as deviant, thus his insistence on the bicycle's worthlessness. It was after writing this response that he expressed concern that I would think him "weird," and that others often only respond in ways
that they think are socially acceptable and not with their honest feelings. I assured him that, while I found it "good" that he channeled his drives in ways that were not harmful to others, there was nothing weird in my estimation about his desire to destroy things. I also said that he might be right about many of the reactions in the group, for people often respond in a socially approved manner, but that those responses are revealing in their own way.

M's next assignment, the "most important passage" in "A Teenage Wasteland," focuses once more on behavior that is unacceptable and should be punished. He points out that at first he felt that Donny might be a victim of a flawed system, but later, once Donny's story about the beer in the locker is questioned, the boy's "logic is refuted." M thinks Cal is just a con-man because he gets the boys to like him but "does not take the next step and teach the kids how to get better." Better is, of course, a condition that must be measured against social norms of behavior. M concludes this assignment by saying that "The truth is, Donny is a no-good. He needed his butt kicked, and told to get tough and work. (Sounds like the Protestant work ethic, right?)" It is as if M noticed here how strongly he resists behavior that isn't socially acceptable by his standards, but also seemed to realize that he thought that way because he was himself a product of a certain type of socialization (the Protestant work ethic). I couldn't help wondering if M, like many of us reared on this
ethnic at its extreme, questions his values (hence his fascination with the deviant) at the same time that he honors them in his own life.

M's strong negative response to the final story, Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," reveals that, for M, while deviant behavior may at times be interesting, it is ultimately to be rejected. His essay begins with "I hate this story. It is predictable, sickening, and has huge gaps in logic. It made me sick to my stomach." Coming from a young man who lists "The Terminator" as his favorite movie, this is a surprisingly strong reaction. While I have not made an in-depth analysis of the quality of the violence in each work, I can say that at least near the end of "The Terminator," the violence may be excused as necessary to protect human society and its values, and the viewer is left with hope that human society will be preserved. In Faulkner's story, the violence is "behind the scenes," associated with dust and decay, and perverse in the sense that it serves no social purpose but is the result of an individual's mental breakdown.

M goes on to say that the most important theme in the story is control, "more specifically, an attempt to gain too much control, especially over things which are impossible or immoral to control. Namely, the human spirit, love, and death." M expresses a new insight in this essay about the need for social norms; there are certain areas where "control" by social standards may violate deeper and more positive
values, producing worse perversions than they seek to prevent. He says that "The scene with the druggist impressed me. She (Emily) gains their respect but loses their love. A socially acceptable action, but a lonely one." She may have murdered Homer because if he leaves she "...is disgraced in the eyes of the town, which weakens her control over them."
For M, keeping up appearances in this story went beyond excessive grief or children dressed for Christmas dinner, and he saw the issue of social control in a new light.

He expressed real problems with the story in the group discussion because of what he perceived as gaps in logic, which he mentioned again in his essay. He felt that someone would have come around asking about Homer, and when the writer does not explain this detail of plot, M "...lost all interest/respect/whatever. ...I want to know why." I found this interesting because never, in all my readings of this story, had this issue occurred to me, nor did it matter to me when M pointed it out. Our responses are certainly shaped by our expectations, in this case of what a story should do. There was something "sneaky" for M about Faulkner's not explaining certain details, and it was this mysterious quality of life beneath the surface which disturbed him. I discussed with the group before the assignment a reading of Holland's on this story that hints at a possible sexual relationship between Miss Emily and her father, and M reacted in his essay by adding a postscript; "In class it was said there was a
sexual deal between Emily and her father. I don't buy that." I'm not surprised that M wouldn't "buy" such a notion, since it violates one of our most basic taboos. M has explored in this final essay the idea of social controls in both positive and negative aspects, and his essay is more unified and successful by traditional standards.

In his evaluation of the group experience, M made the perceptive comment that "I would not say my last essay was better when looked at in traditional English grading terms. I would say it was more 'from the heart' and more interesting to read." The essay is an improvement in terms of significance and unity, but is not as much so as some of the other students' work. He is, however, quite correct in stating that it is more interesting, and I felt that was largely because M found a theme with relevance to his own life and worked it into his writing. That he was involved with this text in a different way is shown by the fact that on Essay Three there are seven statements coded literary judgment, two associational, and one self-involvement. I do not think the ideas I found repeated in the students' assignments were the only areas of interest expressed in their work, nor that they constituted any kind of psychological signatures. They were rather common human concerns, and each student expressed different levels of interest in certain ones at that particular time.
Student 3: Ms. C

Table 9
Ms. C: Numerical Classification by Categories

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Table 10
Ms. C: Numerical Chart of Changes

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<td>Number of supporting details used</td>
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General Summary of Student Questionnaire:

Ms. C was a junior psychology major at the time of the study, and her future job plans included working with children. The last unassigned book she had read was *Suicide Prevention: Help For Those Who Are Troubled*. She reported reading non-fiction for pleasure and enjoyed analyzing. She had a need to understand or "fix a meaning" for what she read and analyzed movies; her favorite movie was "Sleeping with the Enemy" and her favorite novel was Grisham's *The Firm*. She said that "some" movies and books could have different meanings. She preferred discussion courses, in which she usually participated. She had not been in therapy or a support group, but reported talking easily about her feelings and experiences. She said that some discussion of that type is fine in a classroom.

The most significant statistical change in C's work during the study was from Essay One to Essay Two; the number of details related to the thesis rose from 7 to 25. The traditional discussion helped her to organize her thoughts and produce a clearer analysis. There was a significant qualitative change in her essays by the final assignment.

Although I coded her first essay with a significant thesis, she did not know how to follow up by developing the main idea and its possibilities. She states that "I feel the story is about a man who sees himself in another person," and
goes on to say that the older waiter can "...sympathize with the drunk because he feels some of the same pain." She elucidates the idea of a shared problem in only the most rudimentary way. She says that both characters are lonely and don't want to face an empty house, but she does not explore any possible reasons for their feelings, omitting the obvious fact of the old man's deafness. She switches focus to the young waiter and his insensitivity toward the old man, saying that he has much to look forward to in life and has "...a limited knowledge of life and unhappiness in the world." She includes the detail of the young waiter's impatience with the old man's suicide attempt because the old man has plenty of money, and says that "This is a very limited knowledge of suicide, or why someone would consider taking his own life." At points like this in the essay, I felt that C was on the verge of analyzing motives in the light of her knowledge of human personality, but she stopped short without pursuing the ideas any further. I found myself asking, particularly in reference to the book C reported reading about suicide, "What do you know of the motives for suicide? What might the common unhappiness of the old man and the older waiter be based upon, beyond the lack of family ties? What in their personalities might have caused them to become isolated? What exactly is it that they share?" Had C focused on the possible reasons for affinity between the characters, her analysis would have had a depth and unity it lacks.
She turned next to the textual detail concerning both men's reluctance to be in dark places, stating that the dark may make it seem "hopeless" for the two. She says that the older waiter "...understands emotions and wants to help others," therefore not leaving the cafe because someone might need it. She adds that the older waiter also understands insomnia, but once again she failed to move beyond the story's surface by explaining what it is he understands about insomnia. She says that insomnia may be why the drunk doesn't want to go home, but doesn't mention possible causes or effects of insomnia.

C now shifts the focus entirely from the issue of understanding between the old man and the older waiter. She says "I feel that the story is meant to show the misunderstanding of life and other issues." There is a common thread in her ideas, but she was unable to follow it through the text with a sufficiently general organizing idea. She comes back to the detail about the young waiter's misunderstanding of the suicide attempt, and adds that he assumes that the old man is "nasty" because he stays drunk. She says that this illustrates how people "...can be very insensitive unless they have been in a situation themselves." She ends by saying that many people simply don't want to be burdened with other people's problems, but she never explores the story's deeper issues. Both ideas in her essay, that there is empathy between the old man and the older waiter and
that the young waiter has no understanding of the old man, could be developed into one controlling idea by questioning the basis of the understanding and its lack. C came close to significant analysis, mainly I think because she was associating strongly with the detail about suicide. When I read her final essay, I discovered that one of her good friends had in fact committed suicide the year before, and then I could see how this experience had colored her response, but, without skills for acknowledging and using that interest, she was unable to follow up in relation to the text and use her concern as a basis for intellectual analysis.

The traditional discussion of techniques for organizing and supporting an essay helped C a great deal to focus on one idea throughout Essay Two. She begins by stating that Singer's story is about the "...difference in people's needs," which is not an idea of great depth, but she develops it fairly well and does try to generalize from it in her conclusion. She supports her thesis about differing needs by using illustrations from the story concerning the parents' and the son's needs for money, religion, and technology, although there is not a full development of any one of the supporting ideas. In her conclusion, she states that since people are different, with different emotional needs, "...this story is a good lesson, you should not try to change other people to suit yourself. What is right for you is not always right for them." She did not tie this idea to the story by remarking on
the absence of a villain, but, as in Essay One, her emphasis was on human understanding and acceptance.

C's first "Bleichian" exercise makes this point from the first sentence when she says that "In 'The Widow's Lament in Springtime,' I feel very sympathetic." She sees the point of the poem as the hopelessness one feels when things happen beyond one's control and says that she has experienced this feeling in her own life. Probably because of her personal experience of loss, she had no problem understanding the conventional "meaning" of the poem. Her response includes several references to her own grief that she was unable to overcome by the enjoyment of simple pleasures, and she ends by saying of the poem that "...it gives me a sad, mellow feeling. A feeling that life continues, and we do not have much control of what is in the future." Like Ms. H, C expressed the idea that strong human empathy is important in a world where much is beyond our control, while M, who peeked into the realm of uncontrolled impulse, used "the normal" as a place of retreat.

"The Road Not Taken" elicited strong associations for C of times when she also faced an uncertain future without clear indications of the correct choice. One specific experience she reports is her decision to marry, because she says that "...other people do not always know what is right for you," returning to her theme of misunderstanding. In a world filled with uncertainty, C says that her feelings, though also often
confused, may be a surer guide for behavior than the opinions of others, for they may not understand her needs. Another association elicited by the poem for C is a religious one. In addition to personal feelings, she chose the Christian faith as a guide in life's uncertain moments, even though she says that this is often the "more difficult" path. She ends the response statement by saying that "You are faced with so many decisions, and probably can always wonder if the grass is greener on the other side."

Her next assignment focuses on the word "destruction" from Greene's story. C states that it is not just physical destruction that occurs, but emotional destruction as well. She makes an interesting comment about the damage caused by the bombs. Their destruction is a "permanent thing," thus illustrating that while life may be filled with uncertainties, destruction is forever; harming others is serious because it is often irreversible. After giving examples of the boys' physical destructiveness, she makes the rather strong statement that "I cannot stand a destructive nature in anyone. I feel that you should take care of others' things as if they were your own. When I read this story I feel a sense of anger." Taking care of others' possessions is a way to express the empathy that C finds so important. She goes on to emphasize that the boys destroyed not just the house but ". . .the old man's whole life and being,. . ." a sure violation of any positive empathetic response. C reacts
strongly against Trevor because, by realizing how the old man feels about his house and then choosing to destroy it, he turns empathy to a destructive purpose.

C chose as the "most important passage" from "A Teenage Wasteland" a part of the story where Daisy shifts responsibility for her son onto his tutor, Cal. C insists that both parents should have exercised more control over their son and taken more "...initiative in their son's life and discipline." Parenting is apparently not an area, like death, where C felt we have no control of the future. Empathy in this case includes setting strict limits, since C says that "...passing responsibility...can be very traumatic, especially in a child's life." She adds that we have responsibilities to one another which may include more than emotional understanding.

C's final essay is better by the study's definition of literary competence, and she also incorporated some of her personal experience in a fairly well integrated manner. Like H, she expresses the main theme as one of denial, not surprising since it is one of the possibilities we discussed in class. C's focus, however, is mainly on Miss Emily's own ultimate denial in killing Homer rather than on the townspeople's involvement. She does mention that both the servant and the others must have realized that something was wrong by the smell, but unlike H, she does not emphasize their denial as the central problem. She says that the most
important example is the one concerning Emily's father, relating it to her own initial denial of reality when her friend committed suicide, but she does not generalize or make a judgment at this point. It is with her last example, Emily's killing of Homer, that C expresses her own feelings. She says that Emily kills Homer so he cannot leave her, thus making him serve her needs against his will. She says that, "This is complete and insane denial. You cannot make anyone do the things that you wish. She took his freedom away so that she could live on as she wished." For C, Emily's act is the ultimate refusal to empathize, and she calls such selfish controlling "insanity."

While C began the study with some desire and ability to analyze and organize her ideas, the group work helped her define and deepen those abilities. She used fewer details on her final essay (10 rather than 13 and 15 on the other essays) but used them more judiciously. Her greatest gain in ability to unify an essay with a clear thesis was from Essay One to Essay Two. The traditional explanation of thesis as controlling idea helped her a great deal, while the more subjective exercises produced insight and depth without diminishing unity and coherence in the writing. C's evaluation of her experience during the study demonstrated the same general perceptions about her progress. She said that she would choose a class that included personal experience and response and that ". . .this is very important and should be
incorporated in public education." She stated that her last essay was better because she could more easily pick out the theme and illustrate it with greater detail, and that focusing on what was important to her helped her relate to the characters and feel more comfortable about writing. She concluded her evaluation by noting the importance of the concept that "...with personal experience, there is no wrong or right answer."

**Student 4: Ms. B**

**Table 11**

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Table 12
Ms. B: Numerical Chart of Changes

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<td>Number of supporting details used</td>
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Summary of Student Questionnaire:

Ms. B was a junior math/business major at the time of the study. Her work experience was at a fast food restaurant, but her future plans included going into business for herself for approximately ten years, then retiring and teaching. She reported reading, mostly fiction, for pleasure, and her favorite book was *Pern: The First Fall* by Anne McCaffrey. She said she enjoyed analyzing what she read after the reading was completed and liked to "fix a meaning" for what she had difficulty understanding. She analyzed movies by discussing them with friends, and her favorite movie was "The Outsiders." Her favorite "novel" was the *Dragonrider of Pern* series by McCaffery and the *Xanth* series by Piers Anthony. She said that novels and movies must have many meanings, since ". . . interpretation is merely the expression of one's feeling (opinion)." She slightly preferred discussion courses and
sometimes participated. She reported having attended both a support group and therapy. She said discussion of personal experiences would depend on which experiences, but that she talked easily about personal feelings. She stated that personal feelings and experiences might be appropriate for class discussion if the experience caused her to feel a certain way about the material being studied, "Such as if AIDS or abortion is being discussed and you are for or against it due to an experience of yourself or one of your friends."

Unlike the other students discussed thus far, B never established a strong interest that recurred throughout her work. She was forced to miss two group meetings because of illness, and made up the assignments upon returning by discussing them with me privately. Missing a group meeting was very significant because of our once weekly schedule, which was already too seldom to establish a high level of rapport. I hired seven students originally to allow for the possibility of a student's illness or emergency, but one student had already dropped out. Being gone for two weeks made re-integrating into the group awkward, and in B's assignments written without group discussion, she never achieved the unity or depth quite likely possible with more support. With reference to her statistical changes, her final essay is no more fully developed that her first, nor is it more significantly unified.
In Essay One, B discusses as a "possible meaning" what she calls "...oblique references to the impatience of youth and the dignity of old age." She refers by example to the young waiter's misunderstanding of the old man's reasons for the attempted suicide, and says that Hemingway also shows the cruelty of youth toward the older generation by the young waiter's actions. The dignity of old age is illustrated for her through both the old man and the older waiter, but she gives only the specific example of the old man's walking unsteadily but with dignity. She points out that this is only a "subtheme" of the story but a major part from "an emotional point of view." She says that "The story can make the reader disgusted at the younger waiter, feel sorry for the old man and applaud the older waiter." She concludes that the ending of the story would be confusing if not considered from the point of view of personal emotion, but she gives no explanation for this conclusion. Of the twenty-four statements in this essay, only seven are related to the idea of dignified age and impatient youth. There is no attempt to explain whether or not this is a generalization about human nature, or if not, under what conditions it may be true.

Essay Two was written after B missed the two group meetings, therefore missing our discussion of traditional ways to produce unity and coherence in writing. I did spend some time talking with her, both about the story and about writing techniques, but my comments lacked the diversity and
spontaneity of the group discussion and the sense of discovery in finding ways to structure writing based on students' ideas. (We had actually generated brief outlines in class and discussed how specific examples might illustrate different sections of those outlines.) Probably as a result of having missed and of trying to catch up not only in the group but in other classes as well, B wrote a very short essay (fifteen statements) that still lacked a strong sense of purpose. It may, however, have reflected her own subjective interests more than those generated by other students, since they knew from the discussion what some possibilities for the story were that I, "the teacher," considered worthwhile.

B decided that for her, "The meaning or root idea of this story is how society changes our perceptions and values." This idea is not completely unrelated to concerns in her first essay, for both deal to some limited extent with how our experiences shape our personalities and perceptions. This idea is rudimentary in Essay One, where I could only infer that B felt the older waiter's life experiences help him to sympathize with the old man. In Essay Two, however, B attempts to explore this idea as a major theme. She gives two examples of how the son's religion has changed, then turns to the topic of money. Her treatment of the son's attitude toward money includes a general reference to his sending money home and not understanding why his parents did not spend it and his bringing money from the Lentshin Society and then
realizing that the village needed nothing. She ends by quoting Berlcha's prayer to illustrate that the old people still worship God, but that money has become Samuel's god. This rather strong statement is not explored further, nor is there discussion of what societal influences may have altered Samuel's views. There is an interest shown, as in Essay One, in how power is often mistakenly attributed to money and how this is a corrupting assumption.

B's response to "The Widow's Lament" is very short and focuses on her empathy with the narrator's sorrow, which she claims to have experienced secondhand through her grandparents. She ends by saying that she felt "...glad after reading the poem, safe in the knowledge that I had not experienced this personally, but with a twinge of guilt, knowing that (and fearing it) it will occur to me and mine one day." This is another acknowledgement of how experience inexorably overtakes us and a fear of the consequences. While experience may give us the basis for empathy, B expresses the realization that it may also be painful or change us in negative ways.

For her associational assignment, B chose "The Road Not Taken," and her response is much fuller and more personal. She associates the poem to her choice of Angelo State instead of Odessa College, where both her mother and father attended, and where a sister was enrolled. It was apparently a decision of some difficulty, but she made her choice because "Angelo
State. . .was a better school," a clear recognition that different experiences change us, and the choice of a college would surely have lifelong effects. She next thought of her current boyfriend who was working in New Mexico and of how she could not choose to be with him over Spring Break because she had to work, and since both decisions were not possible, she would ". . .go with whatever seems the best choice." The next four lines reminded B of walks with her family at her grandmother's farm and how these walks were ". . .generally off the beaten path," making them feel ". . .like explorers in a brand new world." This association reminded me that young people are often both excited and apprehensive about new experiences. The next lines concerning the virgin quality of the paths reminded B of winters in Virginia and how she loved a ". . .thick blanket of clean, untouched snow, . . .and its magical quality." This imagery associates with B's concern for the indelible mark of experience with the snow representing the innocence of life before a great deal of such marking occurs. Concerning the pivotal lines about doubting the chance to return and remake the decision, B relates the very personal experience of losing her virginity to a man who proved to be uncaring and how she wished she could re-make that decision. She accepted the change by saying that ". . .at least I know that I loved him even though he didn't love me," a begrudging acceptance in the face of the inevitable. I was quite surprised by this revelation, since
B never discussed even mildly personal experiences in the group, though she had reported in her questionnaire that it seemed appropriate to do so and that she discussed her feelings easily. I can only speculate that the limited number of meetings she attended kept her from reaching a point of comfortable rapport with group members, but perhaps her more extended time with me in a private setting moved her to a different level of trust. She ended this assignment by returning to the idea of her college choice and how that had been a good one because it allowed her to "...become myself," surely because her experiences differed from those possible had she lived at home.

