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# Differential Perceptions of English Teachers About the Teaching of Literature in Seventh-day Adventist Secondary Schools in Selected Regions of the Caribbean

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Andrews University

School of Education

# DIFFERENTIAL PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH TEACHERS ABOUT THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SELECTED REGIONS OF THE CARIBBEAN

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Shirley Ann McGarrell

July 2000

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July 10, 2000
Date Approved

# ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

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Title: DIFFERENTIAL PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH TEACHERS ABOUT THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST SECONDARYSCHOOLS IN SELECTED REGIONS OF THE CARIBBEAN

Name of researcher: Shirley Ann McGarrell

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## Problem

Literature, as a subject in the English curriculum, is not taught in all Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) secondary schools in the Caribbean. This research attempts to investigate and document the reasons why this subject is not taught as part of the English curriculum in some schools and yet is taught in other schools. Literature, as a course of study, addresses philosophical, moral, ethical, and spiritual questions, and often teachers are not the central controllers in determining whether this subject should be taught in church-operated secondary schools.

The literature teacher's role could be pivotal in this situation, but only if the

constituency under which each school falls, allows for the teacher's input in decision making. Depending therefore on the circumstances that obtain in the various geographic regions under study, literature may or may not be taught. The problem of the teaching or non-teaching of literature involves several factors, and the English teacher's perception could be influenced by these.

## Method

A qualitative mode of inquiry was used to explore findings. Questionnaires were sent to every teacher in the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) secondary schools in Antigua, Barbados, Bequia, Dominica, Grenada, St. Croix, St. Lucia, St. Thomas, St. Vincent, Tobago, and Trinidad. The eight-page questionnaire was centered around six basic research questions that dealt with both teachers' philosophy on this subject and their classroom practice. The completion of the questionnaires was followed up by telephone and face-to-face interviews and three case studies.

## Findings

The study revealed that of the 34 teachers who teach English in all the Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in selected regions of the Caribbean, 15 teachers did not teach literature.. However, all 34 of these teachers perceived literature as being important to the English curriculum. They perceived it in varying degrees of importance in relationship to other subjects in language arts such as grammar, drama, and composition.

Reservations persisted on the use of fiction, but these were primarily based on faulty moral, spiritual, and philosophical standards expressed in works and not on the basis that fiction is false and not true to fact. On the whole, teachers believed that

literature is beneficial to students and should be taught in all schools, although several factors sometimes militate against this. They perceive literature as an effective vehicle for communicating values as well as a catalyst for fostering critical and analytical thinking and writing.

## Conclusions

The study has given English teachers an opportunity to examine their own philosophical and ideological positions as to why they do or do not teach literature. As a result, it has sensitized them to the important role this subject plays in the lives of students by means of its values in improving writing skills, critical and analytical thinking skills, appreciation for the aesthetics of language, and the communicating of life values through themes, characters, and plot action.

The research has also enlightened teachers to an interpretation and understanding of several of Ellen White's counsels on the reading of fiction and the studying of literature in Seventh-day Adventist schools and colleges.

## DEDICATION

To Roy, my beloved husband and best friend, whose unconditional love, support, sacrifice, and prayers vicariously resided with me during this academic journey.

To our children, Andre, Fern, and Faith-Ann, whose continuous encouragement and expressed confidence motivated me to achieve this goal.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A research project of this nature has resulted from the composite support of several people. Qualitative research involves people in addition to published sources, and I am indebted to many who have contributed extensively to the completion of this research. First, I would like to thank God who has given me the opportunity to undertake this project and to see it through to the end. I am also indebted to all four of my committee members who have worked untiringly in reading each chapter and giving me consistent feedback from a distance through e-mail and postal carriers. These committee members are Drs. Paul Brantly, Chair; Douglas Jones, Co-Chair; Merlene Ogden (who had to leave because of circumstances); Karen Graham; and Delmer Davis. Each is a diligent scholar whose meticulous eyes catch every grammatical and syntactic glitch and whose sharpened minds penetrate every seeming ambiguity and unclear or irrelevant thought. Above all, I cherish the friendship and spirit of professional camaraderie that developed among us as we pursued what at times was very tedious work.

Qualitative research cannot be done without the cooperation of human subjects. I, therefore, express sincere appreciation to all the 34 subjects who took time to complete the eight-page questionnaire and several who engaged with me in telephone interviews. These were all the teachers of English from Antigua, Barbados, Bequia, Dominica, Grenada, St. Croix, St. Lucia, St. Thomas, St. Vincent, Tobago, and Trinidad. Profound

appreciation is also extended to the three teachers who were subjects of my case studies. The time they spent talking with me after my classroom observations and interview sessions, and as we together examined documents was greatly appreciated. Although my presence in their classes might have been unsettling at times, they never let me know it. I thank them all.

My gratitude also goes out to Dr. Sylvan Lashley, a past president of Caribbean Union College, who was instrumental in starting me on this academic journey. His tenacity in doing so, in spite of odds, is really appreciated.

I also want to thank Caribbean Union College and the Caribbean Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for supplying almost all of the financial resources for this project and my program. Toward the end of the writing of this dissertation, I needed a concentrated body of time, and this was granted me by the college administration under the presidency of Dr. T. Leslie Ferdinand.

I would like also to register appreciation and thanks to my former secretary in the faculty of humanities and social sciences, Mrs. Del Charles, who spent much time helping me put my chapters together, combining files, printing copies, and preparing material for mailing by federal express carriers. Thanks to Mr. David Baynes, head of computer maintenance at Caribbean Union College; Mr. Ian Teixeira, my nephew; and Mr. Hamdel Tobias, director of computer services at the Ruth Murdoch Elementary School; who helped in various ways in putting together the graphics and technical parts of this study.

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improvement. A similar thanks goes to Ms. Bonnie Proctor, dissertation secretary at Andrews University, for checking this project for mechanical correctness and offering fine-tuning hints.

Finally, I express deep and unbounded gratitude to my dear husband, Dr. Roy McGarrell, and our children, Andre, Fern, and Faith-Ann, who have offered significant moral support and encouragement throughout my journey with this research project. My husband, Roy, sacrificed living one full year without me in order to facilitate the completion of my residence requirements at Andrews University, during the 1998-1999 school year.

It is my hope that this research, which examines the perceptions of teachers of English about the teaching of literature in SDA secondary schools within selected regions of the Caribbean, and the documentation of these perceptions, along with the published review of literature on this subject by both SDA and non-SDA authors, will create an awareness for the importance for this subject in SDA secondary schools internationally. Also, I trust that this study will work as a catalyst for the re-opening of minds that were once closed toward the inclusion of imaginative literature as a viable form of study, and that while it should be seen as a genre that is useful for its "truthful" and aesthetics aspects, it should also be seen as a genre that calls for a measure of responsibility on the part of both teachers and students.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The study of literature should be one of the most important, meaningful, and enjoyable courses in a high school's English curriculum. Its use as a vehicle of education goes back to ancient times. A vehicle of education in this sense means a way of enlightening and communicating knowledge not necessarily in a school or academic setting, but in ways that cause people to see, feel, and sense the multi-faceted experiences of life.

Literature encompasses a range of genres. These include poetry, prose, drama, and narrative of all sorts: historical, biographical, and imaginative. Literature, however, was not always in the written form as we now know it, but its effect on the lives of people has always been compelling. Oral tradition–when stories were told around the hearth or fire place, and children listened with awe and delight to those who told them, as well as when people told stories to each other–was an effective form of literature, and this became a vehicle for education. One generation educated the other as myths, legends, and folk tales in the form of poetry or narratives were told. Opland (1980) dates literary history as far back as the pre-Christian period ending at about A.D.100. Although there is a vagueness of the chronology, Opland feels confident in advancing the hypothesis that "the Germanic poetic tradition . . . before the second century was complex and that there were different forms of poetry and song" (p. 29). He goes on to suggest that poetry at that

time performed a serious function in society, with the most elevated form being that of the eulogy. Poets who propagated this tradition were not ordinary, mean men, but those "intimately connected with the kingship" (p. 29).

The "different forms of poetry and song" that Opland describes have to do with oral tradition, a form of literary art that preceded the written form of literature. "It is reasonable, therefore, to conjecture that men talked before they wrote" (Macey, 1930, p. 17). So, we can accommodate the contradiction, she concludes, "that there was a kind of literature before literature" (p. 17). Showing the important place of the imagination in literature of any sort, she declares:

> We can fancy–and without fancy there would not be much literature worth reading–that our distant fathers who lived in caves sat round the fire and told stories about wild animals they had met, about their exploits in combats with neighboring tribes, and mysterious tales, "myths," as we call them, about the gods of forests and stream. Who can doubt that they sang songs, that they imparted to their children such wisdom as they had, and so made traditions of law, tribal customs, religion? (p. 17)

In its growth process, however, oral tradition gave way to the written forms as we now know them, and these continued to be an important medium of education. So important and meaningful was literature that, in the early years of its history as an academic subject in the United States, controversy arose as to whether it should be taught as a school subject or just simply enjoyed and absorbed as part of the normal course of a person's life (Graff, 1989). Organizing it was like tampering with its beauty. That is why Irving Howe declares: "It is hard to organize literature" (cited in Graff, 1989). Educators, however, recognized its important role, and when literature as a subject was vying for a reputable place among the other school courses, the National Council of Education of the National Education Association, in 1892, appointed what was called a

"Committee of Ten" (Applebee, 1974). The purpose of this committee was to arrange a series of subject-area conferences to consider the whole problem of secondary school studies. These people were not all teachers, but were all active in the field of education. Conferences were called in nine fields, one of which was English, and 10 members were appointed to each of the nine fields. Each conference met separately and elected its own officers. The final recommendations revealed that English in all its various aspects, was to be taught five periods a week for the entire duration of 4 years. It was the only subject recommended for definite inclusion in the program for every student during each of the four high school years (Applebee, 1974).