B chose "class" as the most important word in "The Destructors" because to her it distinguishes Trevor from the rest of the gang. She points out that his parents are a further sign of class distinction, especially his mother, who "...considered herself better than the neighbors." This picks up on B's interest in how we are influenced by experience, and she goes on to describe Trevor as "classy" because he rings Old Misery's bell instead of breaking in and because he recognizes the beauty of the house. B says that the most important illustration of class difference is that Trevor does not hate Old Misery, but Blackie thinks his desire to destroy the house must be based on hate. B reads this as emotionalism on Blackie's part, and says, "This showed me that he (Trevor) did not respond on an emotional level with the
rest of the gang but rather on an intellectual level. A class difference found even today." This association of "class" with repressed or absent emotion was interesting, especially as B recognized that the way we process information is environmentally influenced, with class being a major formative influence.

The passage that B selected as "most important" in "A Teenage Wasteland" was where Cal tells Donny's mother that he's a "serious, sensitive kid," and that she is not showing him trust. This passage stood out for B because it demonstrates ". . .how easily parents are manipulated." The response is very brief but reveals that while B tried such tactics with her own mother, her mother was ". . .smart enough not to fall for these guilt complexes." There is no reference in this response to the way experience marks us, except perhaps obliquely in the mention of how Donny's ability to manipulate his mother is the real cause of his failures. There actually seems to be more of a concern here with the destructive effects of guilt, which serves to emphasize that while students may have central concerns that can be noted in much of their work, they also have a variety of interests.

B expresses a familiar interest in her final essay, where she speaks again of generational differences. In the case of the Faulkner story, B finds the young seemingly more in touch with reality, as she illustrates by mentioning the example of the younger man who is more willing to confront Miss Emily
about the smell and how he is silenced by the voice of the older generation. After mentioning how the ladies of Emily's day felt that she had to hold on to her father's body while our generation would have simply considered her crazy, B turns to the episode of the poison. She intended at first to use this textual detail as an illustration of the older generation's unwillingness to confront reality, but she became interested in the effects of Emily's powerful personality, and the essay changes direction entirely. B refers to a personal friend with this ". . . same type of personality,. . ." but claims that her personality was tempered by the fact that her friends finally got tired of her demanding behavior and quit giving in to her. She does not link this to the idea of generational differences but ends by simply speculating that Emily's personality might have been better if she had friends to confront her. While the essay lacks the unity it might have achieved by focusing on a single idea, the final statement does reflect B's concern with how personality is shaped by experience.

On the evaluation, B stated that her final essay was better than her first one ". . . in a way, because it allowed me to explore a theme I normally would not, one that was not a generality (i.e. man vs. man, etc.)." Of all the students in the group, it was with B that I most regretted not having the opportunity to discuss the work from session to session as the study progressed, for I felt she could have gained skills
in a way satisfying for her had I been able to help her focus on her own interests in relation to the texts. I discuss this lack of feedback and its implications in my conclusions.

**Student 5: Mr. A**

**Table 13**

**Mr. A: Numerical Classification by Categories**

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Summary of Student Questionnaire

Mr. A was a junior marketing major at the time of the study, with plans to enter a marketing firm after graduation. He stated that he read fiction for pleasure; the last unassigned book he had read was *The Black Stallion*. He enjoyed analyzing and needed to "fix a meaning" for what he read. He analyzed movies with friends; his favorite movies were "Batman" and "Batman Returns" and his favorite novel was *The Outsiders*. He said he had never thought about whether stories have one meaning that can be discovered. He preferred discussion courses, where he claimed to participate "half the time." He had never attended a support group but had been in therapy, and reported talking easily about his feelings "sometimes." He said he did not think it appropriate to discuss his feelings or personal experiences in a classroom...
situation, but liked to hear a professor's personal experiences.

The statistical changes in A's work demonstrate how purely quantitative analysis can be misleading, especially in such a small group where one student's results make a significant impact. I phrased the first assignment in the following manner: "What do you think the story is about? What is the meaning of the story?" I made the mistake of assuming that all the students would infer the assignment to be an analysis of the story in terms of theme, but A answered both questions separately by first summarizing the story and then writing a few brief paragraphs about the story's meaning. He carried this tendency to summarize rather than to interpret on to his second essay, and only by Essay Three did he focus more clearly on interpretation. While statistically his Essay Two was included as having a significant thesis, he could not develop the organizing principle until after writing the response statements.

In A's first essay, after the summary, he states tentatively (using a question mark) that the old man represents the signs of being old. He says the younger waiter also has traits of older people because he wanted to go home and sleep and because he "nagged all the time." He relates the older waiter to the old man by listing such similar traits as cleanliness, enjoying the night, and insomnia. No clear thematic interest emerged here; rather, the significant aspect
of this essay that I found reflected throughout A's work was its quality of uncertainty. A seemed eager to do the assignments "right," as he often asked me if what he wrote was what I wanted, but until the final assignment he was almost completely at a loss when asked for textual interpretation.

After the traditional discussion of Singer's story, A made a better attempt at focusing on a significant aspect, but was still confused and tried to write about two different ideas; "you can't go back home," and "money means different things to different people." The first idea reappeared in A's later writing and was apparently of some importance to him. After again summarizing the story, he used supporting details to show how Samuel changed from the simple, religious lifestyle of his parents, noting in these changes the idea that Samuel may visit in Lentshin but could never return there to live. He then turned to the idea of money, demonstrating with textual evidence the wide difference in Samuel and his parents' attitudes toward it. He says at the end of the section that this idea could be "another example of you can't go back home," and that was most clearly the meaning the story had for A at the time of writing, but he was unable to integrate the story's different aspects with that as a controlling idea. Certainly students, teachers, and critics always see many possibilities in any literary work, and it is neither necessary nor desirable for students to integrate all their potential meanings, but it is worthwhile for them to
learn techniques for developing one idea fully before exploring another. At the end of such a process, students may see for themselves if there is any relation between these meanings while observing the rich possibilities for interpretation.

A's response to "The Widow's Lament" demonstrates how a strong, unexplored subjective motive may cause a reader to miss the more "literal" or conventional implications of a text. He says that the poem is about a woman who is "tired of the scenery that she has seen for 35 years like I did while living in my hometown," and that she wants to "...deal with moving on after her husband's death by going somewhere new to die herself." Without considering the subjective underpinnings of this interpretation, I would probably discuss with this student what I feel is the poem's more literal meaning and encourage him to re-evaluate his interpretation. While I might still do so at the end of the response process, I would first explore with him why he saw what he did and what importance that had for him.

A goes on to associate this idea with his leaving the small West Texas town where he grew up because all his friends had left for college also and he needed to "move on." He says this is what the widow wanted to do, because, due to the death of her husband, she could no longer find joy in the scenery that she had once loved. A states that she wanted a "new place to look at," and that her son provides such a place at
the edge of the woods. He says he did the same by "...moving to ASU to get a change of scenery." He recognizes that she "...wanted to go there to die to be with her husband," while he simply wanted to rejoin his friends at Angelo State. What interested me was how thoroughly A associated his feelings with the woman, thereby inferring that she also wanted a "new" place, even if only for the purpose of death.

A's next response, to Frost's "The Road Not Taken," continues this line of thinking. He says that the poem "really hit home for me with my decision to come to college," and it is here that I realized his decision was more important than in the case of many students upon leaving the small towns around San Angelo. His next associations explained some of the reasons for this importance. He says that the line "two roads diverged in a yellow wood" reminded him of first the decision to go to college and then, with "another fork in the road," of where he would go. He associates the first decision with the lines about looking as far down one road as possible, saying that the road which looked traveled would have been the "easy way out of my decision" because he would have just worked "regular jobs and lived a regular life." While college seems to be part of a "regular" life for many of us, the rest of A's response explains his emphasis. Not being able to see his future clearly, he was frightened by his decision because some of his high school teachers had told him "in a round
about way" that he would not make it in college. The line about the equality of the paths reminded A of his experience when he came to "college day" at ASU, when both roads seemed equal. By the time he left that day, he had chosen one path over another. The lines about keeping the first path for another day reminded him of how he felt when he told his parents of his decision, letting them know as well as affirming for himself that he would keep the other path, the "regular" path, for another day, knowing that he would never walk that path at all because his decision eliminated it as a possibility. A says in reference to the line concerning the poet's doubts about ever returning to that point of decision that after receiving his acceptance letter from ASU, he told himself that he would "...never look back at Colorado City or as, in the poem, I would never look back at the other road I could have travelled." Of the lines about telling this with a sigh, A says that he can now tell his story with a sigh of relief, because it was four years since his decision and he has proven his doubters wrong.

The last paragraph of A's response emphasizes and expands upon the poem's significance for him. He says that, "There have been several people on both sides of my family to go to college, but they never made it that far. I have a cousin that is only a year older than me and the family was depending on her to be the first to make it through college but she didn't make it passed the first year. I have made it my
number one goal to be the first in the family to graduate from college." I felt this response statement was a turning point for A in the study; for the first time a clearly important idea emerged for him with reference to a text, and he stayed with it and developed it in a cogent manner. He expressed an experience of the work with more depth than on his first assignments, a way of experiencing that he carried to some extent through the remaining assignments.

While Greene's story did not elicit the same overt expression of interest in critical decisions and taking control of one's life, A explored these ideas more subtly in his "most important word" assignment. He chose the word "leadership," first discussing how leadership changed from Blackie to Trevor at Trevor's suggestion of destroying the house. According to A, Trevor's suggestion was accepted because "the gang was tired of doing the same old cheating (stealing) game and wanted to try something new. . . .," reminding me of A's interest in "something new" for himself. A says the significance of Blackie's rallying the boys when they hear that Mr. Thomas is returning is that this is where power passes back to Blackie. The third time "leadership" was important for A was when leadership, in fact, no longer concerned the gang because they were working as a group to destroy the house, and they "... all seemed to know their unfinished part without having to have a leader to tell them what to do" (emphasis mine). A concludes by stating that
"leadership" is important in the story because it demonstrates of the boys that "...no matter if they had a leader or not, they reached their goal..." This reflects A's concern with becoming his own "leader" by making a decision that was somewhat unusual in his family and carrying it through to accomplishment.

A's "most important passage" assignment focuses on the phrase, "At night, Daisy lies awake and goes over Donny's life." He associates the passage to his own life, stating that, "I used to be a lot like Donny during my freshman and sophomore years at high school...I would let my friends get me into trouble by following them..." He continued in that role of follower until he had an accident while driving drunk, an event that forced a major decision. He was no longer willing to be influenced by his friends, but decided to do what he thought was right. It was only in reading the story that A realized how worried his parents must have been and considered their feelings, but he focuses in his response on how they no longer had to worry after he took the initiative and changed his life. Once more, A was faced with an important decision and had to become his own "leader."

In A's final essay, he demonstrates a much improved ability to focus on an organizing principle. He states that he chose the theme of denial because there are so many references to this theme in the story, but the last section of the essay reveals his choice's subjective basis. He supports
the denial theme with textual detail, referring to the death of Emily's father, the episodes of the taxes and the buying of arsenic, and the final denial with Homer's death and Emily's "sleeping or laying by his body." A associates this theme "from the story" to an episode in his own life, described at length, when he refused, in spite of solid evidence, to accept that a girlfriend was involved with another young man. By acknowledging a subjective interest in the story, A was able to develop this assignment more fully and with more unity than after traditional instruction only.

The process was more clearly traceable in A's work than in that of the other students. True to his comment on the introductory questionnaire, A did not share personal experiences in class discussion, but was able to explore the assigned readings from a personal standpoint in his written work. Again, I felt that this student would have made even greater gains in interpretive ability had I been able to provide more feedback during the study. A concluded on his evaluation that he would sign up for a "personal experience class" because it helped him in "explaining and understanding the stories better." He said that he felt his work was improved because he covered more parts of the stories and mixed that with personal experiences. This is an interesting comment because in fact his number of purely narrational statements dropped from 12 on Essay One and 9 on Essay Two to none on the final essay, while the number of supporting
details mentioned therefore dropped from 20 and 23 on the first two essays respectively to only 12 on the final essay. A mentioned fewer of the details from the text but "covered" what he mentioned instead of merely summarizing.

**Student 6: Ms. K**

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**Table 15**

Ms. K: Numerical Classification by Categories
Table 16

Ms. K: Numerical Chart of Changes

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Summary of Student Questionnaire

Miss K was a sophomore economics major at the time of the study. Her most recent work experience was tutoring a fifth grade student, and her future plans included business and journalism. She reported reading for pleasure, mostly fiction; the last unassigned book she had read was Stephen King's The Shining. Analysis interfered with pleasure for her, and she did not always need to "fix the meaning" for what she read. She said that she analyzed movies, her favorite movie being "Aladdin" and her favorite novel Jane Eyre. She did not feel that stories, novels, and movies have one meaning. She preferred lecture courses and only participated in class discussions "sometimes." She had never attended a support group nor been in therapy, and reported that she did not talk easily about feelings or personal experiences. She answered with an unequivocal "no" to question eighteen concerning the
appropriateness of discussing her personal experiences or feelings in a classroom setting. Ms. K is from Bangladesh, attending Angelo State on a Carr Scholarship.

True to her answer on question eighteen, Ms. K never discussed feelings or personal experience in the group setting, and only mentioned them in her writing when specifically instructed to do so. Again, statistics are somewhat misleading with reference to this student; K had only 8 interpretive statements on Essay One, 14 on Essay Two, and 25 on Essay Three. While this would seem to indicate a dramatic improvement in her interpretive skills, close examination of her work shows some, but a less marked, improvement. Only on Essay Three did she focus her work on a significant idea, and even on that essay only 15 of 29 statements were related to the thesis.

K's first essay, on "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," is largely a narrative re-telling, with some attempt to focus on the differing views of the old man taken by the two waiters. The few statements coded interpretational are so only in the most limited sense of seeking to assign some motive for the characters' actions or feelings. Statement 22, for example, stresses dignity and attempts to generalize by saying that "...dignity is something they can keep in spite of their age."

I thought that the story used for Essay Two might appeal to K because one of its main characters is a man who left his
home and culture when young and came to America, but K's essay on this story is shorter and less fully developed than her first essay. She once more uses the differences between characters in an attempt to produce meaning, but her thesis, that ". . . we see two different generations--the son and the parents and how different their lifestyles are" never achieves a level of generality that would ask what idea these differences illustrate. While I coded all the statements as interpretational because they show "an attempt to discover. . . the nature of the characters," the results are shallow and disorganized because the unifying idea is not sufficiently general to allow interpretation of details. Most of this brief essay consists of examples that show differences in the characters. The final paragraph switches from these differences to the love shown by the characters in spite of the gap between them, giving a few examples and then breaking off abruptly with no attempt at closure or meaningful conclusion.

In response to "The Widow's Lament," K faithfully followed my instructions to write about her feelings as she read the poem. She begins her response statement by saying that "This poem gives me an intense feeling of sadness." She continues later with "I can sense a deeper feeling in her like anger because everything is going on as before," focusing on what she believes the narrator feels. She ties this to her own feelings by saying that "I can sympathize with her because
that is the way I feel when something goes wrong with my life but everything else seems to be the same." She says that "It makes me feel lost and lonely and angry like she is feeling in this poem." Although a very brief response, it does express K's subjectivity openly and mentions for the first time the idea of loneliness, which seemed to have some importance for her.

K chose Frost's poem for her associative assignment, and continues and expands the idea of personal loneliness. She begins by saying that the first two lines reminded her of a choice she made to graduate a year earlier than her peers, who were engaging in social activities while she finished school and prepared for her SATS. She says, "I used to feel real sad then and wished I could do both." The word "traveler" in the next lines reminded K "of a trip to Austin with a group of friends." She describes how, while climbing Mt. Bonnell, she suddenly had a feeling of loneliness even though she was with a group. She says, however, that it was a "...satisfied loneliness, not a sad loneliness." She wanted to leave the group and explore on her own, which she did by continuing her climb alone and looking down as far as she could see.

She returned with the second stanza to the idea of making difficult choices, this time mentioning her choice to attend ASU rather than Dartmouth because ASU offered her a scholarship. She seemed to regret that, unlike Frost, she took the easier path. In response to the lines about never
coming back to take the other path, K says that "This is what I feel like when I am homesick. What if I never go home because something comes up which I have to do?" Once again, though briefly, K mentions loneliness and sadness.

The last stanza was meaningful to K because she believed that her choice to come to America would have significant and lasting effects on her life. It was with this associative response that I got my only glimpse of ideas that had some importance to K, for, of all the students, she was most reluctant to allow her personal concerns to appear in her work unless directly instructed to do so.

K, like Mr. A, picked "leadership" as "the most important word" in Greene's story. She says that ". . . not only has it been used a lot of times but is also the theme of the story as I see it." She describes how Trevor easily replaces Blackie as leader of the gang, saying that Trevor's ". . . silence gave him solemnity." I heard echoes of K's concern with dignity and loneliness, but there was no direct reference. K herself was a very quiet but dignified person, seeming a bit mature in comparison with her fellow students. She says that the boys in the story respect Trevor because of his quiet and "solemn" nature. She also says that daring is a part of Trevor's attraction as a leader, for he involves the boys in an exploit that they would not have undertaken on their own. K then links the idea of leadership with responsibility and ends by saying that Blackie still hoped to retake his role as leader.
if Trevor failed in his project. K's assignment had less depth than A's focusing on the same word, because whereas A tried to discover motives for the passing back and forth of leadership, and I could easily see how the differing ideas about leadership related to A's concern with autonomy, there was no personal feel in K's response, and only the merest hint of how her subjectivity might have influenced her choice.

For her "most important passage" assignment, K chose the part of Tyler's story where Daisy discusses her son with Cal. "'Well, I guess you're right,' said Daisy. She saw Donny suddenly from a whole new angle: his pathetically poor posture, that slouch so forlorn. . .oh wasn't it awful being young? She'd had a miserable adolescence herself and had always sworn no child of hers would ever be that unhappy."

K says that while Daisy and Donny are alike, they are also different because Daisy outgrew her problems while Donny runs away. She remarks that even though Daisy has "come out of it," she is still affected by low self-esteem. Her pity for Donny, though she doesn't realize it, is lowering his self-esteem further. In the last paragraph of K's response, she says that "We also feel sympathetic towards Donny in spite of what he has done. His poor 'posture' and 'slouched shoulders' paint a very pitiful and lonely picture of a teenage boy who cannot adjust to normal life and take its challenges." She continues with "It makes the reader feel his unhappiness and the sorrow that nothing could be done about
it. . . ." When not asked about her own feelings directly, K played down subjectivity with the use of "we" and "the reader," while still mentioning her concern with sympathy for loneliness. This is a habit that, of course, we all have when referring to texts, since the use of "I" is usually discouraged, and most students, in the absence of guidelines for when it might be appropriate, seek to avoid the usage.

When asked on the last assignment to combine traditional methods with subjective concerns, K wrote her best essay; however, while I asked for at least four examples from the story and one related personal experience, K sidestepped the latter part of the assignment. While the essay was an improvement, K still had difficulty with unity and focus. Her introductory remarks did not relate to the thesis she chooses to explicate, but did relate to her personal concerns. She mentions that Miss Emily is "on a pedestal" and "...very much separated from the rest of the townspeople. She lived alone. . .and did not mix with the rest of the community." In introducing her thesis, K did attempt to tie the idea of loneliness to that of denial: "She was not only a lonely woman, but she also had some mental disorder, that is, her denial of reality and I think this is what the story is all about." There was no attempt, however, to explain how the loneliness may have caused or been related to the denial. Since I discussed denial as a possible theme, I felt that K
picked it because of my remarks, but that she felt drawn to other aspects of the story.