## The Power of Literature on Readers

Stories, more than any other form of literature, appeal to human beings and are a powerful means of education and communication. Eisner (1991) says: "[They] instruct, they reveal, they inform in special ways" (p. 5). They allow for new dimensions in understanding and changing educational phenomenon (Freed, 1997). Coles (1989), a strong advocate for the power of stories on the mind and body, describes the powerful effect that stories have over other genres in literature, for example, poetry and prose. He posits: "The gnawing irony persists that powerful poems and poignant prose can affect us, excite us, cause us to see more clearly, yet not deliver that daily hammer-blow Chekhov prescribed" (p. 197). And the "daily hammer-blow" that Chekhov speaks of is the irony and power of stories to "unsettle" us and make us aware of life:

> The insolence and idleness of the strong, the ignorance and brutishness of the weak, horrible poverty everywhere, overcrowding, degeneration, drunkenness, hypocrisy, lying, yet, in all the houses and all the streets there is peace and quiet; . . . We see people who go to market, eat by day, sleep by night, who babble

> nonsense, marry, grow old, good-naturedly drag their dead to the cemetery, but we do not see or hear those who suffer, and what is terrible in life goes on somewhere behind the scenes." (pp. 195-96)

Coles (1989) sees stories as having the power to accomplish this awareness in readers more than anything else. Hyde (1920) sees it this way, too, when she declares: "I can bring forward no more appropriate generalization than the oft repeated one that literature is an interpretation of life. . . . The books that the pupils read are their short-cuts to an experience in worthy living" (p. 401). Literature is not only about the artistic and imaginative works of writers, it is also about life and living; it is about human experience and humanness. Judy (1981), citing Benjamin DeMott, endorses this when he says that the whole scope of language, which includes literature, has to do with "individual human feeling, human response, and human time, and these can be known through the written expression (at many literary levels) of men living and dead" (p. 56).

Literature is a poignant, artistic vehicle used to communicate the ideas, philosophies, and values of one generation to another in concrete and imaginative ways. It appears in many forms and becomes a tool for learning at every stage of an individual's development. Nilsen and Donelson's (1985) model, which they named the "Birthday Cake Theory of Reading Development," shows that every level builds on the one preceding it, with birth to kindergarten at the bottom and adulthood at the top. The foundation level of reading includes "nursery rhymes, folk tales, picture books, cereal boxes and anything else that shows that fun and profit can be gained from the printed word" (p. 36). Concerning fiction, or the novel–the genre used widely at the secondary and tertiary levels–TeSelle (1974) says: "Almost every novel is concerned with the structure of human experience" since novels address the felt experiences of people over

time be they positive or negative (pp. 113, 114). She goes on to suggest that this realism or concreteness becomes both the fascination and danger of fiction. One of the main functions of fiction, therefore, is to give insight into human experience so readers can enter vicariously into the actions and minds of characters, finding reasons for behavior and gaining strength and value from negative or positive characters.

A strong relationship exists between this central thrust of fiction and the concern of Christianity, as the latter explores the human condition and affects the seat of all human action. Gaebelein (1968) emphatically declares that both Christianity and literature are concerned with the springs of human character. Both have to do with the "outward manifestations of that character in human action" (p. 65). Literature offers concluded patterns of knowledge. This means that a great deal of it shows how fictional characters come to learn why people behave the way they do; they learn what life is like, and this understanding leads to self-knowledge, which is a basis for problem solving.

But some contend that literature is bad, for fiction is false and not true-to-fact; therefore, as a discipline, it should not be offered as part of the curriculum at Christian schools; at worst, teachers should not try to integrate it with anything that has to do with faith and truth since these lead to God and God is ultimate truth. Peter Thorpe (1980), a former English teacher and author of the book Why Literature Is Bad for You, cites the case of a young enthusiastic and ambitious female English major who became totally disillusioned by the study of the great books–works of the masters in the Renaissance, Victorian, and 19th-century periods. He claims that there is something inherent in literary art that discourages people from maintaining stable relationships with others. Thorpe's ideas, though debatable, were not unique to him, for White (1952a), speaking out against

the reading of stories that are not true-to-fact says: "I know of strong minds that have been unbalanced and partially benumbed or paralyzed by intemperance in reading" (p. 414).

## Ellen G. White As Source and Authority

Ellen Gould White (nee Harmon) was one of the three co-founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As writer, lecturer, and counselor, her life of service impacted significantly on the origin, growth, and progress of the church from the mid nineteenth century through almost the 1st quarter of the 20th Century. Most importantly, Seventh-day Adventists have accepted her as one who possessed the prophetic gift.

According to Neufeld (1966) White was born in Gorham, Maine, U.S.A., on November 26, 1827, to Robert and Eunice Harmon. She served her church for over 60 years as an authority figure and wrote and lectured on a wide range of subjects including education; health and temperance; home and family; prophetic; biblical and theological matters; youth counsels; and other areas. "At the time of her death [in 1915], her literary productions consisted of well over 100,000 page" (p. 143). What concerns this research, however, is White's work with regard to education, but particularly the reading and studying of literature.

White has issued many warnings against fiction reading. Some of her counsels concerning the prohibition can be found in such works as Messages to Young People (1930), pp. 271-74, 2279-82; Fundamentals of Christian Education (1923), pp. 451-52; Testimonies for the Church (1948), 2:236, 302, 410, 463, 481, 559; 5:16-20; and Ministry of healing (1905), pp. 444-46. All of these counsels strongly suggest that fiction reading

should not be encouraged at home or at school, by parents or by teachers because of its inherent danger–a danger that involves time, which robs many of energy, spirituality, and the self-discipline required to meet the rigor and challenge of daily living. Given this seeming dilemma for Seventh-day Adventist English teachers, how should they deal with the teaching of literature, which to a large extent includes fictional works? Secondary school English teachers can use their personal Christian philosophy to inform their choice of literary works that will teach value and faith to students within the framework of beauty, artistry, and imitative accuracy that serious fiction allows. Students are then encouraged to respond to and participate in themes and episodes that communicate the truth about reality, human experience, and God.

## Reasons for E. G. White's Counsel on Literature

What elements in fiction was White (1930, 1905) objecting to, and what did she mean when she used the broad term, fiction? In Messages to Young People (1930) and The Ministry of Healing (1905) she counsels against sensational stories and Greek tragedies–classics of her age that dealt with violence, incest, murder, and bloodshed. These were read as a result of the study of Greek in educational institutions. Students thrived on the excitement and suspense generated by such stories. Waller (1965) says that sensational novels in White's day "were almost one hundred percent trash" (p. 19). Another unsettling element was maudlin sentimentality. Sentimental novels held great appeal to women and girls, and White was not conservative in her criticism of this saccharine literature and its effect on young and older women. Young women reading such novels became sentimental, having sick fancies and sported with indecent and

obscene thinking, while older women became disillusioned with their marriages, dreaming of imaginary husbands and experiencing unrequited love.

When White used the broad term, fiction, in her writings, she was addressing a brand of literature that encouraged readers to indulge in the reading of plot-dominated stories of excitement, suspense, sensation, and sentiment. The feverish excitement from stories of this nature dulled the mind to the beauty and artistry of serious literature: literature that reflects artistic success, imitative accuracy, and truth. Waller (1965), therefore, concludes that "absence of sheer factuality was not White's definition of fiction" (p. 21). He recalls the opportunity he has had to examine and research five scrapbooks in one of her works entitled Sabbath Readings for the Home Circle, which was edited by White. Through the courtesy and confidence of her son, Arthur L. White, who was then the secretary of her publications, Waller attempted to ascertain whether certain narratives that White read, clipped, and preserved were fictitious or true-to-fact. He concluded definitely that quite a large portion was fictitious. This finding, he announced, with the permission and reservation of Arthur White that he take pains "to establish . . . safeguards that will as far as possible, keep hearers and readers from arriving at conclusions of a more liberal character than the facts would justify" (p. 4).

White was not alone in her view of fiction. Other religious bodies decried the type of fiction that prevailed during that period. The Roman Catholic journal, Thought, carried an article by Joseph E. O'Neil on Longfellow and described him as one who "neither would or could look at reality except through a golden mist of emotion" (cited in Waller, 1965, p. 6). He (Longfellow) was further described as a victim of "the great Romantic doctrine of the importance of the heart in the life of man. . . . Having rejected

completely his forefathers' diet of strong Calvinistic meat and drink, Longfellow is sometimes to be found dining on little pink cakes and the very weakest of tea" (cited in Waller, 1965, p. 6).

In the early issues of the Methodist Quarterly Review, strong counsels against the reading of fiction were urged by the Methodist Church. It was not until 1845 that the slightest acceptance of any sort surfaced among Methodist writers, according to Waller (1965). An article in the Methodist Quarterly Review entitled "Critical Notices," suggested that although some moral fiction could be read sparingly by various classes of people, fiction should not be read excessively, especially by young people so as to create an omnivorous appetite for it: "Light reading, however, free from the total faults of our popular novels, like condiments, should be resorted to with great caution, and especially by the young, under proper advisement" (Waller, 1965, p. 7).

All of these references suggest that the cheap fiction distinguishable in White's day did not elicit on the part of the reader an opportunity to analyze and interpret critically. Stories led to hasty, superficial reading, which weakened the power of concentration. Speaking out against this type of literature, White (1952a) notes that "old and young form the habit of reading hastily and superficially, and the mind loses its power of connected and vigorous thought" (p. 415).