She uses, without elaboration, the examples of Emily's father's death and her refusal to pay taxes, then mentions how the servant denies reality, and ends with the obvious example of Emily's sleeping with Homer's corpse. All of these textual details had been mentioned in the group discussion.

In an attempt to fulfill the latter part of the assignment, K adds that "I can sympathize with her denial of the real world to a certain extent because I believe every human being does that." The statement is not only qualified by "to a certain extent" but avoids personal feeling by association with "every human being."

K mentions ideas of oppression, particularly of women, in her conclusion, but she does not elaborate or relate these ideas to her thesis. I had the feeling while analyzing her essay that K could not fully interpret or develop her thesis because she was not focused on an idea that made any real difference to her personally. While upper division English majors often have the technical expertise to write well developed, unified essays discussing ideas that have no importance for them personally, the students in my group seemed to perform better when there was some obvious connection between their lives and the text. In a regular class that allowed time for feedback and re-writing, I would suggest to K that she pursue the ideas of Emily's isolation
and loneliness and their relation to her denial of reality, drawing on her own personal experience with these often uncomfortable aspects of life. Such suggestions and encouragement in exploring subjectivity might have benefitted K, but it is also possible that she is a person who would never be comfortable exploring personal experience in relation to literary texts in any setting. If so, I would find it unwise to continue urging her to do so past the point where I recognized her extreme reluctance. If she were in a class clearly described from the beginning as requiring the use of personal experience, I would encourage her to drop rather than receive a failing grade if she were unable to comply with course requirements.

On her final evaluation, K said that she would "...sign up for a class where personal experiences and responses would be used because that way I can relate to works of literature. It would be easier to understand as well as more enjoyable." She reported feeling that her last essay was better than her first, so perhaps the gains she made and the few attempts to relate the texts to her personal life were perceived by her as much more satisfactory than I realized. So it is with subjectivity.
A Special Case: The Teacher

Although the statistical breakdown for my own work is not included in the quantitative data because of the obvious disparity in training between me and the group members, I include it here as a basis for the following discussion. Because the primary purpose of my study is to explore the data made available by the students' writing, I follow these statistics with a summary of my responses rather than a detailed qualitative analysis. Readers may further examine my responses in Appendix One.
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**NOTE:** As mentioned earlier, all statements for both myself and the students are coded at the sentence level, and this gives a somewhat inaccurate comparison of my work with that of the students because of the sentences' greater complexity. However, I prefer this type of coding since all parts of compound/complex sentences almost always fall into the same category and breaking sentences down further seems an unnecessary complication for this study. Comparison of the essays can be done by turning to the Appendix and reading the actual texts.
Table 18
The Teacher: Numerical Chart of Changes

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Summary of My Responses

My response to the first story focuses on the idea that "The story...is about the opposition between order and chaos." Much of my language reflects the habit of referring to meaning as embedded in the text, and I refer with authority to the characters' inner lives and to the author's intended meaning. Only in retrospect did I see how my subjectivity shaped my choice of theme and the selective remembrance of critical articles about the story. This is only a danger if the subjectivity is not acknowledged and closes off access to the text's rich potential.

My second essay is more fully developed but similar in quality to Essay One. I focus on the idea that a person should be free in her choice of lifestyle, an idea I recognized on reflection as having strong subjective importance for me.
Like my students, the process of acknowledging my subjectivity began with the exercises from Readings and Feelings. I associated "The Widow's Lament in Springtime" to my experience of grief at my father's death and "The Meal" to tensions within my family during my formative years. My "most important word" from "The Destructors" is "creation," since I see destruction as a negative form of creation, requiring the same careful planning and execution and satisfying the same basic need. I found many passages in "A Teenage Wasteland" important, all adding up to produce a meaning that I state as Daisy's having undermined Donny's self-esteem by not insisting that he is capable of achieving certain standards.

In my final essay on "A Rose for Emily," I made an effort to integrate what I learned from the exercises in directing my focus and enriching my interpretation. By associating the tableau of Emily and her father to an adolescent event with my own father, I focus on the idea "...that male members of a family feel they have a right to control and repress the sexuality of female members..." and support this idea with both textual details and personal associations. I concluded that the increased emotional involvement did not strengthen my essay in traditional terms since I had already achieved basic literary competence, but that I felt a tremendous gain in the richness of my relationship with the story.

Another important conclusion with reference to my work concerns the reduction in textual details used on this final
essay. Given time constraints and the necessity to include personal experience, details had to be limited to a few that were most clearly supportive of my main idea. I decided that time limits could be altered to accommodate fullness in presentation of both response types as a possible solution, or, as I discuss below, this method could be implemented in two steps.

The subject of my final essay and some of the personal experiences I revealed brings up another issue of importance to the response-based class, and that is the appropriateness of sharing with students personal experiences related to sexual issues. While I have no problem with discussion of sexual themes in general, I would not read this essay to a lower division class nor discuss its content, since I feel that openness may exceed the bounds of propriety. A "no holds barred" approach does not seem in the best interests of the students. I would reconsider in terms of a graduate seminar clearly described as response-based.

An encouraging result of my third essay was the integration of personal experience and intellectual interpretation to a much greater extent than I had expected. This type of integration was a problem for the students in the group and illustrates another important issue with relation to their work.

Every student had difficulty integrating personal experience into an essay that required the traditional
structure of thesis and supporting detail. I attribute this to two main causes; the acknowledgment and use of personal experience in writing about literature was completely new to the students, and they were all still struggling to some extent with the skills for writing a basic essay. I was largely free from these concerns and thus able to move back and forth between personal experience and textual detail, while students' use of personal experience had a "tagged on" quality that often interrupted their works' flow.

For these reasons, I feel that the process might best be approached in two steps, especially in lower division classes, with personal and emotional response emphasized as accompanying and influencing all intellectual response and subsequent writing about literature. On the students' response statements, they were free to move from one idea to another as their feelings and associations dictated, while on the essays they were restricted to one unifying idea and related associations. I think it would be profitable to work through the response based exercises with reference to a particular text first, allowing time for feedback from both the teacher and fellow students. During this part of the process, students' areas of interest could be identified and discussed, leading them to focus on one relevant area in a standard essay. Working with the process in this way could help students write fuller traditional essays since they would not be forced to include personal associations, but could
concentrate on meaningful ideas and thus be more alert to useful textual details. I emphasize that this process should be presented as a unity, with emotion acknowledged as affecting the generation of theme and its development throughout the work on any given text. This is a possibility for using these methods that my experience with the group suggests as worth exploring.

Analysis of the students' work raises another important issue, the relationship and appropriateness of our traditional grading procedures to a response-based class. Although the students in the group knew I could ask for work to be redone if I did not find their efforts satisfactory, they also knew that to do so would in some way negate the emphasis on fresh response. I do not think they performed as diligently as they would have had they known a grade would be assigned. I agree with Bleich that there is an internal motivation to interpret experience, but this motivation varies widely with regard to the purely verbal experience we present to students in the English classroom. Some combination of increased internal motivation by using response techniques and the external motivation of grades seems appropriate and capable of complimentary application.

Grades for response statements must of necessity be given with consideration to both the response's relevance to the text and to fullness of treatment. The group members overall did a good job in regard to the texts, mentioning specific
lines of poetry or sections of stories that elicited certain feelings and associations, so that they were clearly responding to specific texts and not simply emoting. When a student wrote a lengthy association to one particular part of a text, as A did with sections of "A Road Not Taken," he or she then returned to the next section and moved on with some thoroughness. Evaluating this process is of course subjective on the teacher's part, but no more so than grading a traditional essay.

The following chapter discusses my use of these techniques in regular freshman and sophomore classes. I explore the issues raised by the small group study more fully, and integrate that discussion into my overall conclusions.
Chapter Four
Use of the Method in Regular Classes

In the spring of 1994, I taught two sophomore level literature classes at Angelo State University, both in British Literature from 1800 to the Present. I experimented with the same techniques used in my group study but did not implement them as fully in the regular classes. The class sizes limited the amount and type of discussion; there were thirty-seven students in each section. I also felt that because students had no prior information about the courses except the standard college catalogue description, it would not be fair to teach the classes in a radically altered manner that required sharing personal experiences.

I told students from the first class day that my goal was to help them relate to works in a personal way as a basis for increased literary skills. I said I would share my personal experiences as they related to the works studied and give students the opportunity to do likewise, both orally and in writing, but that it would not be a course requirement.

A great deal of thought and discretion are necessary when using this method, since not all experiences are appropriate
for classroom discussion. I have already mentioned that I do not share personal experiences of a sexual nature, nor do I encourage students to do so. There are other areas of my life that I consider private, and I have not had any problem with inappropriate student comments. Ms. B in the group study revealed an intimate sexual detail, but I did not have this occur in the regular classes. Maintaining an atmosphere that includes high standards for public conduct and avoiding explicit sexual reference provided sufficient guidelines.

I used the "most important word" and "most important passage" exercises as the basis for class discussion with very positive results. Students found justification both "in the works" and in experience for their choices, and the negotiating that went on among us for importance expanded our perceptions of the texts. I remember particularly a student's relating Blake's "Holy Thursday" from the Songs of Innocence in some detail to her own Sundays in a church orphanage when parishioners visited. Some students were visibly uncomfortable with this personal association, since it came near the beginning of the course. I directed the discussion to the way the experience related to the text, pointing out how this student's personal response would necessarily be more intense than my own.

Another memorable incident concerns Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." A number of students asked why the mariner shoots the albatross, and I gave a couple of examples
of my own impulsive acts that had long term and unpleasant results. The particular examples I used were those of taking a job and moving in a hurry because "it sounded good at the time" and going out with my best friend's beau; these are not shocking revelations but common human experiences with which most of the students could relate. I then asked of the class in general, "Are you always aware of your motives when you act? Do you plan all your actions in a rational manner?" A student shared a hunting experience that came closer to the question about the text when he said that he and some friends were out shooting rabbits when he killed a dog. "I just shot it because it moved. . .it ran and I shot at it before I thought," he said. He stated that he has never forgotten how he felt when he saw its collar and realized that it was someone's pet. There was a profound silence in the room as he spoke, and when we came back to the text, it was with a greater appreciation for the irrational impulses that are part of being human.

When we studied Jane Eyre, we had a "most important word" discussion that lasted for two fifty minute class periods; it is a long novel to focus on a single word, and doing so revealed much about our personalities in relation to the work. On the exam for the Victorian Period, I included as an option the essay question, "Discuss three aspects of the novel Jane Eyre that you either like or dislike. Give two examples from the novel of each aspect that you are responding to, and tell
me at least one reason you respond positively or negatively to that aspect." Before the exam, I lectured on aspects of the novel such as plot, character, theme, pace, setting, point of view, etc. This gave me an opportunity to teach traditional ways of approaching a novel while focusing the discussion that followed on how these aspects affect us personally. Pace is a big issue in *Jane Eyre*, because lengthy descriptions suspend plot, and many of my "TV and video game" students became angry with Bronte and wanted to know why "she doesn't get on with it." This produced a discussion of differing literary styles and their relation to culture, while also allowing students to analyze and evaluate their personal reactions. We were comfortable enough by this point for me to tease about their "mental fidgeting," while they expressed amazement that anyone would voluntarily be "bored" by such long books, and we explored how our backgrounds predispose us to enjoy certain styles. Keeping this kind of discussion close to the text was important so that students would not feel that they could simply talk about their likes and dislikes. In the discussion as well as on the exam, students were responsible for going to the novel and pointing out examples where the pace disrupts the plot, or of certain character's attributes that they admired or despised, or of anything else that elicited response.

An issue that arises when I mention staying with the text is that of "literal meaning," a term I used several times in
my qualitative analyses. Since I believe, as Bleich says, that we interpret the symbolic object that is our recreation of the text, what I really intend by the "literal meaning" is the symbolic object that the reader recreates at the most basic level. For example, with reference to Williams's "A Widow's Lament in Springtime," my literal meaning is that the narrator's husband has died after thirty-five years of marriage, and the natural beauty of springtime is not strong enough to alleviate her sorrow. When her son mentions the white flowers at the edge of the woods, the woman thinks not of their beauty but of how she would like to become part of the flowers and the marsh by sinking into them and dying. When one of the students in the study recreated a symbolic object that missed the husband's death, my first impulse was to tell her that she was "wrong." Since words are conventionally determined signs, there was usually a fair amount of agreement about literal meaning in stories, but the increased play of language in poetry caused much student disagreement about what is going on in a poem, particularly in the larger classes where we studied more complicated texts. Many gave up and said "I have no earthly idea what's going on," but I did not let the discussion stop there; they usually saw quite a bit of what's "going on" but were not always willing to make the effort required in verbalizing it. I asked specific questions with reference to the Williams poem like "What's the woman sad about? Why do you think 'lived' is
in the past tense?" I authorized my right and my responsibility to do this by my having a longer association with texts and with techniques for constructing meaning. I was not trying to force all my students to see what I did, or to recreate the same symbolic objects, but I did insist that before they stopped the process of symbolic recreation, they took into account as many textual signs as possible. I emphasize that this was a two-way process; students who were seriously engaged with texts noticed aspects I have overlooked in many readings and offered new ways of combining signs to create meaning. With more complex texts like Eliot's "Proufrock," there was never consensus about "literal meaning," and certainly not about further interpretation, but I was satisfied when students had incorporated many textual details in recreating their symbolic objects. I did not have a recreation so idiosyncratic as to cause me concern, but if I have a student in a future class who insists, for example, that "Proufrock" is about oil field workers' difficulty communicating with their sons, I will require a long private conference to discuss which textual signs have elicited the creation of that symbolic object.

There is a dual consideration here, that of whether the text itself imposes limits on interpretation and whether the teacher as an authority figure should or indeed must impose limits at some point. I do not believe that a text, which is a combination of signs with no will of its own, can impose
limits, since a sign calls to mind referents that are subjective in nature. When I hear or read the sign "Venezuela," for example, I have an immediate mental picture of a mailbox stuffed with catalogues, flyers, and other inconsequential matter. I recognize, of course, that this referent is quite idiosyncratic, particular to my mother's family, of which no member has a clue about its origin. Even as I recognize this, I also know that the influence of this odd referent remains and reverberates at some subconscious level whenever I am presented with the sign. My ability to recognize the peculiarity of my interpretation arises from another aspect of signs, that they are not only subjective but also inter-subjective and, to a large extent, conventionally determined. So while a text containing the word "Venezuela" may not limit my interpretation, my social situation can and will. Were I to encounter the word in a poem, I would likely never mention my peculiar referent to any group or in a written interpretation, since it cannot possibly have meaning for my audience. (I consider this reporting of highly personal references under normal circumstances to be on the level of dream discussion--interesting for the teller but boring for the listener.) However, if the student mentioned above insisted on his interpretation of "Prufrock," and there was some strong emotional charge associated with his interpretation (his father, an oil field worker, took him to foggy coastal areas paved with oyster shells where he tried
unsuccessfully to talk with him) I would not tell the student that the text cannot possibly have the meaning he has generated, for in fact it does mean that to him and at some level will likely always do so. What I would insist upon is that he disclose the subjective link with the signs that is producing such an interpretation, pointing out the numerous signs that he is probably ignoring. Then, acknowledging my authority and responsibility as his teacher, I would explain to him that such a purely idiosyncratic interpretation cannot be negotiated inter-subjectively and therefore is not valid for purposes of the classroom. Since it can have no meaning for anyone else, and will only be of peripheral interest if explained, since its emotional charge applies only to him, it must remain his personal meaning, valid and important for him but not useful in the society of our class. This seems to me an honest approach to limiting interpretation, since it is the way language works in society at large. One may have endless referents for a sign, but it is generally appropriate to share only those that fall within a certain culturally determined range. When I have a fairly quirky interpretations brought up in class discussion, I say something like, "Hmmm, that's interesting. Did anyone else think of that? Well, come by my office and we'll talk about it." If it were included on written work (I did not have this happen), I would insist upon a conference, then after the type of discussion outlined above, ask for a revised interpretation. It is always a
subjective call on the teacher's part as to which associations are too idiosyncratic to have socially negotiable meaning. The point, I believe, is to honor each student's personal experience of the text while insisting upon close, inclusive reading and socially determined limits.

The students, in fact, had to read as much and as closely for the response-based classes as for traditional ones, because they could not explain a response with relation to a text unless they were quite familiar with the text, and students remembered textual details better when they went through this process than when I pointed them out in lecture. Of course, I still had a few students who never participated in discussions and were operating on the "how little can I read and still get by?" approach. I left them alone because I see my role as offering opportunities for relating to texts and for joining discussion, not as forcing students to participate. I do not see this as abandoning my responsibility as teacher/authority any more than I would with students in a traditional class who chose to remain silent. I do give extra points on the students' daily average for class participation, but if a student can get the grade he wants without availing himself of those points, I consider that to be his business. When I use more written exercises based on response that will be graded, as I mention below, lack of response will have a greater effect on grades. It seems to me, however, that a student has a right to
participate in any class to the degree that he determines and
to be responsible for whatever grade that participation may earn.

At the end of the semester, I asked students to fill out an
anonymous evaluation that I generated specifically for these classes in addition to the regular evaluation required by the university. Thirty-eight of sixty-nine respondents reported reading "much more" for this class than they usually read for an English class, while twenty-eight reported reading the same and three said they read less. Fifty-eight students said they would like more practice relating to literary works personally and emotionally as well as intellectually; eleven said they would not. I had two students who reported minor discomfort with the use of personal experience in the class and said they would have preferred a more traditional approach. I would like in the future to let students know how my classes will be conducted before registration, but so far there is no mechanism except word of mouth for doing so. They are allowed to drop and add the first week, but many cannot do so because of scheduling requirements.

Most students performed extremely well on exams, which were a mixture of true/false, identification, quotes, and essay questions. (Most response-based exercises were used as background for class discussion and were not graded. I plan to alter this system in future classes, using "most important word/passage" exercises in lieu of traditional reading
quizzes.) Of the seventy-four students receiving a grade in the two sections, forty-one received A's, twenty-three made B's, and ten made C's. No one failed the course or dropped. The grades were so high that I compared my syllabus and exams with those of two other teachers, and found that my students read as much as the other classes and that tests were comparable in length and difficulty.

I was so encouraged by these results that I incorporated Bleich's specific exercises and general response based techniques into my sophomore literature class in the fall of 1995 (British Literature before 1800), and in my 1302 Composition and Literature classes. I teach the research paper in the 1302 class and use two novels to generate essay topics. It was in one of these 1302 classes that I had the best student example of how personal experience and traditional methods may be integrated. The student wrote her final essay over Steinbeck's In Dubious Battle as a eulogy for her brother who was murdered while attending medical school. She compared that loss of potential to Jim's death, sustaining the comparison through a discussion of Jim's character development and generalizing the discussion beyond the purely personal. (The assignment was to write an essay fully discussing the character development of Jim Nolan.) Fortunately, the essay was solid both in terms of traditional skills and the use of personal experience; I would hate to put a poor grade on one like that.
I continue planning new ways for integrating response based techniques with traditional teaching approaches. Practical application of response theory in regular classes has given me confidence that, as the group study indicates, these techniques help students relate more fully to texts with a corresponding increase in traditional literary skills.
Chapter Five

Conclusions and Implications for Research and Teaching

The group study asked two questions: Can self-involvement with a text be increased by Bleich's teaching method, and if it is increased, what effect will that process have on students' acquisition of literary competence as herein defined? The statistical analysis showed an overall gain in statements coded self-involvement of 7.5%, and a 6.5% increase in associational statements, which also indicate personal involvement. This was a gain of 14%, a statistically significant increase. The qualitative analyses of student work also indicated that Bleich's method works to increase self-involvement.