All fiction is therefore not the same, for White's view of this genre takes into consideration more than a lack of factual information. It can be inferred then that serious fiction or imaginative works that would require critical and analytical skills in interpretation, stories that are strong in theme, action, characterization, setting, and other literary and artistic elements, and according to Waller (1965), "stories with enough real

intellectual challenge" (p. 13) that can "add strength to the mental powers" (White, 1948, 5: 544) would not be considered as cheap and trashy. High-school students in the upper Forms or grades can, under the guidance of able literature teachers, critically analyze, interpret, and grapple with the intellectual challenge of serious literature. Fiction, moreover, can be perceived as truth since it is a vehicle that gives a diagram of life.

The taboo on literature was gradually lifted as fictional works became more artistic and serious in nature. In the best fiction, less emphasis was placed on plot-dominated, suspenseful stories and more emphasis was placed on style, structure, theme, and characterization. Although it still held the potential for negative habits and attitudes, fiction gradually became a model for imitation by way of beauty, artistry, and design. A note in the Presbyterian Quarterly Review (1857, p. 285) illustrates the shift in acceptance, given the change in subject matter and style of fiction:

> It seems pretty well settled now, that works of fiction must be tried on their own merits, and that any such sweeping rule as was formerly laid down, that all fictitious writing is per se bad, must be abandoned. The reason does not lie in the fact that the world has grown wiser than formerly in its judgments, but in this other fact that the extraordinary merit of many parts of fiction during the last half century will not allow the rule to remain. The question cannot now be, Shall I read any novels? But, What novels may be read? . . . The genius and virtues of many men and women have passed into this class of books, and there can hardly be any fine culture without them. This world is a place of trial. We must choose the good and reject the evil. (cited in Waller, 1965, pp. 8-9)

This shift became significant for the acceptance of literature both as a vehicle for communicating life values as themes, characters, plot actions, and other aspects of literary works were explored.

## Statement of the Problem

For the past 7 years, I have worked with English majors teaching a variety of subjects in the field of English. The teaching of literature has always excited me, whether it was English or American literature, the study of Milton, or that of the English Bible, and I have endeavored over the years to transfer this delight and excitement to my students. One course, however, has often caused me to think that some of these majors were robbed of the benefits, value, and intellectual challenge of a full-fledged literature program in high school. Whenever I taught the course Secondary Methods in English to majors, and together we discussed a variety of children's, young adult, classical, or contemporary literature, in preparation for the development of thematic units, some students who attended Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in the Caribbean region would invariably make statements such as: "Where did I go to school?" or "Did I miss out on something during my elementary and secondary years?" Whenever I inquired into the reason for this lack of knowledge, those students would say: "Literature wasn't taught at my high school. Didn't you know?"

As I reflected on this situation over the years, I have felt a strong obligation to inquire into the differential perceptions and attitudes that teachers of English have toward literature as part of the English curriculum in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in selected regions of the Caribbean. I would like to know what causes some schools to have literature as part of their English curriculum while others do not; why some teachers believe that literature corrupts the mind while others think it elevates; whether there are teachers who teach it although they do not believe in it; and whether others who do not teach it believe that it should be taught; also, what or who determines the teaching or

non-teaching of it? Perceptions and attitudes, when aired and opened to objective analysis, can change, and what was once lost because of misconceptions or tradition can be gained as a result of insightful inquiry. Literature, which includes not only prose and poetry, but drama and fictional works, is inextricably bound to life, and one can better relate to and understand the circuitous and often uneven terrain in his or her life if a healthy exposure is given to the study of this discipline, for as Ryken (1974) points out, it is "the interpretive presentation of experience in artistic form" (p. 13).

From repeated observation as a teacher of the course Secondary Methods in Teaching English, it appears to me that the teaching of literature still poses a dilemma in some SDA secondary schools. In some schools, it appears that literature is not taught. If this is true, resistance to this subject becomes a problem. Its absence from the English curriculum robs students of a value that prepares them not only to enjoy and appreciate the beauty and aesthetics of their language, but also to develop critical and analytical skills that are vital for their college years. Students also miss out on the thrill of entering vicariously into the experience of characters, of connecting and comparing their own experiences while benefitting from the wisdom and mistakes of others. In spite of the plethora of published opinion on the importance of teaching literature, little research is done on Christian teachers of literature, less is done on Seventh-day Adventist teachers, and none is done on teachers in the Caribbean.

At the outset of this research I wanted answers for the absence of literature in the curriculum of some secondary schools for my personal benefit. My investigation, however, has led me to believe that my research findings could be useful to English teachers and other educators both locally and internationally.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to discover and document the perceptions of Seventh-day Adventist secondary school English teachers, within selected regions of the Caribbean, about the teaching of literature. Literature is a broad term that serves as an umbrella for several genres including fiction.

A discovery of these perceptions could serve as a catalyst in helping teachers who do not teach literature to review their own philosophical and ideological positions as to why they do not teach this subject, with the hope that they will perceive this course as one that is indispensable to the English curriculum. Further, a documentation of the perceptions of these 34 English teachers could also help to re-affirm the belief of those who teach literature that this subject is valuable and indispensable to any curriculum.

One of the reasons why the perceptions of these 34 English teachers were elicited, and not those of school administrators, school board members, or other policy makers, is because teachers are considered the most important gatekeepers since they not only administer instruction, but they share in their students' lives on a daily basis for several years. They know the students' needs for knowledge, value, meaning, and guidance. They are the ones who serve at the cutting edge in academia and are, therefore, the greatest agents for effecting change–change in philosophy, belief, culture, and perspective through a curriculum that is written, hidden, tested, and learned. Several sources address this concept as they sense the need for teacher empowerment (Butt & Townsend, 1990; Fullan, 1992; Joyce, 1990; Klecker & Loadman, 1998). They see teachers are the most important gatekeepers in the arena of education.

The discovery of teachers' perceptions, therefore, as well as the emphasis on the significant role of literature in SDA secondary schools, could create a renewed sensitivity for the importance of this study both regionally and internationally.

The six research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

1. What value do English teachers place on literature as part of the English curriculum?

2. How do administrative and other bodies influence the literature teacher's choice of literary works?

3. How does the teacher's philosophy of life impact the selection and teaching of literature?

4. In what ways does Ellen White's counsel on literature influence its selection and teaching?

5. How do Seventh-day Adventist literature teachers relate to fiction as a genre in literature?

6. In what specific ways do teachers believe students benefit from the study of literature?

## Delimitations of the Study

Several delimitations impose on this study. These are as follows:

1. This study was restricted to 34 teachers of English within selected regions of the Caribbean.

2. Because of the constraints caused by distance, time, and finances, the case studies were further delimited to the island of Trinidad.

3. The term "teaching of literature" used in this study refers to the teaching of literature as a separate and distinct subject, which is inclusive of short stories, longer narrative works, fiction, non fiction, drama, poetry, biography, and historical works.

The first delimitation surrounds the relatively small population of 34 teachers. Qualitative research, unlike quantitative research, does not depend on a large sampling to establish generalizability or validity. According to Brinberg and McGrath (1985, p. 3 as cited in Maxwell, 1996, p. 86), "Validity is not a commodity that can be purchased with technique." The qualitative model of research allows for the investigation of small samples of subjects in what is sometimes labeled the "bounded system" (Merriam, 1988). This could be as small as one teacher, one school, or one program (Alderman, Jenkins,& Kemmis, 1983; Smith, 1978).

This survey pool of 34 teachers is important because it represents all the people who teach English in all the Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools within the selected regions of the Caribbean. These are, therefore, the most important people from whom to derive perceptions on the teaching of literature–they are at the cutting edge of their discipline. According to sources, this type of specialized sampling is called purposive or purposeful sampling (Chein, 1981;1980; Merriam, 1988 Patton, 1980), and is the most desired sample for the gaining of information. This group is important because from them the researcher could discover, understand, and gain the best insight. They make up a sample from which one can learn the most.

The perceptions of this small pool on the teaching of literature as part of the English curriculum in SDA secondary schools are valid since their beliefs and ideologies are what count in the English classrooms and what impact on both the selection and

teaching of literature. Pratt (1994) labels such a group change agents, for they are significant gatekeepers in the field of education.

The second delimitation of using the island of Trinidad as the geographic location for the case studies had to do with the convenience of moving around the territories because of distance, time, and finance. Although there are differences on several fronts among the people of these regions, more elements bind them together than separate them. Seventh-day Adventist literature teachers in these regions share common basic beliefs and practices and are quite united in social, cultural, and spiritual perceptions..

The third delimitation surrounds the term "teaching literature." When this term is used in this study, it refers to literature in its holistic form. This subject appears as a separate course in language arts studies, and teachers who teach it, utilize its full range, not merely a little poetry interwoven with grammar and composition.

## Significance of the Study

This research is significant in several ways. First, it is the first educational research to be conducted among Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools within the Caribbean islands in the area of curriculum.

Second, it is the first research to be conducted in the area of the teaching of literature in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools within this region.

Third, it examines the relationship between the philosophy and practice of English teachers about the teaching of literature in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in this geographic location.

Fourth, this research builds in a practical way upon the theoretical foundation laid

by other Seventh-day Adventist researchers who have investigated and interpreted the counsels of Ellen G. White, one of the founders of the SDA Church, concerning the study of fiction and the teaching of literature.

Fifth, it has the potential of sensitizing and re-sensitizing Seventh-day Adventist English teachers, locally and internationally, to the important function of literature in the secondary school's curriculum as well as its role in the lives of students.

# CHAPTER II

# REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature review falls into three categories. The first establishes the importance and value of literature study to students. The second addresses the study of fictional works, which is still an area of controversy among some Seventh-day Adventist educators. The third explores the aspect of methodology or approaches to teaching by the literature teacher, which is central not only for an appreciation of the beauty and aesthetics of the language, but also for encouraging students to find meaning and value in literature, freedom to respond to the subject in creative ways, and a validation of their own experiences as young adults.

## Importance and Value of Literature

The study of literature is one component of the Language Arts curriculum in many secondary schools. Osborn (1984), a proponent of the teaching of value through literature in the entire school curricula, declares that "little else in students' lives provides room for the consideration of values and provides them with a foundation to understand and confront the unavoidable failures and even successes of life" (p. 2). She sees this not as a modern discovery, but an effective medium that existed from the earliest of times. Myths, parables, and oral histories have always held human values up to the light and given life to the problems of being human. The power of the story, she posits, is

something that is indispensable to the reader's view of what is real since it encompasses a broadened range of human emotion, complexity, and possibility. Although this is so, Osborn (1984) and other researchers have, however, sensed a "losing of ground" in many educational institutions in the area of literature.

They see several factors responsible for this loss including the modern thrust of information and technology and the heightened emphasis on rhetoric and composition (Bancroft, 1994; Bowers, 1991; Gillepsie, 1994; Hansen, 1979; and Rutledge, 1968). Bancroft (1994) sees the ascendence of rhetoric and composition and the emergence of new critical theories as being instrumental in making literature the "stepchild of the language arts curriculum" (p. 23). In spite of all of these, he says, the power of literature is not diminished. Gillespie (1994) justifies the need for the continual presence of literature in this information and technological age. He sees its value as being very relevant for an age that, from all perspectives, seems to be in crisis. He says literature is justifiable in the modern curriculum because of its contributions to the cultivation of the imagination and empathy. These two are critical skills for the 21st. century and are essential for thriving, for they are pragmatic to the core. Imagination helps society to endure the present for it allows readers to foresee a better time. Also, empathy, which is a by-product of literary studies, allows readers to be understanding and kind to fellow humans.

The latter, therefore, could bring about a reduction to wars, suicides, and crime. Although all the other parts of the Language Arts curriculum are of importance to students, the study of literature is paramount to their understanding of life and experience. Sauls (1978) poignantly points out that literature is part of an important process of

growth in the life of the Christian student, and a response to literary experience is essential. It can play an important role in students' moral development. This source believes that the study of literature allows young people to live in the dimensions of time and thus rise above the animal existence of an inescapable present. They can study and judge the actions of characters as being appropriate or inappropriate, good or bad. When literature is not taught, Sauls (1978) concludes that teachers are missing an opportunity to engage their students in critical thinking and in the refining of values. When the subject is thrown out, he further concludes, "teachers are throwing out the best models of effective use of language, and one of the most effective means of helping students develop creativity and the ability to discriminate" (p. 33).

Agreeing with them is Meek (1991). She emphasizes the need for everyone to have access to literature since she claims that this gives people a degree of control over their lives. She declares:

> As literacy promotes and refines ideas, so it advances what human beings have always called, freedom. Beyond that, literacy supports our passion to know what it is to be human–a passion that is much older than writing embodied in the ways by which we make language memorable. (p. 180)

She does not see literature as being simply a subject for a chosen few, but for all. It is not "old books," she argues, "not a list of specially chosen books which represent an unchanging heritage conferring on the reader a distinction of showing taste and discrimination" (p. 182). Rather, she sees literature as a "literate activity that can bring everyone a fuller enjoyment of life, beyond usefulness, beyond even, the worthy notion that it is nourishment that makes us grow. It is its own kind of deep play" (p. 182). It, therefore, extends both social and personal learning.

Literature, however, did not always occupy a favored position in academic studies. Its history as a school subject has been fraught with controversy. According to Applebee (1974), it was once perceived as something "airy," light, abstract, rigor-less–something that was done merely for pleasure, that provided a knowledge base for good conversation across genders, but especially as a "finish" factor for young women of a certain social class. After it became an accepted subject of scholarship, various philosophical approaches governed its teaching. Graff (1989) outlines some of these approaches in his book Professing Literature. These approaches and other factors are responsible for the various perceptions that teachers of English have toward the teaching of literature. Graff (1989) gives a historical overview of this controversy:

According to him, in the United States, four main groups reflect the various philosophies that have at one time or another defined the structure of English departments. The primary groups he discusses are the philologists, generalists, literary historians/scholars, and the new critics. A fifth group, literary theorists, he claims, "has come to be associated with an assault on tradition" (p. 247). Although traditional humanists have exhibited ambivalence toward literary theory, seeing it as a threat to literature itself, it has become "accepted as a useful option for graduate students and advanced undergraduates, but something to be kept at a distance from the normal run of students" (p. 248). These five groups focus on different paradigms in the way they view the teaching of literature. This work is an insightful history of academic literary studies in the United States of America, roughly from the period of the Yale Report of 1828, which assured the primacy of the classical over the vernacular languages in American colleges for another half century, to the waning of the New Criticism in the 1960s, and

subsequent controversies over literary theory. Each of the approaches discussed by Graff (1989) presents advantages and disadvantages if considered independently. These paradigms determine the way literature is interpreted.

Regardless of the perspective teachers take to the teaching of literature, the power of this discipline in the form of narratives or stories remains unchanged. Coles (1989), in one of his powerful and effective books entitled The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination, shows very illustratively how literature, specifically stories, can develop the moral growth of an individual's life. The author recalls his own experiences as a young psychiatrist intern on a psychiatric ward of the Massachusetts General Hospital. He cites several encounters with his patients, young and old, and shows how through the medium of literature–either what they had read before or what he was able to encourage them to read–highly negative and destructive attitudes were changed to controlled, reasonable, and responsible ones. His patients took responsibility for their own physical, mental, and spiritual restoration.

Freed (1997) emphasizes unequivocally that stories provide a way for people to understand themselves and each other–they provide a way to understand personal biases and interests. More than any other literary form, they yield insights and allow for new dimensions of discovery. As readers gain personal insights, they "find themselves" and their roles in the universal scheme of things as they come to terms with their own biases and preconceived ideas. Several other authors share Freed's opinion in their agreement that the narrative works of literature help people understand their own lives and those of others in a meaningful way since they come to know that experience is not unique to one

person–all share the human experience (Connelley & Clandinin, 1990; Cronon, 1992; Reissman, 1993).

Another type of value that literature imparts to students is that of disinterested benevolence toward others. Parr (1982) recognizes a moral callousness on the part of today's students to learn and to care. He makes the argument largely because he sees this callousness as a product of a "mixture of unreflectiveness, limited knowledge, and the motion which suggests that questions on morals, values, and responsibility are not pertinent to education" (p. xiv). His own experience, however, tells him that when students become engaged in morals and value questions that are inherent in certain lines of study, especially literature, they are better able to possess these qualities. Literature teachers should, therefore, address the problems of moral apathy, which is sometimes called dubbed meism or the new narcissism. Parr (1982) is not arguing for a particular code of behavior or a particular set of values that literature teachers must pass on to students; rather, she feels that teachers serve students best if they engage them "in the learning process, teach them to understand and express the complexities of all that they study, bring them to recognize the value of individual moral choice, and give them a sense that they are part of a larger human community" (p. 17).

Stressing the importance and value of literature in the lives of high-school students and the responsibility of teachers in helping them form correlations with life, Shuman (1995) draws several examples from well-used works of literature. For example, she says:

> Oliver Twist faced many of the problems that today's youth face. Discussed as a nineteenth-century masterpiece, Charles Dickens's novel may fall flat with contemporary secondary school audiences; discussed as a book that has direct

> parallels in today's youth culture, Oliver Twist begins to take on a new life, to become a significant link in what philosophers like to call "the great chain of being," which includes among its links many of the ethical problems with which contemporary students are themselves dealing. (p. 26)

She draws similar parallels with John Steinbeck's Tortilla Flat, William Golding's Lord of the Flies, and other works. She believes that English and social studies teachers are in strong positions to direct discussions of their courses to help students make vicarious and realistic connections with contemporary life. She forcefully emphasizes that literature can help students "comprehend contemporary situations in their historical perspectives and, by so doing, can heighten their understanding of what solutions might be available to the social problems that most concern them" (p. 26).

Agreeing with Dilg's point of view (1997) is Israel (1997) who shows that contemporary authors can teach values in compelling ways. He shows that dead authors were not the only ones who wrote well, but that many contemporary authors have the same effect on readers plus additional advantages. He says: "One serendipity is that my students can use 'school to work' skills by writing letters to authors (the dead make poor correspondents)" (p. 21). Contemporary literature, more than classical literature, addresses sensitive subjects like racism and prejudice. These are helpful, he says, when discussed with maturity, sensitivity, appropriateness, and personal responsibility. Students in high schools need literature that is relevant, accessible, well-written, valuable, and enjoyable. He concludes by declaring: "Rather than ask why we should teach contemporary works, we might ask, 'why not?'" (p. 23).

One of the problems that proponents of traditional works of literature have with contemporary authors is a language that often features epithets stronger than "oh my

goodness" or "shucks." Hipple (1997) concludes that language reflects the way adolescents talk today. Beyond that, however, the literature "permits the same pedagogical tools classic literature affords: analyses of character, theme, language. Tests. Response-based classes. Small group discussions. All sorts of writing activities. Even bulletin boards" (p. 16). In favor of the value of the classics, Hipple (1997) airs his hunch that methods used in teaching may be responsible for the disinterest of modern youth in this mode of writing, for example, literary criticism types of activities, search for tensions and ironies that make works intellectual artifacts rather than a "living, breathing, meaningful, powerful, and potentially life-changing force" for readers (p.16).