In answer to the second question, the most significant finding was the increase in students' ability to generate significant themes in relation to texts and to develop those ideas in a unified manner. All six of the students presented significant ideas on Essay Three, in comparison with three after traditional instruction only. Qualitative analysis further demonstrated that the ideas on the final assignment were more significant that those designated as significant on
Essays One and Two. There was a gain in unity and coherence and a reduction in the number of supporting details used. Students summarized less and interpreted more. Interpretational statements rose most significantly on Essay Two, but this is accounted for by the time factor that limited interpretive statements on Essay Three in order to allow for statements of personal experience. All the students wrote better essays by traditional standards at the end of the study. These essays were not only more coherent and unified but also more profound in their insights, which were generalized to common human problems of some significance.

Overall, I conclude that Bleich's method increased self-involvement with a concurrent gain in literary competence. I think a great deal more would have been accomplished had I been able to provide the students with personal feedback concerning areas of importance. Were I to teach a regular college class clearly designated "reader response," required conferences would be an integral part of the course, along with numerous written comments to the students.

I raised the additional questions in the introduction (pp. 46) concerning who might gain from this method and in what way, who might be inhibited by it, and when it might be justifiable to increase a reader's involvement with verbal experience. The students who gained most in terms of both personal insight and literary competence in the small group study were the students designated as C, M, H, and A, who were
most open to sharing personal experience, curious about their own personalities, and dedicated to attending and participating fully. My experience in the regular classroom confirmed these findings. To put it simply, the students who gained were those who chose to become involved.

Students who were intimidated by these techniques were students like K who did not feel comfortable sharing personal experiences either verbally or in writing. These types of students still did well in my classes because I offered traditional questions as options on the exams.

Concerning the question of justification for increasing reader involvement, the results of the study demonstrated that increased involvement helped students acquire traditional skills, skills that will help them succeed both in the academy and in professions. There is the additional justification that many students found the increased involvement pleasurable and profitable in itself, as reported on many of the course evaluations and in conversation. (An interesting possibility for further research would be the connection between articulating one's own textual recreations and independent thinking and problem solving abilities.) Again I emphasize that the final justification rested with individual students, and given the assurance that nothing would be wrested from them against their will, the vast majority of students with whom I worked responded positively. Many of the students told me that they had always felt they were "missing something" or
were "dumb" in English classes, but that they had always wanted to understand literature. As Bleich says, it is our human need to organize experience through language that creates the desire to interpret; most of my students accepted this method as helpful in doing so.

This study emphasizes problems with purely statistical analyses of response that might be considered in further research projects. Some of these problems may be eliminated; larger groups of subjects, for example, would allow dropping a student who is ill rather than making up work under circumstances different from the group. All variables, however, cannot be controlled. How can statistics account for the student's intense reaction to "Holy Thursday" or reflect the effect on a student's essay of a quarrel with a friend immediately before class? I do not think that any method can make all aspects of response "susceptible to systematic comprehension," but response techniques and qualitative analysis seem more likely to produce valuable information for both students and researchers.

I offer a final suggestion concerning who might use these techniques successfully. No one pedagogical method matches all personality types or backgrounds, and I would recommend this method wholeheartedly, but only to those teachers who already have a natural affinity for its goals and procedures. Teachers who are severely uncomfortable with the thought of sharing personal experience in the classroom are obviously not
candidates, nor would reader response be profitable in the hands of teachers who cannot set appropriate limits for what is acceptable in their class discussions. Given these precautions, and considering the positive results of this study, I conclude that, as Faulkner encouraged writing from the heart, I would encourage teachers to give students guidance in reading from the heart.
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APPENDIX

STUDENTS' WORK
Student 1
Questionnaire

1. What is your college major? **Psychology**

2. If you have been employed before, what was the last job you held? **Communications Etc.**

3. What are your job plans for the future? **To work with children.**

4. Do you read unassigned books for pleasure and information? **When I have time**

5. What is the last book you read that was not assigned as part of a class? **Suicide Prevention / Help for those who are troubled**

6. Do you read mostly fiction or non-fiction? **Non-fiction**

7. Do you enjoy analyzing what you read, or does analysis interfere with your pleasure? **I enjoy analyzing.**

8. Do you feel the need to understand or "fix the meaning" of what you read? **Yes**

9. Do you analyze the movies you see, either in your own mind or by discussing them with friends? **Yes**

10. What is your favorite movie? **Sleeping with the Enemy**

11. What is your favorite novel or short story? **The Turn**

12. Do you feel that stories, novels, and movies have one meaning that can be discovered? **No, we feel that some have very different meanings.**
Questionnaire, page 2

13. Do you prefer lecture or discussion courses?  
   Discussion Courses

14. Do you usually participate in classroom discussions?  
   Yes

15. Have you ever attended a support group?  
   No

16. Have you ever been in therapy?  
   No

17. Do you talk easily about your feelings and personal experiences?  
   Yes

18. Do you feel that it is ever appropriate to discuss your feelings and personal experiences in a classroom setting? If you feel that it might be, briefly describe the conditions under which you feel such discussion might be appropriate.

   All feel that discussion of personal experiences and feelings are fine. All am very open to expressing my opinions.
all feel that the story is about a man who sees himself in another person. The waiter (the older man) can sympathize with the drunk because he feels some of the same pain. The drunk is lonely and doesn't want to go home to an empty house, the waiter feels the same. He understands the unhappiness of being lonely. The young waiter is very insensitive to the drunk's feelings, he is more concerned with his own, he wants to get home to his wife. The young waiter has a great deal in life to look forward and can't understand why others are not as content. The remarks of the young waiter represent a very limited knowledge of life and the unhappiness of the world. He makes remarks such as "why would he want to commit suicide, he has plenty of money?". This is a very limited knowledge of suicide, or why someone would consider taking his own life.
Like the drunk, the elder waiter does not want to be in a dark place. The cafe is well light and a pleasant place. He thinks that being in the dark may make it seem hopeless for the two.

The elder waiter understands emotions and wants to help others. In the story he states that he does not like to leave the cafe because someone might need to come in the cafe.

The elder waiter also understands insomnia. He feels that insomnia is possibly the reason for the drunk not wanting to go home.

He states in the story that many suffer from insomnia.

I feel that the story is meant to show the misunderstanding of life and other issues. Take for example the young waiter asking why the drunk tried to commit suicide. People do not take their life for only one reason. The young waiter assumes that the deaf man stays drunk, he is nasty.
Get also represents the fact that people can be very insensitive unless they have been in the situation themselves. Another thing is in people's hectic life, everyone looks out for themselves only. The young waiter shows this by telling the drunk he should have killed himself last week. That way he would not have to be concerned with him. Many people do not want to be burdened with others' problems.
Essay 1

Writer 1

1. I
2. I
3. I
4. I
5. I
6. I
7. I
8. I
9. I
10. I
11. I
12. I
13. I
14. I
15. I
16. I
17. I
18. I
19. I
20. I
21. A
22. A
23. I
24. A
"The Son from America

We feel that the main theme of "The Son from America" is the difference in people's needs. The story supports this idea very well. The son has gone away to achieve a better life for himself. He goes away and leaves his past behind, for 40 years before he returns. His parents have lived in the same community and lived a very simple life for this period.

The son comes home with high hopes of making his parents' life much easier. He brings gifts and has been sending money. He has arranged, back in the states, for money to build a new church and a home for the older citizens. His parents nearest this new church and red fields home by stating that there is no need for them.

The son has been sending money home, all the time that he has been away, in hopes that it would make his parents happy or help them with money for technology."
He cannot understand how his parents would be happy with such a simple, difficult life. Another need is the parents’ religion. Their religion gives them stability and happiness. They have found in religion what the Son is looking for with money.

When the Son went to the Synagogue, the old man that was there stated that “As long as God gives health, one continues to live.” The Son had meant what kind of work did he do, but as long as faith was strong, this was what made their adoring.

To the Son what made a person wealthy or happy was purely materialistic items? This is shown when he brings them gifts, or sent them money. Technology made him happy through ways of simplifying life. The parents’ happiness was being together and having a very simple life, as in reference to the old mother saying that why change if the wick in the
People are different, and no two people's needs are exactly the same. What makes one person happy will not work for another. Some people find happiness through emotional needs; others are not satisfied with only emotions. I feel that this story is a good lesson. You should not try to change other people to suit yourself. What is right for you is not always right for them.

The story tells us that the son tried to change things about his parents' life. He tried to get them to go on vacation, or as simple as helping bake the bread, but his parents saw no need for complicating their life when everything was perfectly fine. Why would they want to try something that wasn't broken?
Essay 2
Writer 1

1. I
2. I
3. I
4. A
5. A
6. I
7. I
8. I
9. I
10. I
11. I
12. I
13. I
14. I
15. I
16. A
17. I
18. I
19. I
20. I
21. I
22. I
23. I
24. I
25. I
26. I
27. I
28. I
29. I
30. I
31. I
32. I
"The widow's lament in Springtime,"

...feel very sympathetic. The author's point is that life goes on, even though your life may seem hopeless. She

...has spent 35 years with her husband who is now gone, she feels a sense of hopelessness. There are many times in my life that things happen that we can not control, that we too have a sense of hopelessness. She tries to look at things that use to make her happy, but it doesn't work. We can relate to having grief that is too big to overcome with a simple thing that use to make me happy. We can feel her sense of loneliness after losing loved ones. She wishes just to "fall into the flowers" and disappear, she has a feeling that this would be happiness. We too have thought before that if you could just go to a beautiful place and forget your grief all could be well with life.

This poem gives me a sad, melancholy feeling. A feeling that life continues, and we do not have much control of what is in the future.
"The Road Not Taken"

The Road Not Taken, others

a great deal of emotion for
me. This poem reminds me
of many times in my own life,
that we had to make a tough
decision. There are so many
times in a person's life that.
you are not certain of which
way to go.

One particular decision in
my life took me, and was
very hard for me. When we
made the decision to marry
my husband. I loved him with
all my heart, but we had
a great deal against us.

We were raised in complete
opposite worlds. There was
trouble with family and friends
thought that our marriage would
not survive. I choose to
follow my true feelings, my
love for my husband. Even
proud that I did because
other people do not always
Know what is right for you. The other emotion that this creates is one of happiness with my religion. You literally have two ways to go. You can choose a Christian life and live a tough life but later benefit. Or, you can choose a life that you have an easier road. All is not easy to lead a good moral life and it is easy to stray. But, aim proud that we choose the religious road even though it may be a bumpy path.

I truly like this poem. You can relate it to a great deal in peoples' lives. You are faced with so many decisions, and probably can always wonder if the grass is greener on the other side.
In the Destruction, al... the most important word is destruction. The gang members seem to be bored so they find destructive things to do. Not only do they involve themselves in physically destructive activities, but also emotionally destructive behaviors.

The story begins with talking about the damage that two bombs have caused. There are nine remaining walls of houses and one is literally leaning to the point of having to be supported. A bomb is a very destructive and permanent thing...

It also touches upon the gang members bouncing the balls on the old man's wall. We believe that this action is destructive because they are doing this to aggravate him. It can also be seen as disrespectful and that they are just looking for something to tear up. A destructive tendency is also seen when Beacnu is in...
The parking lot and kicks the car
that is there. It says that it
only scraped a little bit of
paint off, and no one paid any
attention. This tees us. That tearing
up so harming things is not that
uncommon to these kids. The final
and most destructive act is
when they destroy the old man's
house. They tear up all the papers,
break all the china and glass,
and literally destroy the walls
and everything in the house.

We cannot stand a destructive
nature in any one. We feel that
you should take care of other's
things as if they were your
own. When we read this story
we feel a sense of anger. How
can one could possibly want
to tear things up, just smashes
me. Not only being destructive
physically, they destroyed the
old man's whole life and being.
This house was his life and
all he had, and they took that.
away. There is so much destruction in the world today that this story is not far off of how some view things.
"beige wasteland"

I feel the most important passage of "beige wasteland" is: When Daisy feels Miss Evans that the counselor, Carl, deals with Donny's problems. This is very common when children seem to "go bad". Parents, just like in this story, tend to blame themselves. They also tend to hand over their responsibility to someone else. There are several instances in the story that Daisy is very submissive and did not take control of the situation. For instance, when Donny did not come home from school when he was supposed, she wanted Carl to let her talk to Donny, but Carl told her that there needed to be a conference. Instead of taking charge, Daisy just gave in and went over to Carl's house.

This is a very sad for the parents and everyone dealing with the child. There are so many kids that just seem to waste away, and there is not
Any way to save them all.

Parents try, but sometimes they can be the problem and not even realize it. Darry went over Danny's life in her head trying to decide where she went wrong. Maybe she was too good and too submissive. Maybe the parent did not take enough mature in their own life and discipline this problem of taking responsibility. It comes one else in sein very often and can be very traumatic, especially in a child's life.

Good essay, could you give a personal reason why this idea of parental responsibility is important for you?
The most important theme in "A Rose for Emily" is denial. Denial is a very prominent theme throughout the entire story. Not only does Miss Emily have a problem with denial, it seems that the townspeople also struggle with it. We see that the most important example in the story is when Miss Emily refuses to let them bury her father. Beauty had obviously not set in and she denied that he was even dead in her own mind. Denial is a very common theme in my best friend's life. When my best friend committed suicide last year, it took me several months to even admit that he was dead. Miss Emily also refuses to pay taxes. She refuses to understand that there are new leaders in The town at the present. She tells the townspeople and the sheriff to just ask her father and me.
Others who use to be in charge,
Miss Emily's servant also denies The fact that there is something wrong with Miss Emily. He, in his time, used to live in the house with her, he had to realize that the color was not normal. Yet, he never spoke to anyone about the problems. Because takes its form in silence, in this example. The townpeople deny the fact that the moon is something other than a dead animal. They go to the house like "burglar". They searched time on her property. They believe that her place just needs to be cleaned up, and deny that there is a much more dangerous problem. Last but not least, Miss Emily completely denies reality when she murdered Homer Barron. She purchased gifts for him just before their wedding night. She thinks that since he is dead, he now can not leave her. She continued in just like ace is wise...!
This is a complete and insane denial. You can not make anyone do the things that you wish. She took his freedom away so she could live on as she wished.

e liked this story and can relate to parts of the denial. In time of death, some times reality is very hard to accept. Some people like Miss Emily choose not to accept reality.

Denial is a part of everyday normal life. Even though, I feel that there were some deep seated problems with the main character of this story.
Essay 3

Writer 1

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Evaluation

1. If you had a choice, would you sign up for a literature class in which you knew beforehand that personal experiences and responses would be used in discussing literature (both by the teacher and by the students) or would you prefer a more traditional class? Please briefly explain your choice.

We would choose the class in which the personal response was included. We feel that this is very important and should be incorporated in public education. We feel that this would enhance reading analysis and allow students to get in touch with their feelings.

2. Do you feel that the last essay you wrote in this group was better than the first one? (That is, was it more unified and did it cover more of the story?) Yes, it was much easier to pick out the theme. We feel that my first essay was not that detailed.

3. Did the idea of focusing on what is most important to you in the story help you get started writing the essay, or did it make it more difficult? It is easier when you relate the story to personal experience. You can relate to the character and feel closer about writing. Also, with personal experience there is no wrong or right answer.

Thanks for participating in this study. Good luck in your future endeavors.

Address where I may send results:

Calvert
331 Loch Ness (permanent)
San Angelo, TX 76901
Student 2
Questionnaire

1. What is your college major?
   Marketing

2. If you have been employed before, what was the last job you held? Water-ski instructor/camp counselor at a summer camp.

3. What are your job plans for the future?
   Work for a bodybuilding supplement manufacturer or a home/car stereo manufacturer.

4. Do you read unassigned books for pleasure and information?
   Yes.

5. What is the last book you read that was not assigned as part of a class?
   Eye of the Hunter  Dennis McIlvain

6. Do you read mostly fiction or non-fiction?
   Fiction

7. Do you enjoy analyzing what you read, or does analysis interfere with your pleasure?
   Interference with pleasure

8. Do you feel the need to understand or "fix the meaning" of what you read? For homework, yes.
   For pleasure I just read.

9. Do you analyze the movies you see, either in your own mind or by discussing them with friends?
   Yes

10. What is your favorite movie?
    Terminator  Arnold Schwarzenegger

11. What is your favorite novel or short story?
    The Hobbit  J.R.R. Tolkien

12. Do you feel that stories, novels, and movies have one meaning that can be discovered?
    No
Questionnaire, page 2

13. Do you prefer lecture or discussion courses?  
   Discussion

14. Do you usually participate in classroom discussions?  
   Yes, very much so.

15. Have you ever attended a support group?  
   No

16. Have you ever been in therapy?  
   No

17. Do you talk easily about your feelings and personal experiences?  
   Yes

18. Do you feel that it is ever appropriate to discuss your feelings and personal experiences in a classroom setting?  
   If you feel that it might be, briefly describe the conditions under which you feel such discussion might be appropriate.

   Yes, I will usually talk about anything that does not reflect poorly on me, so long as I have a willing audience. I like a setting where laughter is common.
I think this story is about the unhurried UW waiter. He is in a hurry, and he too one of his insecurities is fear of the dark. That is why he wants to be in a well-lighted place. He is very particular about neat/clean, as demonstrated by his complaint that the bar is unpainted.

The UW is basically a meek guy, because he does not want to leave work to go enjoy whatever leisure activities he might enjoy.

The old man is merely a focal point for the waiters' conversation. The married waiter represents a person who works because a job is necessary to live. He would probably rather watch sports and just have fun. The UW is working because it's the right thing to do.

Although the late night cafe is an unusual job, it is a good one for him because of his work ethic. His job makes him feel that he is doing something important and useful.
to close up because there may be someone who needs the cafe. 12

The VW cleanliness is further exemplified by two of the latter sentences. He disliked bare and lodegas. A clean, well-lighted cafe was a very different thing. 13

The VW wants to hang around his cafe late into the night in hopes of someone coming in needing help. Off the VW successfully helped the patron to feel better and some big problems the VW's day will have been made. 15
Essay 1

Writer 2

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The main idea of The Son from America is to use a cliché, "money can't buy happiness." More specifically, it relates to other sayings like "ignorance is bliss" and "what you don't know can't hurt you." 12

Ben and Bertha live a simple, traditional life. They probably quite similar to many of their ancestors. 13 They have a half acre of field, a cow, a goat, and chickens. 14 Their son sends them money, but they don't spend any. 15

"What for?" The garden, the cow, and the goat provided most of their needs. Besides Bertha sold chickens and eggs, and farm these there was enough to buy flour for bread." 16

Obviously all of their worldly needs are being met, and material wants we consider important are irrelevant to the. They used a wick in a dish of oil for light, so apparently they had no electricity. In place of materialism, they had a strong religion, and marriage to satisfy them. 17
The village had become a place with few young people. Like the son, the young are leaving to find adventure and make their fortune in other places. Samuel (the son) left for America when he was 15 and returned 40 years later. He says he had been a laborer for many years in New York. In New York he surely saw all manner of worldly devices. He also saw human suffering such as orphans, homeless people, and minors.

Samuel returns to the village with presents, a checkbook, and letters of credit. All is his own money as well as funds from the Jewish Society in New York. After his exposure, Samuel begins to see the village as needing more. He wants to build a larger synagogue or a home for old people. "But this village in the hinterland needed nothing."

Samuel sees money as the answer to all problems, whereas the villagers use the tools of love and sharing to solve problems. Since the villages have no serious problems in a more social structure
arise to meet their needs. Therefore, they continue to live their traditional existence.
Essay 2

Writer 2

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22. I
In the first 5 lines I think of post memories. Something reminds the person of a memory and gives her discomfort.
1 and 2 make me think of long-term commitment
9 - 19 make me think of being so distracted that I would not notice other things.
The rest of the poem make me think of utter despair. But if you’re going to cry at least go how you want.
It made me think of suicide.

I have not had a lot of experience with death. This poem did not have much personal significance to me.
I tried my best, but I’m not real emotional.

I felt sorry for the woman, but I also thought - Get a hold on yourself, suck it up.
B.M.

We is myself, my four older Cousin,
and my three year younger Cousin. They were brothers.