Literature, as a school subject, especially for secondary students, should, therefore, not be exclusive. Dilg (1997) makes a strong case for the value of inclusive literature for students at the secondary level of instruction. This is especially necessary, she feels, considering the explosion of multicultural literature that is currently available. Dilg observes that the literary canon should include Caribbean literature written by talented Caribbean authors as well as African-American, Latino, Asian, and Native American authors. She says in no way should the canon exclude women and minority writers. She observes that the works of women authors are generally authentic and "perfectly natural." All of these help students to discover themselves and make personal, insightful responses to their own individual experiences in life. African American literature also has its peculiar value to students. Barthold (1981) writes from the premise that fiction grows out of experience. However, she sees imaginative works that grow out of a Black heritage as being different from works from a Western European heritage. So, in one sense, stories of the Black race are unified to all other imaginative works because

of their true-to-life connection; but in another sense, they are singular enough to justify them as a separate aspect of modern literature as well as an important feature of contemporary culture. This form of writing has its own peculiar value to the Black race, be it from Africa, the United States, or the Caribbean.

Hansen (1979) and Zahlan (1986)) point out that not only does a mixture of literary types give students a varied perspective of life, but it also helps students develop in other areas, for example, improving their own writing style. While the aim is not mimicry, by observing a variety of styles, students can better affirm or improve their style by observing how words, phrases, and sentences are used for effect, impact, and greater communication. Reading is also enhanced, and students, school administrators, and the community benefit. Hansen (1979) advances the thought that when school administrators see how an inclusive literature program promotes good reading habits that builds a favorable reputation for their schools or districts, they are made proud. For people in the community, who are always demanding "statistical validity as the justification for the existence of a program" (p. 2), when they realize how literature stretches the mind to think, organize, and draw conclusions as well as improve reading, comprehension, and writing skills, they will support the existence of a literature program.

The study of literature performs several services to students who read and respond in writing. Applebee (1974), quoting Bobbitt, famous literary critic and writer, details seven of these. The points are rather redundant, he claims, having in common an emphasis on the value of experience through literature. He posits that the study of literature does the following: takes the reader out of what would otherwise be his/her world; helps students relive the human experience of other times and other men; broadens

and educates thoughts; tunes students' responses to those "who have seen most clearly and . . . felt most deeply"; helps students gain new insights; assists students in understanding life's experiences; and makes students aware that life is action and reading is one mode of that action.

Not every source agrees with the outright value of literature in terms of students' holistic development. Bogden (1986) draws upon her experience from one school district in Ontario, Canada, and demonstrates how the humanist position for the teaching of value through literature can be turned against English teachers and literature education when it is based upon a theory of language operating primarily on the assumption that literature directly portrays life. She concludes with a different defense for the value dimension of literature, a model grounded in a theory of literary language as a hypothesis about life rather than as a facsimile of it. Bogden (1986) looks at literary works not as a guide to life, "but as a moving, powerful hypothesis about life, which bears much reflection and sifting through, as meditations rather than as poetic depictors of moral and religious propositions" (p. 7). One author further contends that literature is bad, for the genre of fiction is false and not true to fact. As a discipline, therefore, literature should not be offered as part of the English curriculum. Peter Thorpe (1980), a former English teacher and author of the book Why Literature Is Bad for You, cites the case of a young enthusiastic and ambitious female English major who became totally disillusioned by the study of the great books–works of the masters in the Renaissance, Victorian, and 19th-century periods. He claims that there is something inherent in literary art that discourages people from maintaining stable relationships.

Thorpe's criticism emphasizes the dimension of meaning within a work. Authors

see meaning as a catalyst for value. Elaborating on the importance of finding value through meaning are Berthoff (1981) and Duke (1982). Rutledge (1968) addresses the question of value by asking whether literature really improves human beings. To this he reasons: "We can't have it only one way." He says, if literature really can change people, then this can be for good or evil. So, he concludes: "We had better be very careful about the kind of literature we present in schools since the mass media are not under our control and not always on our side" (p. 20). High-school literature can have its own special dangers, Rutledge (1968) posits, dangers that lead to self-conscious passivity. Supporting this view are White in several of her works: The Ministry of Healing (1905); Messages to Young People (1930); Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students (1913), as well as Cobb (1966), Bradley (1970), and Thorpe (1980).

Narrative works written for young adults have now found a place in the English curriculum of many high schools, and they can often be considered as having a similar quality as the classics. Ted Hipple (as cited in Monseau & Salvner, 1992) examines the characteristics of this mode of writing and declares that its universal nature makes it highly suitable for high school study since many authors shape unforgettable characters. But more than that, authors show the ingredient that makes literature–that factor that moves printed words to ideas that make readers return continuously to the work. This, they say, is "theme, the underlying philosophy embodied in the work, the view of the human condition it offers" (p. 4 ). The themes, he says, are as forceful as are the narratives, characters, or settings in works such as Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities, Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and Hardy's Return of the Native. The works of contemporary authors, though not as moralistic or rigidly formulaic, display the same

elements as these classics in terms of theme, complex main characters, conflict resolution, meaningful foils, vivid settings, tight plots, skillful suspense, diverse points of view, etc.

Rahn (1995) sees this revelation as rediscoveries in young adult and children's literature, and therefore speaks out against the practice of those who believe that there should be a canon–a small number of books that are worthy. This, she feels, diminishes awareness of the richness, variety, and value of literature for younger people. This mode of literature especially geared for high-school students is sometimes overlooked in favor of the more traditional works. Small (1977) expresses his fear that teachers overlook the craft of the junior novel within the framework of the art of literature. He says they tend to ignore specific literary relevance of the work to the benefit of students. He sees these works as simple compared with works such as Absalom, Absalom or Ulysses. Because of this, teachers feel there is nothing "great" to lecture upon. Small (1977) responds to this concern by saying that authors like Peck, Blume, Klein, Felsen, and Cavanna produce simple but artistic works. In fact, artistic simplicity is one of the major virtues of these authors. Simplicity of form forces teachers "to get off [their] podiums and drop the pose of expert" (p. 57). The work of Ramp and Ridout (1995) describes very illustratively how values such as honesty, respect, responsibility, compassion, self-discipline, perseverance, and giving can be taught through children's and young adult literature. These authors see literature as a powerful tool for teaching values. They illustrate this by describing each value and then give a 51-item annotated bibliography.

Emphasis on the classics deprives students from appreciating their own literature–one with which they can identify. Small (1977) continues to contend that adult

or "so called" classics put students at a great disadvantage. The well-written junior novel, in contrast, invites and welcomes students to meet it as equals. Students can then become real authorities on the literary craft of books less technical than classics in understanding how characterization, setting dialogue, and theme work. He concludes that "developing in students an appreciation for and ability to cope with devices of literature is an important part of the English teacher's role. Literature is surely the human race's greatest art form because it is the means that we have found most suitable and flexible to express nearly all that we want to express" (p. 59).

Sharing this author's view is Stahl-Gemake and Wielan (1984); Bancroft (1994); Ramp and Ridout (1995); and Ohanian (1998). Stahl-Gemake and Wielan (1984) see this type of literature as allowing students to encounter values and issues with which they can identify socially, emotionally, intellectually, and attitudinally. It has a cathartic effect. Yet, these authors are not saying that one kind of writing is better than another. Instead, they are purporting that literature teachers must meet students where they are in their own experience, helping them to appreciate what is closest to them, and then move them onward in appreciating other works. Ohanian (1998), in her article entitled "Some are More Equal Than Others: Teaching and Learning Literature With Children and Young Adults," shares the idea that the cultural absolutists do not help students in their holistic literary growth, e.g., when they say "every ninth-grader should read Great Expectations." Instead, she says every classroom should have a variety of books so that students can move from the known to the unknown, from what they are comfortable with to what they can aspire. She posits: "To encourage a child to read Nancy Drew stories without ever pushing her Madeline L'Engle or John Bellairs is criminal" (p. 107).

Whether it is first grade or high school, Ohanian (1998) believes that teachers must grapple with the issue of literary content for they are not teaching merely for today, but for tomorrow. One source, then, is not equal to another. There must be progressive growth in exploring contemporary, classical, young adult, and biblical literature.

Ryken (1974) affirms the position of several others mentioned above when he describes literature as a vehicle in which life's experiences ride. In fact, he states that it is the "interpretive presentation of [life's] experience in artistic form" (p. 13). In a later work, Ryken (1987) elaborates on this aspect of experience. He says that the writers of stories usually write because they intend to say something significant about human life and experience, not just reiterate something that is trite. Their characters, especially the protagonists, are intended to be representative or exemplary people as they and other characters undertake an experiment in living. Readers, who, in an academic setting, happen to be students, bring to the texts interpretive presuppositions of what they expect from writers, and, as a consequence, given the writer's intentions, find value and meaning in the literary works.