The Meal

This poem makes me think of being all dressed up, having to be very polite,
and acting it.

It makes me think of Christmas Dinner when we had to wait until all the
adults are finished eating to open our presents.
I am out of the house now, but
when I was a kid I was sitting with
impatience. We had on very shoes
that were smooth on
bottom instead of "tennis shoes" with
good "grip." Nerdy shirts and pants
of odd colors and materials instead
of blue jeans and T-shirts.

We would eat very quickly so
we could open our presents. But we
still had to wait for the adults to
finish. We would go (march) outside
to run around) and
purposefully get our clothes dirty to
get with our money for
dressing up like that. We never
got in trouble because it was Christmas
and they did not want to make a scene
on spoil our happiness.

Eventually we opened the presents
and settled down.
The single most important word to me is "divine." It is only printed on page 51 in its form "deviant," but the entire story is about deviant behavior.

First example is just wanting to destroy this house. That is cruel and odd.

Second, they try to say they are not going to steal anything. Why not have done personal gain?

Third, to burn the money. What an idiot.

Fourth, locking up the old man. The entire plot.

The entire story is about deviant behavior, but the above stand out. Something I thought about was why all the attention to small things like cutting electrical wire and plates cracking. If you make the walls fall, most everything else will be destroyed.
I also wonder why the boys did not keep money or other valuables. Also, one of the boys says, "I've never heard of going to prison for breaking things." They should go to prison.

The story appealed to me because I like being a destructor. I would enjoy tearing down houses, but I never will because I know it is wrong, and fear legal consequences.

When I was a child I often tore up toys when they no longer worked.

When I was 14 I tore up my first bicycle. It was very small, had been left in the weather and rusted, and I deemed it useless. My 11-year-old cousin, Clint, and I took a heavy steel pipe and beat on it until it broke in half. We liked it.
When my mom found out
she was upset and said she
was saving it for her grandchildren. She also said it had
sentimental value to her.
I think that is a crack
of fee because for 3 years
it had been left to rust in
the barn behind our barn. Her
great-grandchildren would have scoffed
at that like, anyway, she
convinces my dad that it was
a bad thing, and they made
me pay them $15.00.

My parents have been very
generous to me, and I have
been fortunate, but I still
think my mom should give
me $15 and say, "You know,
that like was worthless."

The point is, I would like
to destroy something, but I limit
it to things with no value,
therefore I have no bad
conscience about it.
These days destroyed something valuable, go out and judge the deed as being bad.
To me the most important phrase is on page 514. "He had worn that look when he was small, denying some petty misdeed with the evidence plain as day all around him."

Parts of this story really make you feel like Tony is the best victim and the system is somehow flawed. Cal is a very smooth talker. However once you start asking questions his logic is refuted.

When Daisy starts asking, "What was the boy's name?" and "How did the boy get your combination in the first place?"
then the school was conspiring against Tony.

Cal is a con-man with a lot of charm. Cal has no real training in degree. He's just cool, someone kids can relate to. That is OK. Even good, but Cal does not take the next step and it teach the kids how to get better. He just makes excuse for them and himself.

The original psychologist said Tony had no serious emotional problems. Don Cal claims he made no headway with Tony because Tony was emotionally disturbed. ""More excuses!""
The truth is, Tommy is a moron. He needed to be butt kicked and told to get tough and work. (sounds like the Protestant ethic, right.)

Yes, which apparently we both have—could you give a reason from personal experience or background for why you have this ethic? I can guess and from class discussion I think I know, but it would strengthen the essay.
I hate this story! It is predictable, sickening, and has huge gaps in logic. It made me sick to my stomach.

...I think the most important theme is control. More specifically, an attempt to gain too much control, especially over things which are impossible to control. Namely, the human spirit, love, and death.

1st example: Control of the Negro. Miss Emily obviously has Tom in the palm of her hand. He probably thinks he has it pretty good considering he is black, so he is probably willing to be controlled.

2nd ex. Control of town citizens. Miss Emily takes down the Mayor and Alderman and the druggist. The scene with the druggist most impressed me. She gains their respect but loses their love. I consider acceptable action, but a lonely one.
3rd ex. - Control of Homer (excluding 1/5th)

Sometimes I think Emily did love Homer, and killed him, rather than facing the thought of leaving her. From a different point of view, I think Emily may not have loved Homer deeply, but she was grasping for a chance to get back into mainstream life. If Homer married her, she is respectable. If Homer leaves she is disgrace in the eyes of the town, which would have her control over them. When Homer says he is leaving her, perhaps she kills him to prevent him from bragging about his sexual exploits. Alas, the 2nd lies to keep his liars so nicely preserved. I don't know, she is a lovesick - guivy and thinks she can bring him back to life.

With love - death.
Emily even tries to deny death by saying Homer out wisely.
The only thing I can think of from precedent opinions are the times of have been described and gone through these phases. I'm not thinking of anyone in particular (or at least, I can't think of anyone). What do you mean by a 'free man'? What does that mean in your opinion? I don't think they need help, and I don't think they need protection.
Essay 3

Writer 2

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27. LJ
28. LJ
29. LJ
Evaluation

1. If you had a choice, would you sign up for a literature class in which you knew beforehand that personal experiences and responses would be used in discussing literature (both by the teacher and by the students) or would you prefer a more traditional class? Please briefly explain your choice.

I would sign up for a personal experience class because I love class discussion. Also, like all people, I am curious about other people's experiences and ideas.

2. Do you feel that the last essay you wrote in this group was better than the first one? (That is, was it more unified and did it cover more of the story?)

I would not say my essay was better when looked at in traditional English grading terms. I would say it was more "from the heart" and more interesting to read.

3. Did the idea of focusing on what is most important to you in the story help you get started writing the essay, or did it make it more difficult?

Much easier. It is always easier to talk about yourself than to write to someone else. That transfers into the writing.

THANKS FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY. GOOD LUCK IN YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVORS.

Address where I may send results:

Brigit Marsh
251 Green Oak Dr.
Early, TX 76801
Student 3
Questionnaire

1. What is your college major? 
   Early Childhood

2. If you have been employed before, what was the last job you held? 
   Secretary for Driver's Education at Central High School.

3. What are your job plans for the future? 
   Teach 2nd grade or open a daycare center

4. Do you read unassigned books for pleasure and information? 
   Very seldom

5. What is the last book you read that was not assigned as part of a class? 
   A Time to Kill by John Grisham

6. Do you read mostly fiction or non-fiction? 
   Fiction

7. Do you enjoy analyzing what you read, or does analysis interfere with your pleasure? 
   Often I find myself analyzing what I read, but I would prefer not to.

8. Do you feel the need to understand or "fix the meaning" of what you read? 
   Not always. However, most of the time I feel it's necessary.

9. Do you analyze the movies you see, either in your own mind or by discussing them with friends? 
   Sometimes when there is something symbolic, I will mention it either to myself or a friend.

10. What is your favorite movie? 
    A Perfect World

11. What is your favorite novel or short story? 
    A Time to Kill

12. Do you feel that stories, novels, and movies have one meaning that can be discovered? I think everyone can find their own meanings.
13. Do you prefer lecture or discussion courses?  
    I prefer discussion courses.

14. Do you usually participate in classroom discussions?  
    It depends on the class and instructor.

15. Have you ever attended a support group?  
    No

16. Have you ever been in therapy?  
    No

17. Do you talk easily about your feelings and personal experiences? Only around people I am close to.

18. Do you feel that it is ever appropriate to discuss your feelings and personal experiences in a classroom setting? If you feel that it might be, briefly describe the conditions under which you feel such discussion might be appropriate.  
    I feel personal experiences should be shared. To me they are more helpful and interesting than theory.
The story to me is about two men who are lonely and one man who is not. The waiter and the old deaf man are parallels. Both of them are lonely, insomniacs, and both very much need the cafe. The waiter shows this by his insistence on keeping the cafe light and clean! Because the cafe is the only thing worth anything in his life. He takes pride in the fact it is not a run down bar. I think the fact he insists upon it being light has to do with him being an insomniac and sleeping through the real light of the day.

For the old deaf man, because he is deaf, he waits on his right for the beauty in life. To him, besides his niece, are his hasics the cafe. He spends his time there drinking brandy, and watching the
The younger waiter is incapable of understanding the two men's lives. Because he has a family at home who loves him, he is unaware how lonely it can be to be all alone in the world. He is very insensitive to the old man on several occasions. One such occasion is when he says he should have killed himself. Another was the way he stood upon him and asked him to leave. And another statement which showed the young waiter's understanding was when the way he kept mentioning money and how he should be happy with it. He doesn't understand that money alone can not make you happy.

Though the young waiter is very different, the old man and the older waiter
have many similarities
being age, loneliness,
and possibly insomnia.
Essay 1

Writer 3

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The theme in *The Son from Africa* has to do with tradition versus change. The son in the story represents this change when the parents represent tradition.

Samuel, since he was young and moved to America, has been dealing with change constantly. Just moving from one place to another puts one through many emotional experiences. America is constantly growing and progressing, and to keep up with this way of life one must also grow and progress. One way in which Samuel shows this change is through his deep concern with money. He is very concerned with how much his parents have for he feels in order to be happy, one must have material things. This is displayed by his frequent money orders sent to his parents. The world Samuel is living in makes it hard to realize that not everyone needs all of the finest
things in life. The fact that he sends the money instead of making more contacts to his parents tells me that money has become more important than loved ones. Samuel continues to try to persuade his family and the town to allow them to improve their living conditions and he is confused and a little upset when everyone refused. Another part of Samuel which has changed is his religion. In all the chaos in the United States, he has lost hold of his faith, which is what held his parents together.

Berd and Berloha are very religious and traditional people. In fact, the whole town of Zentshin is built around religion. Religion and tradition means stability and it is all they know. There are several examples of their strong religious values. One is the
Many times the couple burst into religious verses. Observe, they are well practiced and well known! Brel and Brelcha do not want for anything extra. All they need is one another, food, and shelter. This is proven by the simple attire of Brel as well as the one room house in which they live. The couple have put all the money from their son away on a boat. They obviously do not need it. Brelcha's traditional beliefs are shown when Brel Samuel tries to help her cook a meal. In America this is common, however in Lentshin it was unheard of. Brelcha was used to only the women cutting the meals. That is the way it always had been there. That is all she was used to.
The son at the end recognized the good in both change and tradition. He realized that a balance is needed not to lose yourself in the hustle of the changing world around you. He also learned a lesson on happiness: you don't necessarily need a lot of money or possessions to achieve it. The parents and people of the village proved that important message to him.
Essay 2

Writer 3

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27. LJ
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The feeling that comes over me in the first 4 lines is one of concern and sympathy. Though I am unaware of the reason the speaker is upset, I am still concerned. The next few lines give me a sense of beauty. However, there is still a hint of concern and uncertainty. What is yet to come. After completing the poem, I have a feeling of sympathy for the speaker. I am still unaware of the reason for the sadness, but it also makes me sad. The speaker seems to feel that there is no joy left in the world, and even in the beauty he/she finds pain. Overall, my feeling throughout was one of hopelessness and sympathy combined. The poem also struck up my curiosity for the speaker's reasons behind the speaker's view.
The first two lines in "She Had Not Taken" remind me of a choice I made two years ago when I moved to California to live with my best friend. I stayed there a year but decided I would be better off to move back to Texas. Though I was not happy in California, it was difficult for me to return to Texas. I almost had a feeling that which I had failed or could not make it on my own. Often I wonder how things would have been if I would have stayed.

She wrote "And looked down on me far as I could" brings back memories of my grandparents' home. When I was young, they owned many acres around their home, there were no other houses in sight. They had stables behind the house where I spent much of my time and I would just walk around by myself and feel so safe and peaceful. She second stanza does not bring me specific moment to mind though it brings several. I recall all 3 the times I had wished I would have done something else after the fact.
"And with that morning equally clay in leaves no step..."

This reminds me of yard cleanup day when I was in elementary school. Everyone in the neighborhood would rake, mow, and clean up their yard. Everyone and my friends would lend a hand in a small way.

"I doubted if I should ever come back..."

My most pleasant memories were the ones I had when I lived in Germany. I had so many good friends and times and then I wish that I could have those things back though I know it can never be the same. Even the friends in which I have kept in touch with, there is something different there, a change. And sad as it is, I know that it will never be the same.

The last stanza reminds me of the choice I made in my old college degree. I had to choose between money and happiness. I realize that many people
would rather have the money however, I just would not have been satisfied. I think in my life as well as all speakers this choice will make "all the difference".
In my opinion, the most important word in "The Destructors" is the word destroy. This word is used throughout the story in different forms. The first time the word was mentioned was when I said, "We'll destroy it." Here Mr. is speaking of Old Man's old house. The boy had just come from the house and learned that the old man would be away. I realize that young people often do things without thinking, however, I can never remember planning something as damaging as this. This statement comes from a boy who has lived through a war, and I see his anger coming to surface in this sentence and thought.

The second sentence which the word is used is when I am speaking to how others will hear of what the gang has done. "Even the grown-up gangs... would hear with respect of how Old Man's house had been destroyed." This sentence furthers my idea of the damage that war causes. In a war, the people who
have conquered all the
winners. I feel the boys are
too young and innocent to be
able to distinguish the difference
between war and what
they do. This sentence is also
ture today, with all of the
gangs trying to outdo
one another with fear.

"Not merely serious
destruction started". On the
second day there were a
couple of boys who did not
show up. I think for them, the
gun was over, it was only
slightly serenely by "T. T.
Wanted to completely
demolish the house, leaving
nothing standing. This is
where a childhood praxe turns
dangerous. I. is so cruel
within the destruction it is
a little bit scary. It reminds
me of a person who is
completely out of control.

The final quote is "He did not
want to sell his house, which
stood between bomb-sites, saved so
marvelously, as he believed,
from destruction". Old Misery
is now coming home to be
ruined home. This quote is
Because the old house has lasted through war and the enmities, all this time. The house is finally ruined not by enemies, but by young children who play in the car-park.

This story was depressing to me. There is too much destruction in this world in which adults cause, and to see children creating such a mess is very upsetting.
I believe the most important passage in "Teenage Wasteland" is, 'At home, Manny didn't act much differently. He still seemed to have a low opinion of his parents. But Daisey supposed that was an unavoidable part of being fifteen. He said to him, his parents were too "controlling" - a word that made Daisey give him a sudden look. He said they acted like wardens. On weekends, they enforced a curfew. And any time he went to a party, they always telephoned first to see if adults would be supervising. 'For God's sake!' he said. "Don't you trust me?" I believe that this passage is important because, to me, it sums up the whole story.
I think that most children at the age of fifteen and throughout their teenage years believe that their parents are unfair and too controlling. I feel it is a natural stage to go through. I also believe that most parents become worried about their children's activities and new found attitudes at this time. I do understand the concern; however, I feel that Daisy went a little bit too far in this case. I think at this time in a person's life he needs someone to remain constant. The continuous moving from therapist to therapist is not good for a child.
The word "controlling" is used throughout the story. Nancy believes her parents are too controlling. Cal believed his wife was too controlling, and Cal asks Daisy to not be so controlling. What is really good need there is some control and consequence. I feel Daisy needs to quit wishing she had done things differently and simply focus on her children in the present. Daisy would be better off if she had not let the doctors, teachers, and tutors influence her decisions on how to handle her son. If Nancy cannot see confidence and strength in her parents, how can she be expected to show it in herself.
Throughout my life I have dealt with the deaths of several friends my age. These deaths, as with most, were very shocking. The feelings that accompanied the deaths were many, with the first being denial. It was difficult to believe that these people would never be seen on this earth again, and I did not want to believe this. However, this denial soon passes and the normal person turns back to reality. One exception to this is prevalent in William Faulknrs "A Rose For Emily". Miss Emily Grierson is a women who lives in constant denial. This denial comes to surface with the death of her father, with the refusal of paying taxes, with the smell from her home, and with the murder of Homer Barron.

The one person who was important in Miss Emily’s life was her father. He controlled everything in her life and refused to allow her to date. Because of this, when her father died, she had no one left. At the time of her fathers death, at first, Emily refused to allow him to be buried. I do not believe that Emily had any idea of her dads death. Why would she want to bury someone whom she believed to be still living. But, because of the town consistency, Emily finally gave in to the burial of her father. I feel it was at the time of her fathers death when Miss Emily completely lost all track of what is real and what is not. Her father was the only person in her life and now he is gone, and with him went Miss Emily’s sense of reality.

Another example of Miss Emily Grierson’s denial is the episode with the property taxes. Many years before, Emily’s father had supposedly lent money to the town, and as a method of repayment, colonel Sartoris did not make the Griersons pay...
property taxes. Now, a new law was in charge. When the Sherriffs' office sent the tax notice to Miss Emily to pay, she simply returned it without it being completed or paid. The law even went as far as sending a deputation to her door to collect the taxes, Miss Emily refused once again repeating that she had no taxes in Jefferson. Miss Emily then asked the men to leave and she did not end up paying the taxes after all.

There once developed a smell around Miss Emily's house, a smell so strong that it sent the neighbors over to investigate. The neighbors broke into the cellar and scattered lime around on the ground. The townspeople claim that the smell went away quickly after that. The smell was obviously a very strong one, if the whole town could smell it. Miss Emily must have been able to smell this scent as well. However, she did nothing to get rid of it which means she denied the smell existed and became used to it.

The smell emerging out of Miss Emily's home, no doubt comes from the corpse of Homer Barron. Emily kills him with arsenic and locks him in an upstairs room. Miss Emily probably killed Homer because he was going to leave her. Miss Emily refused to let the only person in her life get away. After his death Emily continued to sleep with Homer which tells me that she denied the fact that Homer was actually dead.

By denying the death of her father, the paying of property tax, the smell in her home, and the murder of Homer it is obvious to see that Miss Emily is living a life of illusions. However, it is not only Miss Emily who is living this way, it is the whole town, they allow this way of life to exist. The entire town was
able to smell the terrible scent of Homer's corpse yet they made themselves believe it disappeared with the use of lime. The town, as well, let Emily get away with not paying taxes. I feel that some of Miss Emily's behavior could have been prevented if the town showed a little interest in her as a person and not as simply a main attraction.
Essay 3
Writer 3

1. I
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3. I
4. I
5. I
6. A
7. SI
8. N
9. I
10. I
11. I
12. I
13. I
14. I
15. I
16. I
17. I
18. I
19. I
20. I
21. I
22. I
23. P
24. I
25. SI
26. A
27. A
28. A
29. I
Evaluation

I. If you had a choice, would you sign up for a literature class in which you knew beforehand that personal experiences and responses would be used in discussing literature (both by the teacher and by the students) or would you prefer a more traditional class? Please briefly explain your choice.

I would much rather prefer a class in which my personal experiences and those of my other classmates would be used in discussing literature. I feel it is easier to relate to something heard from someone present than to just read it.

2. Do you feel that the last essay you wrote in this group was better than the first one? (that is, was it more unified and did it cover more of the story?)

I feel my last essay is a much better essay than my first. It was easier to write about something I could relate.

3. Did the idea of focusing on what is most important to you in the story help you get started writing the essay, or did it make it more difficult?

It made the writing come a lot easier. When I feel focused on how I feel in a situation it helps me understand the situation.

THANKS FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY. GOOD LUCK IN YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVORS.

Address where I may send results:

Debbie Naga
48 Loch Lomond
San Angelo, TX 76901
Student 4
Questionnaire

1. What is your college major?
   Mathematics & business.

2. If you have been employed before, what was the last job you held?
   Part-time restaurant, babys', to earn money for college.

3. What are your job plans for the future?
   I plan to go into business for myself.

4. Do you read unassigned books for pleasure and information?
   Yes.

5. What is the last book you read that was not assigned as part of a class?
   "The First Fall," by Anne McCaffrey.

6. Do you read mostly fiction or non-fiction?
   Fiction.

7. Do you enjoy analyzing what you read, or does analysis interfere with your pleasure?
   Some analysis is fine, but reading a book and trying to "solve" it is too much.

8. Do you feel the need to understand or "fix the meaning" of what you read?
   Yes.

9. Do you analyze the movies you see, either in your own mind or by discussing them with friends?
   Yes.

10. What is your favorite movie?
    "The Sound of Music."

11. What is your favorite novel or short story?
    "The Shining."

12. Do you feel that stories, novels, and movies have one meaning that can be discovered?
    Yes.
13. Do you prefer lecture or discussion courses?  
   (a) more true generally, but (b) more often.
14. Do you usually participate in classroom discussions?
   Yes, I definitely have something to say.
15. Have you ever attended a support group?
   Yes.
16. Have you ever been in therapy?
   Yes.
17. Do you talk easily about your feelings and personal experiences?
   It depends on the experience, but I do talk easily about my feelings.
18. Do you feel that it is ever appropriate to discuss your feelings and personal experiences in a classroom setting?
   If you feel that it might be, briefly describe the conditions under which you feel such discussion might be appropriate.
   Yes, if, for instance, the experience causes you to feel a certain way. Such as if AIDS or depression is being discussed and you see it as part of your own experience.
The Meaning of A Clean, Well-Lighted Place

The story, A Clean, Well-Lighted Place, by Ernest Hemingway, has several possible meanings. The one which will be discussed in this essay is his oblique references to the impatience of youth and the dignity of old age.

Hemingway appears to bring to full realization the old adage, "the older I get, the smarter my elders become." He shows in the first part of the story how the hurried waiter, the younger one, feels that the old man has everything and nothing could possibly be wrong, since the old man has money! This is seen when the younger waiter says that the old man tried to commit suicide over "nothing!"

When the older waiter asked him how he knew it was over nothing, he replied, "He has plenty of money," "As if money never caused problems!!!"

Hemingway also shows the cruelty of youth, especially when the youthful waiter tells the old man that he should have killed himself last week, this
Cruelty is even more recognizable when the reader realizes that the old man is deaf. Cruelty of youth towards the older generation is shown when the youth says that he wouldn't want to be that old. "An old man is a nasty thing."  

The reader sees the dignity of old age through the eyes of the older waiter, who is apparently somewhat older than the younger waiter, but not over the hill! This can be seen when the older waiter tells his younger counterpart, "You have youth, confidence, and a job. You have everything." When he is asked about what he lacks, he replies, "Everything but work." The old man's dignity is shown when the waiter points out that even though the old man is drunk, "he drinks without spilling". As the waiter watches him go down the street, the reader receives an image in his mind of "a very old man walking unsteadily, but with dignity."  

While this is a subtheme at best, it is a very major part of the story if it is being looked at from an emotional
point of view! The story can make the reader disgusted at the younger waiter, feel sorry for the old man and applaud the older waiter. If the reader was to read this story without allowing his/her emotions to become involved, the story's ending would be confusing for it does not quite fit in with the rest of the story.
Essay 1

Writer 4

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16. I
17. SI
18. LJ
What do you think is the meaning of the story "The Son from America" by Singer? Please support your answer with as many details from the story as possible.
"The Son from America"

The meaning or root idea of this story is how society changes our perceptions and values! The son has left a peaceful village and his parents to live in America. The village society changed little between the time he left and when he returned, but over the years he had changed. A few, he retained a bare shred of his religion compared to his parents, this is illustrated when he wants to smoke a cigar, but remembered it was forbidden on Sabbath. Another example is how he asked the old man if he made a living, and the old man replied, "If God gives health, one keeps on living." If he had retained his religion he would have had this same outlook. However, his religion is a small part of the differences which occurred. The main difference was the attitude towards money. When the son went to America, God was no longer the most important part of his life, money had. This is illustrated by his spending money to his parents and them not spending it. He could
not understand why they did not spend it until the end of the story. This realization is shown in the last paragraph when he states, "He brought not only his own money, but funds from the Lentschim Society in New York, which had organized a ball for the benefit of the village." But this village in the hinterland needed nothing. But this point is also illustrated when Belcho (his mother) begins to chant:

"The holy sheep
In mercy keeps,
In Torah and good deeds,
Provide for all their needs,
Shoes, clothes, and bread
And the Messiah's tread."

Illustrating that in her society God is the one they bow to, while in the son's society money is what he bows down to, and thus rules him.
Essay 2

Writer 4

1. I
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15. I
After reading "The Bickerdyke's Lament in Springtime," I felt empathetic with the characters. I felt sadness and sorrow, for I had experienced the same emotions and circumstances through my grandmother when my grandfather died. There is an ironic twist to the loss of her husband during the spring, apparently her favorite season. This poem is realistic in both tone and feelings and allows the reader, for a moment, to feel loss and sorrow. After reading the poem, analyzing it, I can honestly say that I liked it. I felt good after reading the poem, safe in the knowledge that I had not experienced this personally, but with a tinge of guilt, knowing that I and many others will come to mine and mine one day.
"The Road Not Taken"

"Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference."
This part of the poem makes me reflect on
tenderness of walking through the
woods with my sister and cousin. We
would go to my grandmother's in East-end
for spring break when we were younger and
go for "walks." These walks generally went
down the beaten path and we felt like
exploring in a brand new world.

"And both that morning equally lay,
In leaves no step had trodden black."

This image brought to my mind is that of
the winters in Virginia, when it would snow,
and look out my window to see a thick,
blanket of snow, untouched snow, it always
seemed so magical, I loved it.

"Oh, I kept the fest for another day!
Yet knowing how, way leads to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

But now these lines of The Waste Land
are so real to me, the responsibilities and worries
I have thought about, you have to work
care, love the other road. I suppose you can't
lose your virginity and know, with
that you should go back to you and our
situation to prepare it, ready yourself to want
for something, I see that it's good from
someone's point of view.
"It shall be telling this with a high
some where ages hence and ages since:
They would have given us a man who -
- would the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference."

Returning to the original choices of college
I am glad that I chose
Princeton State University, thus taking the
road less traveled by" (my family). It
also allowed me to be musical, not an
extension of my family. I enjoy it here,
and I have met some of the best people.
In the world here, especially my friends.
I would not have met any of them had
in Texas in Odessa and at Texas Tech; I was
not what would have happened. By
making that choice I have become myself,
and instead of what everyone wants
for themselves.)
"The Destructors"

"Class" is the most important word to me... in The Destructors. Class is the only true distinction between Trevor and the rest of the gang. In the beginning of the story Trevor is called T. because "otherwise they had no excuse not to laugh at him." Trevor's parents are mentioned as a further distinction between the classes, especially his mother who considered herself better than the neighbors. This shows how his family life was more concealed than the rest of the gang. But the most distinctive thing was his "classy" attitude for T. would "ring the bell" to enter Old Misery's rather than breaking in. He even stated that it was "a beautiful house." A statement which worried Blackie, till T. suggested they destroy it. But perhaps the most distinctive and classic difference between them was illustrated when T. said he'd like "to see Old Misery's face when we are through." and Blackie asked if T. hated him. T.'s reply was, "Of course I don't hate him, there'd be no fun if I hated him." This
showed me that he did not respond on an emotional level with the rest of the gang but rather on an intellectual level. A class difference found even today.


"Teenage Wasteland"

"Mrs. Coble," the tutor said, "I think this kid is hurting. You know? Here's a serious, sensitive kid, telling you he'd like to take on some grown up challenges, and you're giving him the message that he can't be trusted. Don't you understand how that hurts?"

This passage is the most outstanding to me. It shows the basic message of this story, how easily parents can be manipulated. Mrs. Coble is concerned for her son's schooling and safety but is psychologically bullied into believing that his failures are entirely to her fault and that nothing is his fault. This is something which occurs daily in almost every teenage home. I know close told my mom that if they understood me better or trusted me more it would not seem so bad to them, but my mom was smart enough not to fall for these guilt complexes. However, Mrs. Coble feels herself to be guilty and therefore she, in the end, blames herself for her son's run away.
One of the most outstanding themes of "A Rose for Emily" was generational differences. The most specific of these is the different views shown towards Miss Emily. Colonel Sartorius, who was mayor when her father died, remitted her taxes. The remission was claimed for a supposed loan her father had made to the town and chose to dispose of the debt that way, but in reality Col. Sartorius felt that a lady should not be evicted from her home due to lack of tax payments. This was allowed for one generation, but when the next generation came to power, they did not like the arrangement, they had no compunction against evicting a lady.

A less obvious example is the issue of the smell and the way it was handled. During the meeting of the Board of Aldermen, a member of the younger generation started to suggest that they send her notice of the smell when she was intercepted by Judge Stevens saying, "Dammit, sir, will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?" Proof that yet again gallantry has not passed down through the
generations, at least not in the same strength. 

When her father died, she refused to believe that he had died for 3 days, then she broke down and allowed him to be buried. If this had occurred today, our society would have called her crazy! However, the other ladies in her society believed that she had to do it. When her sweetheart mysteriously disappeared, she had gone to the druggist and asked for poison! The druggist asked her what it was for, and she merely demanded that she wanted some. He eventually gave in to her, as others had and sent the poison to her. This showed the overwhelmingly powerful personality she possessed, which caused her to be treated as she was.

A powerful personality, such as Miss Emily's, is a power to be reckoned with. One of my friends, Sandra, has this same type of personality! She will always get her way, usually by a simple demand and haughty stance. But her personality is also tempered by the way that her friends treat her when they are tired of her attitude. I believe that if Miss Emily had had friends, she would have a better personality and
S. B.

still have gotten away with what she did before she died.
Essay 3

Writer 4

1. A
2. A
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7. A
8. A
9. A
10. I
11. I
12. I
13. I
14. I
15. I
16. A
17. A
18. A
19. A
20. A
Evaluation

1. If you had a choice, would you sign up for a literature class in which you knew beforehand that personal experiences and responses would be used in discussing literature (both by the teacher and by the students) or would you prefer a more traditional class? Please briefly explain your choice.

   Yes, I would sign up for the class because it would be easier to remember things if they were put in a personal perspective.

2. Do you feel that the last essay you wrote in this group was better than the first one? (That is, was it more unified and did it cover more of the story?)

   Yes, in a way. It allowed me to explore a theme which I normally would not, one that was not a generalilty (i.e. man vs. man, etc.)

3. Did the idea of focusing on what is most important to you in the story help you get started writing the essay, or did it make it more difficult?

   Yes, because by relating it to me and what I believed was easier than trying to figure out what the teacher believed.

THANKS FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY. GOOD LUCK IN YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVORS.

Address where I may send results:

   September Barrett
   P.O. Box 1509
   Odessa, Texas 79760
Student 5
Questionnaire

1. What is your college major?  [Marketing]

2. If you have been employed before, what was the last job you held?  [Duff Amusement Park - I worked on and ran the rides]

3. What are your job plans for the future?  [Join a marketing firm to do advertising]

4. Do you read unassigned books for pleasure and information?  [Yes!]

5. What is the last book you read that was not assigned as part of a class?  [Black Stallion]

6. Do you read mostly fiction or non-fiction?  [Fiction]

7. Do you enjoy analyzing what you read, or does analysis interfere with your pleasure?  [No]

8. Do you feel the need to understand or "fix the meaning" of what you read?  [Yes]

9. Do you analyze the movies you see, either in your own mind or by discussing them with friends?  [Yes]

10. What is your favorite movie?  [Batman and Batman Returns]

11. What is your favorite novel or short story?  [The Outsider]

12. Do you feel that stories, novels, and movies have one meaning that can be discovered?  [Never thought about it before]
Questionnaire, page 2

13. Do you prefer lecture or discussion courses?
   Discussion courses

14. Do you usually participate in classroom discussions?
   Half the time

15. Have you ever attended a support group?
   No

16. Have you ever been in therapy?
   Yes

17. Do you talk easily about your feelings and personal experiences?
   Sometimes

18. Do you feel that it is ever appropriate to discuss your feelings and personal experiences in a classroom setting? If you do, please describe the conditions under which you feel such discussion might be appropriate.
   Personal experience
   But I'd like to hear the professor's experience.
1. What the story is about?

The story is about an old man setting in an 
open outside café under the shadow of a tree. 
This is early in the morning around 2:00-2:30 
when the story begins. There are two waiters 
that are working at the café and the old 
man is the only one left in the whole café. 
The old man is deaf and it helps the 
waiters because he can see how quiet the streets 
are and he can relate to that because he 
has to live in silence himself. He 
comes to this café a lot because he 
seem to talk about him like they knew 
him. The waiters were of two different lif 
styles. One had a wife and child and 
the other seem to be a Older man than 
the first waiter. When it came time to serve 
the old man, the older waiter didn't mind 
getting the old man another drink but 
when it came time for the younger waiter 
to serve the old man he told him not 
and go home. After the old man left, 
the waiters closed up the café around 3:00.
minutes early!" The younger waiter headed home to bed while the older waiter went to a bar! The older waiter does not like the bar because it is not as clean as his cafe. So he goes home also and finally falls asleep at sunset.

2. What did I think the story meant?

The old man represented the signs of being old. He was deaf, old, and was not very happy with his life because he tried to kill himself. The old man liked to stay in bed because he could see that the city was quiet and silent like the world he had to live in everyday.

The younger waiter had traits of an older person. During the whole story all he wanted to do was go to sleep like most older people like to do. This angered all the townspeople another sign he liked life as an old man.

The older waiter was more like the old man in the story. He felt of all was a very clean person because he kept his cafe very clean and well lit.
he went to the bar the first commit he had was how much the bar was and that's why he left. [22] This makes him like the old man because it was pointed out in the story the old man was clean even when he was drunk. [23] The writer was hit by the old man because he liked the nights also just like the old man. [24] The writer didn't mind keeping the cafe open late because when the cafe was closed he didn't go straight home but instead went to the bar. The older writer also could not go to sleep because of insomnia like alot of older people do.
**Essay 1**

**Writer 5**

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|---|---
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| 2. | N | 25. | I |
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| 12. | N |   |   |
| 13. | N |   |   |
| 14. | I |   |   |
| 15. | I |   |   |
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| 18. | I |   |   |
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| 23. | I |   |   |
I believe the main idea of "The Son from America" is first, you can't go back home and second, money means different things to different people.

The first idea I would like to discuss is the idea of you can't go back home. In the story, the setting for the story was in a small village in Poland called Senchun. The village seemed to be poor in comparison to money. In the village, there was a couple named Berl and Berlita who were in their eighties. They had lived in the village for a long time. They had a son named Samuel which they sent to America when he was fifteen years old. Their son became a success in America and was very wealthy and had a family which was extensive up to his grandchildren. Samuel would send his parents which he had not seen for forty years a money order every month. Three times a year Berl and Berlita traveled in Fahreny to pick the money orders. Then one day Samuel came to visit them from America, and he was welcomed home quickly by his parents, and the people in the village. But things were different for Samuel. He had been raised in the tough, lucky world of New York and a American lifestyle unlike the lifestyle in Senchun. The bigger
change in Samuel was religion! Samuel's parents were Jews and they lived a very conservative lifestyle with center itself around the synagogue! It seemed everything they did had to do with religion!

But on the other hand, Samuel had grown away from being a true Jewish with the lifestyle he was living! Money and success were a part of Samuel's life until his parent and while he was a student it was against law! Samuel didn't go to the synagogue as much as his parents did, so he handled money on the Sabbath when he gave the coachman a silver rupee, and Samuel didn't press on the Sabbath like the rest of the village did! The last example would be when Samuel began to help his mothers and cooking dinners! Then in Jaipur didn't again a meal. It was a woman's job. These are the examples I saw in the story also growth in the main idea of you can't go back!

The second main point if would like to derive is money means different things to different people! Samuel sent his parents a money order every month and they would cash them in the bank a year later they never used the money because they believed they had all they needed which was a garden, a cow, a goat, and chickens.
Samuel put their money in a boot under their bed. Samuel discovered this after he asked his father what happened to the money. Samuel then explained to them that they were rich but his father did not care. Samuel asked if they wanted to build a new synagogue but his father just asked why the synagogue they had was good enough and I think that is when Samuel realized that all the money he had brought, his checkbook, and his letters of credit meant nothing to his parents but they meant everything to him. This could also be another example of you can't go back home.

These are the two main points in the story of The Son from America.
Essay 2

Writer 5

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29. I  
30. I
The widow's home in Georgia seems keen to deal with many or so after her husband's death by going somewhere new to be herself. 

She seems to be tired of the scenery that she has seen for 35 years for she did while living in my hometown. I lived there 18 years and I knew it was time to move on because I had lost something important that kept me here, my friends which all moved away to college.

That was what the widow wanted to, she couldn't find joy from the scenery anymore she to look for a new place to live and that place was provided by her son which described a beautiful place at the edge of the woods. I did not allow her to move to ASU to get a change of scenery. She wanted to go there because she wanted to be with her husband. I did not know because I wanted to be with it and friends. I wanted to repair my friends which
I decided to write about the poem "The Road Not Taken." I think this poem really hit home for me with my decision to come to college.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
This is what the first fork on the road looked like to me. The road that looked 
traveled would have been the easy way out of my decision because it would have just involved a regular job and lived a regular life. Unlike the other road, it held the destination in it.

Because it was good and went on.
The road good or roar. I could not see my future if I went to college and she seemed to dislike because while I was in school I was told in a round about way that I would never make it in college by some teachers.

And both the morning equally lay.

When I came down to college day at ASU that roads were equal but when I left ASU that day I realized which road I had to take.

O! I have the fault for another, yet knowing, how dry heads and dry.

The end of the poem remind me of how I felt when I came back home from college day to tell my parents that I was going to college. I had them know along with myself that I would wait another day to walk down the road that had been walked down before and that I may never walk down that road.
I doubted if I shall ever come back.

This has to me should say, "I doubted if I should ever look back," because when I got my acceptance letter from ASU I told myself I would never look back at Colorado City or as in the poem I would never look back at the other road I could have traveled.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somedays ages and ages hence.

I can now tell my story with a sigh
of relief. Somewhere in the age became that
was almost 4 years ago and I could
my doubts wrong. I got to think that
I could make it in college and I still am.

There is another reason this has brought
up this memory and feeling. There has
been several people in the last side of
my family to go to college but they
never made it that far. I have a
cousin she is only a year older than me and
The family was depending on her to do it first to make it through college but she didn't make it through her first year. I have made it my #1 goal to be the first with the family to graduate from college. That's why the poem "The Road Not Taken" means so much to me...
The most important word I found in the essay was the word "leadership."

The word leadership first came up when T. when to the Old Messing and showed up for the rundown later. When T. showed up the told the rest of the gang about going into Old Messing and this when the leadership role changed from Blackie to T. This happen the gang was tired of doing the same old cheating (stalking) game and wanted to try something new and that was to destroy Old Messing. Blackie could see the changing of kinds of leadership and didn't like it at first but decided to go along with it anyway.

The second time the word leadership came up was when Mr. Thomas was on his way back to Old Messing after being gone for two days. The gang started to fall apart and the all were panning when they found out he was on his way back. T. was even starting to panic when Blackie stood in and calmed everybody down and began to give orders out to the rest of the gang to help finish
route T's plan and not trying to pull out of what they had started. This was the passing of power back to Blandie.

In their time leadership came up when it was said leadership no longer concerned the gang. They just wanted to get the destruction of Old Mussey over with. Also, S.T. looked toward Mr. Home int. to see, they worked as hard as they could as a gang to finish it fast. The gang seemed seem to all know their individual part without having to have a leader to tell them what to do.

This is why I think the word "leadership" is so important in "The Destructor," because it showed that no matter if they had a leader or not they reached their goal to destroy Old Mussey.
After reading "Lemony Snicket," I think the most significant passage is the story line: "At night, Daniel lies awake and goes over Donny's life.