## The Study of Fiction in Seventh-day Adventist Schools

Ellen White, the central pioneer of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, has written widely on the reading and studying of fiction by young and old. It is interesting to observe that of the approximate 2000 visions given to her during her 70 years of ministry, the last 1 had to do with the question of the reading matter perused by the young (White, A. L., 1959). So important was this subject to her that the Index to her writings lists more than 450 references to the reading and studying of literature, including duplications

and excluding entries about studying the Bible and other inspired writings (Cobb, 1966). Cobb further states that "for sixty-odd years, Ellen G. White continued to repeat, elaborate, and emphasize these counsels" (p. 1). Her chief concerns are recorded in Fundamentals of Christian Education (1923), Testimonies for the Church (1948), Counsels to Teachers, Parents, and Students Regarding Christian Education (1913), Messages to Young People (1930), Ministry of Healing (1905), and The Adventist Home (1952a). In all of these works, White seeks to warn against a type of reading material that is impoverished, plot-dominated, violent, sentimental, sensational, saccharine, and "trashy"–readings that would rob the mind of knowing God fully and of meeting the challenges of daily living. Waller (1965) says that sensational novels in White's day "were almost one hundred percent trash" ( p. 19). When she used the word "fiction" in her writings, Waller explains, she was addressing a brand of literature that encouraged readers to indulge in stories of that nature. He concludes that the absence of "sheer factuality was not White's definition of fiction" (p. 21), for factual or historical works that detailed crime, atrocities, and other particulars were also condemned by her.

She has not, however, discouraged the reading of literature that strengthens the power of concentration, calls attention to the beauty and aesthetics of language, and elicits critical and analytical skills in interpretation–stories with a real intellectual challenge, that are strong in theme, action, characterization, setting, and other literary and artistic elements. This is inferred from her counsel when she states: "Old and young form the habit of reading hastily and superficially, and the mind loses its power of connected and vigorous thought" (White, 1952a, p. 415).

Arthur White (1968), in a letter to Eloyce Scharffenberg, throws additional

illumination on this when he writes in response to her query as to whether Ellen White used fictitious stories in her Sabbath Readings for the Home Circle: He says:

> Seventh-day Adventists are a people who live by principle, and we must determine our course of action by certain principles, rather than just to turn on words. . . . We have to get down to principles on this thing. What is the fruit of the reading? What may be the tendencies? To what do these things lead? . . . The facts are that there is a good deal of reading of that which is true which would be detrimental and such is condemned in the references which I have called your attention to. So the question does not rest alone on whether it is an actual account of what actual [sic] took place or whether it is not. There are deeper issues than this. (A. L. White, 1968, p. 2).

The approach that Seventh-day Adventist educators take to these counsels should, therefore, be in relation to the way Ellen White perceived the literature of which she spoke. Eisner (1991), cutting away at the dichotomy between truth and fiction, declares: "Works of poetry and literature are not true in the literal sense, but they can be true in a metaphorical sense" (p. 108). Expanding on this concept, he declares:

> When we use literature, for example, to enlarge understanding, literal truth becomes an irrelevant criterion for appraising its utility. A piece of fiction can be true and still be fiction. Fiction, in the metaphorical sense of truth, is 'true to life'; it helps us to perceive, experience, and understand what we have previously neglected. (p. 108)

In 1968, the Australasian Division Educational Advisory Committee appointed a sub-committee to make recommendations on the study of English literature at the secondary and tertiary levels in Seventh-day Adventist schools and colleges. This resulted in a report entitled: The Aims of Teaching Literature in Seventh-day Adventist Schools and Colleges. In this report, careful attention is given to statements made by Ellen White concerning the study of literature inclusive of fiction in a contextual way. The report examines the many ways the word fiction is used and clearly discriminates between serious literature and light and trashy literature. It emphasizes the point of view

that imaginative works cannot be isolated from literature that builds the powers of critical and evaluative judgments that are so necessary for life. Comparing a firsthand knowledge of life through literature as against mere conceptual writing, the report states:

> Many of the insights embodied in imaginative literature are of a distinctly different kind from those stated in conceptual form in ordinary discursive prose, and cannot be translated into conceptual form without distortion. The actual sense of life as it is experienced–not as a state, but as a living process with finely fluctuating nuances of feeling, and complex fluid relationships–this is something that only the particularizing insights of great literature can fully realize. To say this, is not to deny the value of conceptual thinking in its proper sphere; it is merely to recognize that its function is limited, for its tendency to generalize inevitably blurs in some measure the experience it seeks to interpret. (p. 6)

One of the primary purposes of teaching literature, according to the report, is to cultivate within students the ability to discriminate between what is good and what is undesirable in reading and programing. Students' axiology becomes informed so they know what is of value, what is beautiful, what is worthy. Teachers of literature should, therefore, train their students to see "literary merit not just as a product of structure or style, but as a function of the total meaning of a work–of the fineness of its insights, the quality of its moral implications, and the truths of its exploration of human life and nature" (p. 6). White (1905) establishes the pre-eminence of the study of the Bible, but does not at the same time discredit the importance of creative and imaginative works: "It is well, even essential, to obtain a knowledge of the world in which we live; but if we leave eternity out of our reckoning, we shall make a failure from which we can never recover" (p. 311).

In terms of value, the Australasian Division report endorses what many other writers and researchers have said that the chief values of literary studies "lie in the way they lead constantly outside of themselves, to a deeper understanding of human nature,

personality and interrelationships" (p. 8). "The proper approach to literature," the report continues to suggest, "forces us to evaluate our own existence, and to make vital discriminations between the healthful and malignant in our culture, both in relation to God's purposes for man, and in comparison with the culture of other ages" (p. 8). Here is where literature from the various periods fall, for example, the Romantic, Renaissance, Realistic periods. The report finally declares: "Indeed, one of the chief values of literary studies lies in the way they lead constantly outside of themselves, to a deeper understanding of human nature, personality, and interrelationships" (p. 8). Fundamental human concerns in literature address the things that help students in their everyday lives. They provide them with a balance that helps them realize that the human experience is one experience–all belong to a common human bond. When students become aware that their experience is not unique to them, but that others have encountered similar situations, they gain strength to go on. This is what literature provides.

The report concludes with a "reject" and a "recommendation" list. Suggested literary works are given for high school–Forms I-V, which could be modified for local settings. These fall within the genres of prose, poetry, drama, and imaginative works. The conclusion is that works of imaginative literature that offer real intellectual challenge, encouraging students to think critically and evaluatively, works that are strengthening and enriching to the mental and spiritual faculties of students, that do not encourage hasty and superficial reading, can be of value to students. These are not necessarily works that are "pure" in nature, for life is not like that:

> Such works may well contain accounts of crime and cruelty, without being morbid or excessive, may well contain excitement, without being superficial or merely sensational; may well explore the world of romance and imaginative vision,

> without being unreal; may contain intense feeling, without sentimentality; and may be witty, while still offering significant insights into human experience. Such works, moreover, may well have an intensely moral quality, even though their complexity does not readily lend itself to the kind of approach that looks for easily paraphrasable moral "lessons" that can be extracted from "the story" itself, and viewed in isolation from its wholeness. (p. 12)

One can hardly undertake a study of the teaching of literature as a vehicle of education in Seventh-day Adventist schools without examining the writings of prominent researchers, apart from E. G. White, such as L. W. Cobb, P. T. Gibbs, J. O. Waller, and W. P. Bradley. These people have presented carefully researched, interpretive viewpoints on the subject. White has written prolifically on the subject, explaining what she means when she warns against literature that beclouds the mind and corrupts the soul as against literature that builds the character and strengthens the mind to think and interpret critically. Cobb (1966) highlights, explains, and summarizes what White means by all her counsels on the subject. He shows how "trashy" literature can be used as Satan's strategy to confuse the senses while valuable literature can be used to strengthen the mind. He lists characteristics of each group and shows what types of literature could be used at every level of education–elementary through tertiary. Waller (1965), preceding Cobb (1966), voices a similar position and gives a clear distinction between literary works that can be considered "trash" as against works that develop and strengthen the mind.

Bradley (1970) continues the tradition set by those before him and extends their findings in his paper entitled: Ellen White and Literature. This was presented to the Committee on the Teaching of Literature in Washington, DC, on June 15, 1970. He emphasizes White's position on the subject of literature to show that she was not against

serious literature that causes the mind to think critically and to find value and meaning. He says: "As for the study of literature, Ellen G. White plainly states that the pursuit of knowledge in literature should not be discouraged" (p. 2). He supports his statement by making reference to White's work Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Children (1913, pp. 19, 36). He goes on to suggest that youth should be "sufficiently cultured in the various disciplines and in the social graces so that they will not go out from our schools as ignorant or boorish people" (p. 2). Actuality of material is not necessarily the way White gives approval to a work of literature; rather, criteria of the work's intrinsic value on the mind of the reader are what matter. "Novels," "fiction," and "fictitious readings" are words Bradley feels Ellen White spoke out against, deeming them as "tools of Satan" (p. 4). Her counsel toward this was not limited to Christians but to everyone, for the kind of literature prevalent at her time of writing was highly plot-dominated, suspenseful, compulsive, and maudlin in nature in such a way that it "fastened its tentacles upon its victim as alcohol does upon the drunkard" (p. 4). It is sensational stories of love, crime, and so forth. In judging literature fit for the inclusion in an English curriculum, the test, he says, should be "the fruitage in the life of the reader of the selected work" (p. 9). Literature chosen should not glorify or perpetrate the corruptions of ancient paganism, inculcate false philosophies of life, develop an attitude of love-sick sentimentalism, and a distaste for life's realities (p. 9).