The passage is mentioned twice in the story line when the family has its final visit with the psychologist and the second time is when Donny runs away.

This passage really gets me to thinking about my own passed because I used to be a lot like Donny during my freshman and sophomore years at high school. I used to get into trouble at school, my grades weren't as bad as Donny's but they could have been better. I would let my friends get me into trouble by following them and I used to look like him with the long hair and trashy clothes.

I got to the point to where I wasn't listening to my parents at all and drinking a lot, I would cut classes sometimes to go drunk and then after classes I..."
would start drinking again. While I was doing all of this, I never realized my mother was doing what Daddy was doing. My mom probably setting up late at night thinking what they (my parents) might have gone wrong. My mother was always trying to tell me how smart, handsome and talented I was. Just like Donny would his mother.

Then one graduation night I nearly killed myself by driving drunk. Don't remember anything happening at all until I had my break. This opened my eyes and made me realize that I could have killed myself or somebody else. During that time I was driving around and I didn't know if I was driving around. I realize I better straighten up my act. Jesus my guardian angel and God had given me a second chance when God could have just let me kill myself. But not until I read this book did I realize that I was hurting my parents.
though I'd be worrying about me and wondering what they were doing. Unlike Donny, my parents don't seem worried again because I straightened out my life before I went over the edge like Donny.

That is why I quit out of the poem, 'Leaves of Grass.'
After reading the essay "A Rose for Emily," I have decided to write an essay on the theme of denial of reality because there are many references to this theme in the essay.

The first reference to denial is when Emily finds the key. The reason this is a denial of reality is because Emily refused to let her future body be taken away from the house for three days after she died because she refused to believe he was dead. This seemed to be Emily beginning of losing her grip of reality.

The second reference to the denial of reality is the whole way the town treated Emily. When Emily was asked to pay her taxes, she was notified by the city several times and even the Board of Aldermen paid her a visit to check on why she refused to pay her taxes. Emily kept referring that they should see Colonel Darsenius because she said she didn't have to pay taxes in Jefferson but that was impossible! Her son didn't mention it to Emily, but Colonel Darsenius had been dead for about ten years plus they didn't
tell her that no where in this record book was there anything saying she didn't have to pay! The cover of reality came in when they let these two men facter slide and never made Emily pay her taxes.

The second part of the towns denial is when Emily went to the drug store to buy arsenic! When you bought arsenic at the time you had to state your reason for buying the arsenic but when the druggist ask for her reason she just ask for the arsenic again and then gave him a cold stare and the druggist just lowered his head and went to the back to get the arsenic but sent it out with a Negre! This tells me he knew what it was going to be used for but denied reality and gave it to her anyway.

The third reference to denial of reality is the way Emily had the Negre tell denying she could smell of a decaying body! Emily also had the town denying they could smell a decaying body! The town passed off as a smell of a decaying body for a dead snake
or rat the major - bullet. |  

The most important reference to denial of reality is when Emily's weight comes back up, they break up and then go their separate ways but Emily did not want Homer to have to make sure he would stick around the poten. him and then keep his body in an vegetable ferment. The most sicking part of losing reality was when a long string of iron gray hair was found in the bed where Homer's body was found which means Emily would sleep on top of his body. |

The reason I asked Emily of reality because I went through denying reality during my second year at school. I was dating this girl during the fall semester, and when we went home for Christmas break her boyfriend from England came home on military break. I was told that they had agreed to see other people and that's when I came into the picture because I would never go after somebody else's girlfriend. After I found out I was lied to, it took me about two months
to get it through to my head that we would never get back together. I don't want you to think I am some sad soul but she was the first love of my life. I could not stop thinking about her. She was my girlfriend. I would still buy things for her. I would take her out to eat and I still would want to spend every moment with her. We did when we were together. I did all of this while I was thinking I was over her. But, one day I met this very sweet girl and my sense of reality came back and I have not thought about her since. These are the reasons I think the denial of reality is the most important theme in the essay "A Rose for Emily."
Essay 3

Writer 5

1. I 24. SI
2. I 25. SI
3. I 26. SI
4. I 27. I
5. I
6. I
7. I
8. I
9. I
10. I
11. I
12. I
13. I
14. I
15. I
16. A
17. SI
18. SI
19. SI
20. SI
21. SI
22. SI
23. SI
Evaluation

1. If you had a choice, would you sign up for a literature class in which you knew beforehand that personal experiences and responses would be used in discussing literature (both by the teacher and by the students) or would you prefer a more traditional class? Please briefly explain your choice.

I would sign up for the personal experience class because it helps to explain and understand the story better.

2. Do you feel that the last essay you wrote in this group was better than the first one? (that is, was it more unified and did it cover more of the story?)

Yes, it covered more parts of the essay and mixed it with personal experiences.

3. Did the idea of focusing on what is most important to you in the story help you get started writing the essay, or did it make it more difficult?

It made it a little easier to understand it plus it helped when you personal experience.

THANKS FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY. GOOD LUCK IN YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVORS.

Address where I may send results:

Summer: P.O. Box 10037 ASU
San Angelo, TX 76901

Fall: 2526 A&M
San Angelo, TX 76901
Student 6
Questionnaire

1. What is your college major?
   **Economics**

2. If you have been employed before, what was the last job you held?
   **Tutoring a 5th Grade Student.**

3. What are your job plans for the future?
   **Probably Business & Journalism**

4. Do you read unassigned books for pleasure and information?
   **Yes**

5. What is the last book you read that was not assigned as part of a class?
   **The Shining - Stephen King**

6. Do you read mostly fiction or non-fiction?
   **Fiction**

7. Do you enjoy analyzing what you read, or does analysis interfere with your pleasure?
   **Analysis Interferes with Pleasure**

8. Do you feel the need to understand or "fix the meaning" of what you read?
   **Not Always**

9. Do you analyze the movies you see, either in your own mind or by discussing them with friends?
   **Yes**

10. What is your favorite movie?
    **Aladdin**

11. What is your favorite novel or short story?
    **Jane Eyre**

12. Do you feel that stories, novels, and movies have one meaning that can be discovered?
    **No**
13. Do you prefer lecture or discussion courses?
   LECTURE

14. Do you usually participate in classroom discussions?
   SOMETIMES

15. Have you ever attended a support group?
   NO

16. Have you ever been in therapy?
   NO

17. Do you talk easily about your feelings and personal experiences?
   NO

18. Do you feel that it is ever appropriate to discuss your feelings and personal experiences in a classroom setting? If you feel that it might be, briefly describe the conditions under which you feel such discussion might be appropriate.
   NO.
A Clean, Well-Lighted Place

This story centers around an old, deaf man who is sitting at a cafe and drinking. The story is almost entirely a conversation between two waiters at the cafe, who were keeping an eye on him so that he becomes too drunk, he doesn't leave without paying. From their conversation about the old man, we can deduce that one of the waiters is young and impatient, and the other one is more patient and understanding, and the story shows how these two very different people look upon the old man from two different aspects.

One waiter says that the man tried to commit suicide last week because he was in despair even though he has a lot of money. At this point they were momentarily side-tracked from their talk about the old man when they saw a soldier walking past with a girl; when one of the waiters commented that they will probably be picked up by the guard. They turned their attention back to the old man when he snapped on his glass with his glass. The younger waiter went up to him and the old man asked for another brandy. He reluctantly brought a brandy bottle and poured. He was irritated and said to his colleague that he is sleepy. He also said that the old man
should have killed himself, and says the same to the old man too which he could not hear as he is deaf. 10

The older waiter however sounded more tolerant and sympathetic as he related to the younger one how the old man hung himself with a rope and was cut down by his niece before he could die. 11 The younger waiter said that he never wanted to be that old when he would have nothing better to do than stay up late and get drunk. 12 He says ‘An old man is a nasty thing.’ 13 But the older waiter says that this old man was a very clean person and he does not spill wine when he is drunk. 14 The young one says that just because the old man is wealthy he doesn’t have to stay up late but the cafe job and keep him away from his wife who is waiting for him. 15

The old man asked for another brandy but the younger waiter refused to give it to him. 16 So he paid and left. 17 The older waiter feels sorry for him and said that his colleague should have let the man stay and drink. 18 He said he understood his need to stay up at a well-lighted & clean place rather than go back to a lonely & home and to bed. 19 He is one of those people who needs a light for the night. 20 He said it is not just a matter of youth and confidence but he also wants to stay up late because
There are people who need to come to a cafe at night, even though there may be bars open all night long, but it is different at a cafe, which is clean and well-lit and quiet, where one could drink peacefully. It is more difficult to keep your dignity at a bar and at their age dignity is very important to them because it is something they can keep in spite of their age.

After closing up the older waiter walks to a bar, almost as if to test his own theory and found that though the bar was pleasantly bright and lighted, it wasn't too clean. So he headed home to sleep which he knew would come to him with the daylight. For him, as for the old man, the days are more like the nights because that is the time they go to sleep. They need light at night, which is actually their day. They need some activity then. Their worlds turn out to be very different from those of the young who sleep at night and work during the day.
Essay 1

Writer 6

1. I
2. N
3. I
4. N
5. N
6. N
7. N
8. N
9. N
10. N
11. N
12. N
13. N
14. N
15. N
16. N
17. N
18. I
19. N
20. N
21. N
22. I
23. I
24. N
25. N
26. I
27. I
28. I
In the story "The Son from America" we see two different generations — the son and the parents and how different their life-styles are! The parents live in a tiny village in Poland and the son lives and works in America.

When the son comes home after forty years, the parents don't even recognize him and they thought he was a nobleman. The money that the son sent them were never used by the parents because they were satisfied with their simple, self-sufficient lives. They did not have anything to spend it on. They were rich and could probably buy anything they could think of but there was nothing they wanted.

We also see subtle differences of opinion between parents and son. For example when the mother was kneading the dough, the son comes forward to help her. This upsets her because she is not used to having a man cook in the kitchen. Also when the son wants to build a larger synagogue, the father says that the present synagogue is large enough for their village and when he suggested a home for old people, the father said that no one there sleeps on
The street. /15 we see the differences due to distance and age gap. Even though the line between Samuel and his parents is obvious in the story, we still see the differences due to distance and age gap. For example, he kisses his mother tenderly when he arrives and did bring lots of presents for them; but he does not give it to them because he is aware of their feelings, and decides not to interfere in their simple lives. /15 His parents are also very happy to see him. /15 Best calls his wife 'Peeca' after a long time and she gets busy with preparations for her son.
Essay 2

Writer 6

1. I
2. I
3. I
4. I
5. I
6. I
7. I
8. I
9. I
10. I
11. I
12. I
13. I
14. I
This poem gives me an intense feeling of sadness. It is obvious that the widow misses her husband very much and feels lonely without him. She looks at her own yard which is blooming with colorful flowers but does not derive any happiness from it and they do not lift her spirit. From the description in the poem I can imagine a beautiful garden, but the joy of this imagination is all but wiped out by her sad tone when she says, "but the grief in my heart is stronger than they." I can sense a deeper feeling (like anger) because everything is going on as before. Spring is here and the flowers are blooming but she feels so differently. Even her son comments on the beauty. Though her world has changed, everything else is the same and she just can't bear to look at her surroundings and so she feels like 'sinking into the marsh.' I can sympathize with her because that is the way I feel when something goes wrong with my life but everything else seems to be the same. I feel as if no one can feel my pain and the world and nature are busy doing their own thing. It makes me feel lost and lonely and angry like she is feeling in this poem.
T. K.

'The Road Not Taken'

'Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both.'

This reminds me of a time in my life when there was so much I wanted to do at the same time. This was 1992. I was preparing for my SATs and applying to colleges. It was a busy time for me. Since I was graduating earlier than most of my friends, I was the only one who had all that work to do. They all had parties and concerts and other social functions to go to, which I had to avoid in order to have more time for my work. I used to feel real sad then and wished I could do both.

'And I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.'

The word 'travelled' reminds me of a trip to Austin with a group of friends. We went to Mt. Bonnell and suddenly I got this feeling of loneliness, even though I was with a group. It was a feeling of satisfied loneliness with a sad loneliness. I wanted to leave the group and explore the place by myself. I kept on climbing up alone and like in the poem 'looked down as far as I could see.' I could see the plants, the twigs, the branches and the 'undergrowth' on the path I took to climb the mountain.
The second stanza reminds me of the importance of making correct choices. The word fair tells me how the choices can look equally good but we have to know how to make the right one. We tend to take the easier way—the 'grassy' one is always more tempting. It is like selecting colleges. I was accepted at Dartmouth College but without financial aid. Though it is one of the best colleges I did not take the chance because I wasn't sure how long I would be able to support myself there. ASU is maybe smaller and less diverse than Dartmouth but it gave me a better option. It is a college I could afford.

Yet knowing how easy leads on its way, I doubted if I should ever come back.

This is what I feel like when I am homesick. What if I never go home because something comes up which I have to do?

The last stanza is very meaningful to me. I did take 'the one less traveled by' by coming all the way to America for college. I had other options at home but I took this one and I strongly believe that later in my life when I look back on this I would see the difference it has made in my life.
The Destroyers

I think the most important word in the story is 'leadership'. Not only has it been used a lot of times but it is also the theme of the story as I see it.

It describes how Trevor, the most recent recruit to the gang, rises to leadership. It is amazing how in one day he turns to a great leader from just a quiet, brooding member of the gang.

The gang was led by a boy called Blackie who immediately recognised his own downfall. He moved away from Trevor's way without much resistance.

In a way, Trevor had been preparing for this. His silence gave him a mysterious aura and the boys who start to fear him in a way because they stopped making fun of his name and even started calling him 'T', so that he couldn't be mocked. Blackie, the former leader, was anxious to keep him in the gang. Though the rest of them could have driven him out, but they refrained from doing so which shows their respect for him.

It is also obvious that the gang's loyalty lies with anybody who could prove to be a leader because they accepted Trevor's authority without question and hardly paid much attention to Blackie after he stepped down.

They followed their new leader's every word as they tried to break the house down. This operation was what made Trevor the leader
of the gang because it was more daring and vicious than their previous exploits and Leon was willing to carry them through it. Throughout the story it has been shown that the leader has responsibilities over everyone else.

Even though Blackie steps down he hopes to come back to leadership. If Leon failed in this mission but while being under his leadership he followed everything he said and did everything to help bring down the house. This shows loyalty to a leader.
The most important passage in this story is, I believe, the following paragraph:

"Well, I guess you're right," said Daisy. She saw Donny suddenly from a whole new angle; his pathetically poor posture, that slouch so forlorn that his shoulders seemed about to meet his chin... oh, wasn't it awful being young? She'd had a miserable adolescence herself... and had always sworn no child of hers would ever be that unhappy.

The two most important characters in this story are Donny and his mother, and this is the paragraph where they resemble each other more closely than anywhere else... It also signifies the name of the story. We know that they both had miserable childhoods and their teenage years were disrupted and wasted. The contrast between mother and son is also obvious here, because Daisy had come out of it but Donny does not. Instead he runs away. Even though Daisy has come out of it, it still affects her at certain times as in the principal's office she feels very self-conscious. This shows her she has very low self-esteem just like Donny.

The paragraph starts with a quote by Daisy where she agrees with Lady. She realizes that her son's self-esteem has been undermined. She sees him as a different person. Even though she understands his problems, she feels pity for him and she does not realize that this pity might bring his self-esteem down even lower. In a way she is doing him more harm that way. She still feels sorry for herself and her wasted year. Everybody was expected to be happy when they were young but for her being young was 'awful.'
She did not want her children to have to go through the same experience, but she could not stop it. This paragraph really gives an insight into her past and her character changes. The point of view through which she sees her son and makes her feel like a failure, like Donny himself.

We also feel sympathetic towards Donny, in spite of what he has done. His poor posture, and slouched shoulders paint a very pitiful and lonely picture of a teenage boy who cannot adjust to normal life and face its challenges. It really gives the impression that he has been "wasted." It makes the reader feel his unhappiness and the sorrow that nothing really could be done about it to bring him back to being a normal person.

Could you give an example from your own life of what you think this passage caught your attention?
'A ROSE FOR EMILY'

'A Rose for Emily' is a short story by William Faulkner. It is centered around Miss Emily Grierson, the main character. She is a strong-willed woman who was respected and feared by the community. In fact, she had a strange control over the town because she was probably the only woman in the town who did whatever she pleased. It seems that they almost put her up on a pedestal. She was very much separated from the rest of the town people. She lived alone with a manservant in her big house and did not mix with the rest of the community.

She was not only a lonely woman but she also had some mental disorder, that is, her denial of reality and I think this is what the story is all about.

Throughout the story, we see how she refuses to accept certain facts. For example, when her father died, she would not let him be buried. It does show a lot of love and affection for her father but it also indicates the reluctance to let go of a past where she was actually oppressed by her father.

The second instance of her denial of reality is her refusal to pay taxes. When the city authorities went to her she said she has no taxes in Jefferson and they should talk to Colonel Hanson about this even though Colonel Hanson
has been dead for ten years. This denial of reality is not only in Miss Emily herself but also in her servant. He is the person who stays in the house and knows what's going on. Even when Homer died he must have known about it, but he does not do anything about it. He does not talk about anything. Emily does. It is as if he pretends not to see anything even when he does see them. This is another example of Miss Emily's power of control over people.

However, the biggest denial of reality which is the focal point of the story is Homer's death. Everyone knew that Homer just disappeared from Miss Emily's life and it was only after her death that the true story was discovered. Emily killed Homer so that he could never leave her and put the body in the room in the house where she slept with it and held it. She did not want to let go of the person she loved and the only way she could hold on to him was by killing him.

I can sympathize with her denial of the real world to a certain extent because I believe every human being does that. But Miss Emily is an extreme case. She invoked a feeling of horror and disgust as well as sadness because even a strong woman like her could...
be driven to do so much. She was oppressed and put down so much by her own father that she really needed somebody and this was the only way she could get him.

This oppression of women is evident among the town people as well. They could not accept Miss Emily's relationship with Homer without their being married. But Miss Emily is a woman who always went against convention.
Essay 3
Writer 6

1. N 24. A
2. N 25. I
3. I 26. SI
4. I 27. I
5. I 28. I
6. I 29. I
7. I
8. I
9. I
10. I
11. I
12. I
13. I
14. I
15. I
16. I
17. I
18. I
19. I
20. I
21. I
22. I
23. I
Evaluation

1. If you had a choice, would you sign up for a literature class in which you knew beforehand that personal experiences and responses would be used in discussing literature (both by the teacher and by the students) or would you prefer a more traditional class? Please briefly explain your choice.

   I would sign up for a class where personal experiences & responses would be used because that way I can relate to works of literature. It would be easier to understand as well as more enjoyable.

2. Do you feel that the last essay you wrote in this group was better than the first one? (that is, was it more unified and did it cover more of the story?)

   Yes.

3. Did the idea of focusing on what is most important to you in the story help you get started writing the essay, or did it make it more difficult?

   It made it easier.

THANKS FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY. GOOD LUCK IN YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVORS.

Address where I may send results: TANZEEN KHAN
                                 BOX - 9272, ASU STATION
                                 SAN ANGELO, TEXAS 76909
The Teacher
Questionnaire

1. What is your college major?
   English

2. If you have been employed before, what was the last job you held?
   Secretary for husband in survey firm

3. What are your job plans for the future?
   Teach here

4. Do you read unassigned books for pleasure and information?
   Yes

5. What is the last book you read that was not assigned as part of a class?
   Close to the Light

6. Do you read mostly fiction or non-fiction?
   50/50

7. Do you enjoy analyzing what you read, or does analysis interfere with your pleasure?
   Like with-

8. Do you feel the need to understand or "fix the meaning" of what you read?
   Yes

9. Do you analyze the movies you see, either in your own mind or by discussing them with friends?
   Yes

10. What is your favorite movie?
    Jaws

11. What is your favorite novel or short story?
    Wuthering Heights

12. Do you feel that stories, novels, and movies have one meaning that can be discovered?
    No
13. Do you prefer lecture or discussion courses?  
   Some or both

14. Do you usually participate in classroom discussions?  
   Yes

15. Have you ever attended a support group?  
   Yes

16. Have you ever been in therapy?  
   Yes

17. Do you talk easily about your feelings and personal experiences?  
   More now — but depends on who I'm talking to

18. Do you feel that it is ever appropriate to discuss your feelings and personal experiences in a classroom setting?  
   If you feel that it might be, briefly describe the conditions under which you feel such discussion might be appropriate.

   Yes, but only as related to class material & not as therapy (can be dangerous for untrained people)
I think the story "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" by Hemingway is about the opposition between order and chaos. Order is represented by light and cleanliness; chaos by darkness and confusion.  

In the 1st paragraph, there is the image of the shadow of leaves against an electric light. The old man sits in the shadow, so is represented as being a creature who is at least aware of chaos, but he is near the light, peering the light.  

One of the waiters is aware of the threat of chaos  darkness and disorder, but one isn't. The waiter who has a wife to go home to does not feel the loneliness and despair of the old man. He also says of the soldier and the girl that it doesn't matter if the soldier is arrested as long as he gets what he is after. He sees no threat in the disorder of law-breaking or uninhibited sex, but I think the idea of law here represents man-made order against the chaos of nature. The same way the cleanliness and light of the cafe keep thoughts of ultimate chaos at bay for the old man, at least temporarily. The waiter who doesn't understand the
threat of chaos has no compassion for the old man, saying, "he should have killed himself last week," but the other waiter does understand and have compassion.\footnote{Perhaps the author feels that the only defense humans have against this cosmic disorder is in helping one another.}

The old man's wife is either dead or has left him, and as far as we can tell from the story, his closest relative is the niece who cuts him down when he tries to commit suicide.\footnote{"She does this not particularly out of sympathy or fellow feeling for the old man but because she fears for his soul."}

The fact that the old man himself is clean and even drunk, doesn't make a mess is another example of how man struggles for order.\footnote{Once a person gives in to overt drunkenness and not keeping himself clean, he will slide further into the abyss of darkness, and perhaps death is preferable to that.}

Later in the story we learn that the waiter with very little sympathy
9 for the old man is young; this may explain why he doesn't understand how desperately the old man needs a place to drink where there are other people's eight [17]. He has perhaps not yet experienced the sorts of things that make a person feel that there is no order at the human level of existence, but only absurdity.

The waiter who understands shows very strongly how human kindness is our only defense against chaos when he says he doesn't want to close up because someone may need the cafe. [18]

The shadows of the leaves represent the shifting, intermingling of order and chaos, for neither state is pure, and people who come to drink may really this music would only add to the impression of disorder, as would attempting to stand in a bar and perhaps losing one's balance.

The waiter who is aware of the problem goes to a bar and notices what is clean and what is not. [19] He explicitly says to himself that everything comes to nothing, and by mocking the Lord's prayer indicates that religion can offer no comfort. [20] The only answer is [21]
surround oneself with people or drink until one can escape the terrible insomnia that comes with awareness of man's condition. That is suicide, which Hemingway ultimately chose. Chaos on a human level wins, and all our attempts at order are only temporary.
In "The Son From America," Singer presents an old Jewish couple and their son who returns from America to visit after forty years. Many differences between the son and the parents are shown, but while Singer seems to favor the old couple, there is no condemnation of Samuel, the son. Instead, the preference is shown only by the fact that the point of view is more closely focused on the old people, along with their goat and horse cricket," while Samuel's life in America is not directly described. By this technique and by showing the deep affection between the son and his parents despite their differences, Singer avoids judgment of any character. Since there is no villain or true antagonist, a possible theme of the story is that while there are many ways one may live, there is no "right" way to conduct one's life. Neither lifestyle is right or wrong, and that people should be free to choose within certain limits and should not condemn one another's choices.

One major difference between Berl & Bercha and Samuel is in the area of material goods and attitudes toward them. The old couple have only the most basic necessities - the half acre of land, the small hut, the goat, and the chickens. Even though their eyesight is failing and they have the money Samuel has sent, they do not choose to buy glasses. Berl wears the same clothes summer and winter. While some of the villagers have kerosene lamps, the couple chooses to use only a wick in a dish of oil for light. Only on the Sabbath does Bercha buy three candles from the store.

This illustrates another major difference in the lifestyles of the characters. While Berl & Bercha have remained comparatively scrupulously orthodox Jews,
Samuel, while not reproducing Judaism, no longer practices as strictly as his parents. In America, Samuel has learned a new language and has named his children Gentile names. When his mother begins preparation for the Sabbath meal, Samuel offers to help her; if not directly against Jewish law, this certainly violates the traditional roles of the culture. Berelcha chides him by saying that his role is not to help her with the cooking but to say Kiddush for her when she dines.

When Samuel goes to the synagogue while his parents rest, he hears an old man reciting aloud, and Samuel has to ask if he is praying. Had he remained as orthodox as his parents, he would have recognized the prayers. Perhaps the most interesting example of Samuel's religious views is expressed when a neighbor asks him if Jews in America remain Jews and he answers, "I am not a gentile." While he does not assert that Jews remain as strong in their traditions, he does mean that neither have they abandoned their religious heritage.

All the differences seem to illustrate the basic difference in the characters and universal difference among people of all cultures. B & B represent those who find security and peace in acceptance of life's demands, while Samuel represents those who desire change and activity of change. B&B can think of nothing to use their money for, because their needs are for stability, not change. When the Rabbi teaches Berelcha that Americans walk "with their heads down & their feet up," she cannot understand his meaning, but assumes it must be true since the Rabbi said it. Her comment is that "one can get accustomed to everything." "When Berelcha calls Berelcha by her given name, it is unusual
it causes her to weep, probably bringing up memories of when she was young and her son a boy. The old couple has even grown accustomed to failing eyesight rather than changing their habits enough to go purchase glasses.

Unlike his parents, Samuel is a man who embraced change by traveling to America and starting a completely new life at the age of 15. Evidenced by his resettlement within the confines of his parents' world as found throughout the when Samuel organized Berl to the synagogue. She takes large steps, and one can imagine the purposeful stride of a man who has succeeded on his own in the tough financial world of America. Berl warns him to "slow down," and needless if the warning goes further than the momentary occasion. Samuel remarks aloud of the village that "Nothing has changed here." While the villagers map, Samuel goes out to take a walk, wishing for a cigar and someone to talk to. The best illustration of Samuel's view of life as an aberration for change is his the fact that he has brought money to change the village. He wants to build a new synagogue, a home for old people, but his father tells him that there is no need for either.

It is through the quality of these exchanges where Samuel tries to convince his parents to change and to change the village that we see the lack of condemnation expressed through the characters. When Samuel finds out that his father has all the money he has sent to his parents in a boat, he enumerates the things they could have used it for, but Berl tells him they have everything. There is no sense in the story that they argue; there is just an argument heard by Samuel and a firm answer by Berl. Again, when Samuel mentions change for the village, Berl tells him there
is no need for change, and he comes to realize that it is true. "We come to like Samuel better at the
end of the story when he thinks of his planned
changes for the better, of his money and all the
gifts he has brought, but realizes that these things
are inappropriate in this setting." Rather than
be the "pushy son from America" determined to
make changes "for the better," he acknowledges that
his mother is "wealthy already." 42

Through other examples Ginzger shows how there
is a judgment in the story, only love. 43 When Samuel
arrives after forty year absence, his parents do not
rebuke him for not coming sooner. 44 Instead, they
are overjoyed to see him and show it. 45 Bertha does
ask why he didn't let them know he was coming, but
accepts the answer about the cable without comment. 46
Rather than lecture him about his changes in
language, material possessions, and religion, they
welcome him home as he is. 47 This is a rare glimpse
into the lives of people who accept differences
w/o condemnation. 48
"The Widow's Lament" Effective Response

My first feeling on reading "The Widow's Lament" is one of sadness and sympathy for the woman who has lost her husband. It is Springtime, a time traditionally associated with youth and joy, but she cannot respond because she is locked in her grief. I also responded with some feeling of pleasure to the images of the plum tree and cherry tree in bloom, because I have fruit trees and on a simple, childhood level I love to look at them and smell their perfume. When the poem mentions the son's wanting his mother to notice the trees at the edge of the woods, I felt a bit of impatience with the woman, because her only mental response is to wish that she could sink into the marsh and die so she could be with her dead husband or at least stop hunting. However, on thinking back about times of my own grief, particularly when my father died, I can remember how grief seemed a barrier between me and all beautiful experiences for awhile. We were in Santa Fe, which is so beautiful, but we would go out driving in the mountainous area and feel numb and just think about my dad. After awhile, the feeling became very frightening, because I just thought it would never end. So after reflecting on that, I feel more empathy for the woman. I still want her to respond to her son, but I realize it may be
too early, for grief has stages one must pass through before time helps us heal.

I also felt empathy & sympathy for all of us poor humans as I read the poem, and a feeling, not unpleasant, of sharing and being like others. We all suffer grief at some time in our lives, and knowing this reminds me that at least I'm not alone. It's the same feeling I had when attending a “grief group” after my dad died and I heard other people's stories, which were so similar to mine.
The 1st lines of the poem remind me of when I was a child and I always tried to please my parents, especially my mother, by doing everything well in school. My mother was also obsessive about cleanliness, so the 1st line really makes me think of her making sure we didn't have a single dirty spot on us before we went to school or church.

The next 3 lines remind me of how we always (my brother and I) waited and watched our parents to make sure we didn't disturb them.

The 1st 2 lines of the second verse remind me of how my books never pleased my parents. I was not a particularly pretty or neat child, and I always knew they were disappointed with my books. The idea of hair here really bothers a button, because I have fine, thin hair that wouldn't grow long, and my dad always wanted me to have long, flowing hair. It was like the first couldn't understand that the type of hair I had wasn't my fault. The line about the hoop corn collection reminds me of my brother who had many collections and sort of withdrew into them. The last 2 lines of that verse remind me of my mother putting on bright red, waxy smelling lipstick to go to church. Then we had to be especially "good" and quiet as we got a spanking when we got home, but no matter how hard we tried, we always seemed to get the spanking.
The 3rd verse reminds me of the tension in our family at mealtime, although ours was expressed by fighting instead of silence. The 4th verse reminds me of bickering over eating—my dad always forced me to eat what I didn't like, & I remember being almost sick having to do it. The last line of that verse about "sudden light in the trees" outside makes me think of how happy I was to be outside in our pasture at home, where the tension was much less than in the house. My brother & I played so happily & freely in the pasture that it was like the light of life after a dark tunnel. My dad was also much less serious & fun when he was outside working. The last line of the poem reminds me how happy I am that my family moved beyond many of its tensions and achieved real love & closeness, while happiness never comes for these children. When I remember childhood, I remember many happy times as well as the bad, but these children don't seem to have much promise of emotional "food" in the future. My mom & dad were very demanding in a lot of ways, but they also (particularly my dad) offered me a lot of emotional support during hard times. This poem makes me realize how much worse childhood can be than what I had.
The most important word for me in this story is "creation." It is only used once, but for me it resonates throughout the story and gives meaning to the incidents.

The "gang" meets in a car-park that is the site of the last bomb of the First World War, and for me this relates to the idea of destruction as a form of creation. The people who used the bomb first had to create them, and perhaps they were more positive instincts for creation were frustrated the same way the creative urges of the boys in the gang have been denied by their particularly economic situation. You see this particularly with Trevor, whose father was an architect who is now a clerk. Trevor must have seen the bitterness that is born when a person's creative instincts are stifled, and he himself nurses the urge to create something, but his only avenue seems to be through destruction. The image of the bomb lurks over the story, reminding us that if people are not allowed creative, healthy outlets they will explode, as these boys do.

Another aspect of creation this story touches on is the careful planning that goes into destroying the house. All creative projects require careful planning, and Trevor satisfies this need by deciding exactly how the house will be destroyed. Its destruction becomes his "creation," his work of art.
The other boys get caught up in this destructive frenzy because it lets them co-operate in an act that is the dark side of creation. Before Trevor arrived, they were bored & stole radios in buses for excitement, but this is a project that brings real excitement and risk, just like all creative endeavors. The one time the word "creation" is actually used in the story is to emphasize this point, that the boys worked with the seriousness of creators—perhaps for the first time in their lives. They are so caught up in this act that Trevor and Blackie even burn the money, saying in effect that their creation is not about money and is not for sale.

At the end of the story, the barge driver laughs when the frame of the house collapses, and one can imagine that his laughter is in recognition of the creativity of the boys' destruction. He knows he shouldn't laugh, but he has shown that the boys have done, and somehow the purely abstract quality of their planning strikes him funny. One can also imagine that as a barge driver, he is from the same class as the boys and feels much of the frustrated creativity they do, which causes him a subconscious resentment against the owner of the house.

The frightening thing about the story is the knowledge that all situations and systems that keep humans from realizing their creative impulses in healthy ways drive people to acts of...
destruction — from vandalism to murder, on both small & large scales. Even though Mr. Thomas was not personally responsible for the way these boys have grown up, he hears the brunt of their misguided hate & frustration.
The most important passage for me is the "meaning" which is that Daisy and to some extent Matt have undermined Donny's self-esteem, but not the way Cal tells them. Some they have done it by not setting standards and not insisting that he meet them or suffer the consequences.

The first place I see this is where Daisy is the family focus on Donny's troubles as she helps him with his homework. He gets all the attention but he's not made to be responsible on his own. (Even before this we see the mother giving up her job as a teacher so she can get herself to her kids—maybe not a wise choice in this case.)

That Daisy is the kind of person who is always willing to be made to feel guilty, we see when she goes to see the principal and feels bad about the way she looks.

As Daisy ponders the term "self-esteem," she remembers praising every little thing Donny did—maybe too much—then immediately falling back into the trap of feeling guilty for giving attention to her new baby when Donny's sister was born.

Cal, of course, merely plays into this scenario, taking these people's money to tell them how they've undermined Donny's self-worth. He refuses to blame Donny or make him accountable for anything. Then when Donny
keeps getting into trouble, he's glad to be rid of him. He's not a man who knows about sticking to things either.

An important passage in the development of this theme is the one where Daisy says she had a miserable adolescence. Obviously she has gone way too far in trying to assure that Donny is happy—he needs to learn to be responsible for his own happiness. Only by paying for our own mistakes do we learn self-worth—otherwise, we always feel that somehow we are babies or why would our parents not expect more of us? Donny might not like that at the time, but if she had started when he was little and had to get away with things, the problem might not have gotten to this point.

Daisy tries to get a handle on Donny, but she is too wishy-washy to stick to her guns, as we see when his teacher calls, then she calls Cal and ends up being mad at the teacher. She is too easily manipulated, and apparently the father just can't involve one way or the other.

All through the story, she never really confronts Donny, and by the time she tries to when he is expelled from school, it's too late—he just retreats into his old standby of "you don't trust me." She still can't bring herself to accuse him. All this builds to the last paragraph where she knows
something bad will happen to Lini & feels responsible. She is to me, but not for the reason she thinks. She has not created the monster by simply not standing up to him and making him learn dignity and responsibility.

I react strongly to this idea because I have a niece who is exactly like Donny, and her mother is like Daisy only worse.
Repression of Female Sexuality in "A Rose for Emily"

Reading Faulkner's story after performing the exercises with the group was a stark shaming revelation of my own subjectivity as it related to the meaning I construe as I read the story. Reading with permission to respond emotionally, I noted certain features of the story in a way I had never thought of before, and in a different level of intensity. The tableau of Emily's father framed by the door, the white clad figure in the background, the father'sSpreaded legs, looking for a horsewhip, struck me with a shock of recognition that led me to a clarifying idea that I would use to make a tolerant meaning for the story. When I was about 16, I came in from a date a few minutes before curfew - the young man was not approved by my father, and my father met me on the porch with a shotgun, where he proceeded to lecture the boy, while I had long fled in shame & embarrassment into the interior regions of my house. It is clear that my father shared Mr. Quinn's belief that male members of a family have a right to control the sexuality of female members, and it is also clear to me with the hindsight of middle age that such repression projects can only produce unfortunate results, greater and lesser degree.

Emily's father never approved of any suitor for his daughter's hand, although the narrator says he had drawn away a number of this to the code of male selection of female partners taken to its most damaging extreme; while most fathers of this orientation may reject certain partners for their daughters (or sisters or brothers), this one ultimately faces the reality that women do indeed have sexuality, and so they channel it, rather than denying it by selecting a young man and bastardizing their approval. This was true in my father's case; he approved only one young
man that I ever courted while still living at home, and I married him w/ unfortunate results. The frivory never acquired, & the results are not merely unfortunate but ultimately disastrous.

The sexual code & control works by shaming, and the members of the town seek to repress Emily as well. Just as Colonel Santeria mandated that no negro woman be seen in public w/o and in prom, the members of the town seek to keep Emily from external expression of sexuality in her relations with Homer. Significantly, it is the "ladies" who insist that Emily is lowering herself and that someone must intervene. These men are primarily concerned w/ controlling only the women in their own families, but the ladies insist that Emily must be controlled as they were. A "real lady" would not lower herself because a lady has no sexual desire. This is the code they have internalized, and so they have been robbed of a natural human source of pleasure, so must Emily be suppressed. At their insistence the helpless Baptist minister makes his call, and is so shocked by Emily's response that he refuses to tell anyone what transpired.

At this point in the story Emily is trying to reclaim her sexuality with Homer by flaunting convention, but she had also internalized a code that will cause her to become as perverted as the code itself. Like Emily, I went through a period of flaunting conventions, and like her, I sought to retain my vitality by deliberately "acting like a man" in my culture defined those gender roles.

But because Emily & I internalized the repressive code, Homer is doomed to death and it is an unsuccessful first marriage. Emily cannot allow Homer to leave, because it would not
be possible for her to simply accept the loss and find another partner. Not only is her age the unavailability of single men against her, but now, by the code, she will be "damaged goods," and thus all chance of marriage is lost. Too active and vital, though tortured to simply give up and fade away, she kills herself. She cannot hide the shame of being abandoned in the eyes of the public, but she will keep that which won her, just as she clung to her father's body. That the town is implicated in this scenario of death instead of birth as the result of sexuality is indicated by the scene where the men speak about trying to cover the smell. The shame is theirs because they have not "protected" Miss Emily, and the imagery associated with sprinkling of the lime is significant. They performed this task with a "swirling motion reminiscent of the swirling of sand, and "wore open" the cellar door to do so. While they perform these quasi-sexual acts, Miss E. remains "motionless as an idol," a perfect representation of the proper conduct of a lady during the sexual act. Not only was my sexual vision in marriage similar, but I refused to have children, thus negating any productive or vital aspects of a normal sexual union.

The saddest aspect of this culturally preserved role for men as protectors and directors of female sexuality is that it becomes confused with genuine love and concern. I cannot speak for Miss Emily's father, as their relationship is not sufficiently elucidated in the story, but I can affirm with no doubt that my father loved me and felt he was only doing his duty as a father in constantly
warned me of the dangers my own sexuality could bring. The familiar litany, in extremis, of skirts too short, the evils of dancing, and what must surely occur if young people stay out past curfew. Fortunately, I have outgrown the old code after considerable struggle, struggle that continues today. With a new marriage and the birth of a son (only when my father was quite old), I have found that in fulfilling my role as a wife, all the other roles I play have reached a new fulfillment. I realize that this is most certainly not the case for all women, and I am not saying that a woman must produce children to be whole. What I do assert is that in my case achieving a happy marriage (on all levels, even the sexual) that has produced a child has given a great deal to me in terms of a feeling of completeness. Emily passes that time in her life when her reputation as a woman could have produced either children or a pleasurable sexual union for its own sake, and with no other options, her refinement becomes the drudgery & decay that fills the story.