Tippet (1949), a veteran scholar on White's counsel on fiction, lays a foundation for what Bradley (1970) says about the fiction White condemns. He argues that the same reason a biography is considered good literature applies to other forms of narrative writing. A biography is good, he says, not because it is factual, but because readers see

in it "a mirror that reveals how we ourselves conform to the ideals which motivated the life of the [person] we are studying" (p. 2). The same is therefore true in any other type of narrative work that portrays human life in action. Tippett (1949) argues that since no human life is perfect, Christians have a tendency to reach out for the ideal, but fractured virtue is all they find. This yearning for the ideal–ideal in love, honor, chastity, faith, accomplishment, etc.–is what makes the study of Romantic literature so inviting, for it provides a "glimpse into a utopian world where virtue prospers and triumphs over vice" (p. 2). He sees truth as a great concept that cannot be bound or limited to any form. So, if truth can be found in biography, it could also be found in imaginary disposition of men and women. Tippett (1949), therefore, airs a position on which other veterans (e.g., Gibbs, 1962; Waller, 1965, 1967) concur in regard to the teaching of imaginative works:

> Many earnest, conscientious persons believe that all forms of imaginative literature should be completely eliminated from one's reading. But with the bulk of the world's literature taking that form, and with certain educational attitudes hoary with tradition maintaining that a knowledge of the major works in that field is a part of what we call culture, it does not seem impertinent to ask what we are going to do with the teaching and recommending of certain fictional classics in our schools. The question is not a simple one. It presents difficulties and problems.
>
> It is not wise, or pious, or heroic to try to settle it either by ignoring it with a shrug of the shoulder or with a blanket proscription of every form of imaginative literature. In the first place, it can not [sic] be ignored, for the query will perennially arise, Why do you use it?" In the second place, though fiction be proscribed in the classroom, it may be and is being read openly or surreptitiously by thousands of our youth. Is there no guidance for these? Shall we close our eyes to a very definite responsibility in helping youth to see the difference between the holy and the profane in their reading? Personally, I can not [sic] go along with those who say or believe that imaginative forms of literature are evil per se and in toto. Such a stand does violence to one's intelligence. (p. 4)

White (1955) in Sons and Daughters of God endorses literature that builds the intellect and promotes a sense of values. It is obvious that her negative opinion is

targeted against the light and frivolous. She declares: "Pure healthful reading will be to the mind what healthful food is to the body" (p. 178). And further defining the type of reading material for study, she declares in Messages to Young People (1930): "Resolutely discard all trashy reading. . . . Those who have indulged in the habit of racing through exciting stories, are crippling their mental strength and disqualifying themselves for vigorous thought and research" (p. 280).

Gibbs (1962) postulates that the kind and amount of thinking caused by any piece of reading is a good test of its merit. He sees a work that induces constructive, wholesome thinking as being worthy of study. Truth is an important factor in any type of literature and when this is pitted against error, it becomes a more reliable basis of choice than fact versus fiction.

A strong relationship exists between the central thrust of fiction and the concern of Christianity. Gaebelein (1968) emphatically declares that both Christianity and literature are concerned with the springs of human character. Both have to do with the "outward manifestations of that character in human action" (p. 65). This is so because as a subject, it offers concluded patterns of knowledge, which means that a great deal of it shows how fictional characters come to learn why people behave the way they do. They learn what life is like, and this understanding leads to self-knowledge, which is a basis for problem solving. Concurring with Gaebelein is TeSelle (1974) who confidently declares: "Almost every novel is concerned with the structure of human experience" since they address the felt experiences of people over time whether those experiences are good or bad (pp. 113, 114).

**Importance of Teachers' Approach and Methodology**

Since the ongoing quest of learning is the quest for truth, and, according to Holmes (1993), "all truth is God's truth," teachers of literature, and more so imaginative literature, should always be on the search for specific ways to help students discover truth and meaning in this discipline. Although fiction is non-factual, it can nevertheless be true if the actions and themes lead to a true philosophy of life. Factual stories, loosely labeled true, are sometimes sordid, slushy, and sensational and can do great damage to the whole person of the student. Waller (1979), in tracing the history of Seventh-day Adventists' English education in American educational institutions, describes the views of its founders. He says that up to the year 1900, English education was largely the work of two men: Goodloe Harper Bell (1832-1899) at Battle Creek College and George Washington Rine (1859-1938) at Healdsburg and Pacific Union College. Both men were deeply committed to Christian education having written textbooks that were in use long after their demise. Regarding their beliefs and understanding of the importance of the teaching of literature, he says: "Both Bell and Rine . . . believed that a heart knowledge of good literature would help turn Adventist youth into culturally rounded, spiritually mature, effective witnesses for their faith" ( p. 39). Bell (1900) understood what White meant when she made a distinction between literature that was elevating and literature that was trash. He says that the real study of literature is really becoming acquainted with writings that have intrinsic worth and are valuable to all people at all times. Here is where he feels the Bible is paramount, but there are other writings as well that have a tendency to call into healthy action the nobler attributes of human nature. Such will be contributive to the building up of a whole person. Bell goes on to suggest that this is the

point where the teacher makes a difference. He emphasizes that the English teacher's approach to the teaching of literature will help students develop a pure taste that will allow them to discriminate between real literature and trash. He says:

> The time will come for our pupils when they cannot have parents, teachers, or friends by their side to tell them whether or not a book is good reading. They must learn to recognize for themselves the moral tendency, the literary character, the trend of influence which constitute the inherent power for good or evil in a piece of writing. (p. 6)

When students are prepared to make this discernment for themselves, the problem of what to read and what not to read will no longer be an issue. Agreeing with Bell (1900) is Moncrieff (1993) who endorses the power of the student's mind that is influenced by a teacher's methodology to teaching: He declares: "Superficial and inauthentic rhetoric becomes repellent to one trained to appreciate the best, while those without any higher sense of language's potential remain trapped in their own level" (p. 32).

The literature teacher's approach to teaching, which takes in methodology and philosophy, will allow students to discover the value inherent in literary works. Jones (1989) elaborates on this when he says: "In discussing what teachers do and expect in a literature class, we must first analyze our own perceptions of literature. How we present literature to our classes is fundamental to our students' question of "Why do we teach literature?" (p. 20). He goes on to show that methodology in teaching is important as students are encouraged not simply to read, but to respond in a personal and critical way.

The manner in which literature is presented in the secondary classroom determines the value that is derived. Moncrieff (1993) concurs with Jones (1989) in his view that Language Arts can lead to a more profound understanding of the self, which by

extension includes the world, other human beings, and the Creator, God. Like Jones (1989), he also senses the importance of methodology–a way the literature teacher walks a student through the garden of ideas and interpretive perspectives. He posits:

> To the reluctant literature student who sees every poem as an exercise in symbolic obfuscation, the teacher can, in patient dialogue, tease out the implications of words and lines until the student comes to realize the pleasure of multiple meanings and ambiguities, not to mention how one arrives at them. (p. 32)

He points out that the skilled teacher of literature helps students find personal meaning not by making themselves extensions of the character(s) studied, but by opening their senses to perceive truth. The study of literature is not a process of infusion, he believes, but a process that allows the readers to see for themselves what is there to see. This means that the teacher should possess a sensitivity to distinguish worthwhile qualities in selected literature and the ability to guide and inspire students through various modes of writing to discover truth.

Several approaches could be used by secondary teachers of literature to make this subject meaningful. These include the following:

1. The teacher should help students find meaning in the story not by moralizing, but by discovering. This can be done through an understanding of interpretive presuppositions of what readers expect of writers. Ryken (1987) outlines three of these: First, "the writer intends to say something significant about reality and human experience." Second, "characters in the story [especially the protagonist] are intended to be representative or exemplary people." Third, "characters undertake an experiment in living" (pp. 82-83). Approaching a literary work from these presuppositions allows the reader to move easily from topic to meaning which includes the morals and themes within

the work. For example, examining the biblical story of Lot, one can see how the story gives its own meaning without didacticism. The setting, plot, characters, and theme all show Lot's relationship to the wicked world of Sodom. He cannot envision life without some aspect of the city's materialistic influence. Yet, Ryken (1987) says, "the narrator engages in no moralizing over the characters. He lets their actions do the talking" (p. 87). Didacticism can become a foil to the student's God-given powers of analysis and synthesis.

2. The teacher should have a personal Christian philosophy and world view that is objective. The literature teacher's personal philosophy should be Christo-centric, and his or her world view should be broad enough to take in various disciplines. This focused, yet open-minded approach of the teacher will allow students to make value judgments of imaginative works under study. Holmes (1993) says:

> A world view is not the same as a theology. Christian theology is a study of the perspective itself as disclosed by biblical revelation. It looks within, whereas a Christian world view looks without, at life and thought in other departments and disciplines, in order to see these other things from the standpoint of revelation as an integrated whole. (p. 59)

When a personal Christian philosophy is established, the teacher can turn around events and actions in the novel that may be out of sync with students' ideals and morals. The teacher can skillfully frame the work by setting up parameters for understanding interpretation. By using a technique that allows for both instruction and facilitation, the teacher could ask significant questions that will lead to discussion, enabling students to listen to each other and follow up on the insights and critical responses of others.

3. The teacher could allow the imaginative work of literature to move along the line of a quest for truth. A work of fiction is true if it reflects imaginative accuracy, and if

the events lead to a true philosophy of life. Writers see truth in different ways, but the teacher of literature should be able to encourage students in the pursuit of truth by giving them the technical and philosophical tools necessary for this exercise. Gaebelein (1968) establishes a difference between truth and error. He gives three approaches: "from the point of view of revelation alone, from the point of view of revelation plus reason, and from the point of view of reason only" (pp. 28-29). He says that the Christian teacher's approach should be from the point of view of revelation plus reason. Further, he builds a convincing argument to suggest that revelation alone may lead to irrationalism with the danger of denying the God-given faculty of reason; and reason alone often bypasses God's revelation ending up in rationalism and humanism; but when revelation is tied to reason, truth is better perceived (p. 29). This approach is a tool that teachers should give students of literature so they could think, analyze, and interpret with confidence and not merely rely on other critics' thoughts. The works of critics should serve as a catalyst to stimulate students' minds toward original thought. Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his famous essay, "The American Scholar" (cited in Whicher 1960, p. 65) calls this "man thinking."

4. Teachers can approach the teaching of literature as an opportunity to give students an invaluable acquaintance with concrete depictions of human experience. This approach, TeSelle (1974) suggests, will provide students with a full understanding of the scope their response must embrace. The Christian English teacher is not satisfied with a mere theoretical approach to the subject. White (1952b) declares:

> The true teacher is not satisfied with second rate work. He [she] is not satisfied with directing his [her] students to a standard lower than the highest which it is possible for them to attain. . . . It is his [her] ambition to inspire them with principles of truth, obedience, honor, integrity, and purity–principles that will make them a positive force for the stability and upliftment of society. (pp. 29-30)

Human experience is not simply a tag; rather, it encompasses the whole range of literature. Literature allows for the discovering of meaning through explication and analysis as theme, characters, structure, and other textual features are explored. This leads to a greater understanding of self and others.

Arthur White (1959), in his letter to Thomas Straight of Southern Missionary College in Collegedale, Tennessee, who wrote asking him if it is right or wrong to study fictitious, literary works of men as commonly taught in English and American literature classes of today, emphasizes strongly the role of the teacher in this study. He says:

> There are skilled teachers among us who find that they can impart to their classes information concerning those authors and their works which suffices to give the student the basic information which is thought to be essential without requiring a great deal of reading in those areas which the Spirit of Prophecy Counsels warn us against (A. L. White, 1959, p. 1).

His letter records the perplexity with which teachers in the field of literature as well as students are faced, but affirms the need for an approach from a fully informed standpoint–one that is free from criticism and springs from good judgment and a sense of value.

Recognizing the range of positions that teachers of English have toward this course of study, Denison (1980) cites a survey that was done in the summer and fall of 1977 when academy English teachers and librarians were surveyed to determine the extent to which fiction was accepted for use in the secondary classroom. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: the first asked for personal and school statistics, the second requested the respondent to rank on a scale of 1-10 factors that might influence selection practices, and the third listed 35 titles in 10 subject areas most of which were entirely fictional. Respondents were asked to evaluate along the line of specific questions

pertaining to perceptions of the works' suitability for academy classrooms. The results showed a difference between librarians and English teachers. Librarians approved more readily the books they read and knew. Instructors of English, with or without library experience (some English teachers also worked as librarians), were more cautious with their approval. This was in keeping with the researchers' expectations since they believed that teachers have more "visibility of their materials through homework assignments and diffusion of their materials into students' homes where fiction is often strongly criticized" (p. 16). Another interesting revelation was the fact that those titles considered "classical" were rated higher by all and had more recognition than those considered "modern": "79.4 percent recognition and 0.74 approval, compared to 58 percent recognition and 0.70 approval" (p. 18).

This esteem for the classics or great works of the ancients is reflected in Jones's (1989) article, "Why Study Literature." Jones shows the function of literature in the life of students–the way it helps them to discover and understand themselves and to form value judgments as they engage in reading and responding to the works of authors. Different works appeal to different personalities, and the teacher's judgment will allow him/her to try out several. Jones cites the case of Marilyn Lane (not her real name), a young woman who sat for 3 years in his English classes, rarely cooperative and interested in nothing that took place in the class. She constantly demonstrated a "brash, inarticulate apathy about school, English class, and everything worthwhile in life . . . and masked her scholastic inferiority with sneers and sarcastic put-downs, but stood apart from her crowd in a lonely sort of way" (p. 18). In accordance with Denison's (1980) reported survey findings, however, Jones was amazed one day when he heard Marilyn reading aloud

excerpts from Sophocles' Antigone, a Greek noblewoman character in the Greek classical drama named for her, "Antigone." Marilyn read with confidence, gusto, enthusiasm, and empathy Antigone's words:

> Say that I am mad, and madly let me risk
> The worst that I can suffer and the best:
> A death which martyrdom can render blest.
> . . . . . .
> No one at my side
> No one to regret,
> Uncelebrated love
> Is all I have for my last walk . . .
> No tears will mourn me dead. No friend to cry.

Marilyn's demonstration shows the power of literature in the lives of students. She was "into" the literature and vicariously identified with the character's despair, defiance, and desire for justice. Jones (1989) concludes that a reader-response approach remains a powerful and effective approach in engaging students in a way that leads to self-discovery and acceptance. Rosenblatt (1978) earlier emphasized this connective process–a correspondence or matching what is in the reader's experience with the print on the page. The mingling of the reader's experience, text, and response to the text makes up the whole work under study–it is a consummate experience that helps the reader come to terms with who he or she is.

The literature teacher's approach to the subject and methods used in teaching are also emphasized by Tippett (1949)–a veteran on the interpretation of White's counsel on literature. Expressing the dilemma that teachers of literature in Seventh-day Adventist schools face, he sees the role of the teacher as being central in the way value and meaning are conveyed. If the teacher's philosophical premise is theistic, the problem is lessened. He says that one's ontology, epistemology, and axiology inform practice. The Christian

literature teacher becomes the best person qualified to choose from the great tide of literature those works of men and women that have in them the nearest approach to beauty and truth. He declares:

> Tragedy, therefore, can serve as a teacher of truth in the hands of a skillful teacher, for as in the sad story of Samson, there are many modern examples of men who have similarly made shipwreck of faith, and we learn to choose virtue by viewing and abhorring vice, as well as by seeing the rewards of the righteous. Comedy, likewise, in its critical definition, can be made a teacher of truth in a wise teacher's hands, for it makes human failure incongruous and urges us to try again. Thus literature may become the handmaid to religion if it makes a youth see where lie life's heroic heights and its most tragic depths. (p. 6)

In declaring this, Tippett (1949) is not discrediting White's counsel on literature; rather, he is suggesting that her counsel should not be taken as a blanket proscription against all narrative writings, and at the same time, he is establishing the significant role of the teacher. He, therefore, defines his position:

> Is this discussion a plea for the novel? Not at all, except within the postulates for the high moral romance. Is it any skirting of the plain counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy? It truly is not intended to be, and if it does, this writer will be the first to acknowledge his error if it can be shown that the counsel given must be taken as a blanket proscription against all narrative literature. Does it mean that Shakespeare has a place in our academy and college literature courses? I leave that [as] an open question. Does it mean that there should be no restrictions upon what we read or what we teach? God forbid. Does it not rather suggest that a great responsibility is laid upon the individual teacher to seek that wisdom from Above in keeping the margins wide between what we approve and what we disapprove? (p. 7)

TeSelle (1974) also senses the importance of this human response when literature is taught in a Christian classroom. One of the purposes of education is to allow for critical and interpretive thought–an intellectual and emotional response. She says:

> A novel and a Christian have something in common. They are both concerned with a response. A novel presents man experiencing, man responding to his world and other men; a Christian is a man [woman] responding to God and other men in

> trust and love. Both are concerned with basic orientations of man's being. (p. 167)

Knowing how to respond is the work of the skilled teachers of English as they lead students at every level into doing so. If this subject is not carefully taught, many students will dislike the reading and studying of literature and will, therefore, lose out on the value of this discipline. Gerald Graff (cited in Ritcher, 1994), famed writer, historian, literary critic, and a professor of English and Humanities now at the University of Chicago, tells his autobiographical story of his reading experience as a child, showing his dislike for books and literature. Although he came from a highly literate middle-class Jewish family, he could not bring himself to appreciate anything above comic books and sports magazines. Entering college was traumatic for him because of his fear of failure. It was only after he was exposed to a lively discussion on a required text, Huckleberry Finn, along with the guidance of a creative literature teacher that he was able to formulate his own thoughts and make an intelligent response to the literary debate in class. According to Ritcher (1994), his experience shows that "although a good book essentially teaches itself, the flip side is also true: a great teacher is one who knows how to let the book teach itself" (p. 41).

The teacher's approach and methodology become important also when children's and young adult literature are taught. Foresman (1968) and Moore (1997) show in their separate works that young adult literature like children's literature is instructive and enjoyable to high-school students if it is approached from a contemporary literary theory perspective. This approach helps students discover intriguing ways of thinking about how language works in stories as well as provides exciting ways for the teaching of

literature. When this takes place, students find it relatively easy to enjoy the beauty and aesthetics of their language as well as to discover for themselves value and meaning in the literary works.

The Bible is considered the greatest of all literature. Its protagonist is Jesus Christ, and He shows that one of the best ways of forging positive values and rebuking negative ones, to get people to discover themselves and think critically, is through the medium of stories. Whenever people could not understand His teachings, He told them a story–many were drawn from life's experiences and others were imaginary. White (1941) gives the reason for this when she says: "Jesus desired to awaken inquiry. He sought to arouse the careless, and impress truth upon the heart. . . . No more effective method of instruction could He have employed" (pp. 20, 21).

These sources affirm the importance of literature, the function of fiction, and approaches and methodologies toward its teaching in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools.

# CHAPTER III

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since my study is an inquiry into the different perceptions and attitudes of teachers of English toward the teaching of literature, it is by nature qualitative. Eisner (1991) points out that a significant feature that makes a study qualitative is its "interpretive character," which means that it tries to account for something that exists; also, it accounts for what "experience holds for those in the situation studied" (p. 35). Agreeing with Eisner are McMillan and Schumacher (1997) who declare: "Most qualitative research describes and analyzes people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions" (p. 391). Further, they say that the goal of qualitative research is concerned with understanding the selected phenomenon from the participants' perspectives. This understanding is acquired by analyzing as well as narrating participants' meanings, and meanings in this sense include feelings, beliefs, thoughts, and actions. My study inquired into the different perceptions that teachers of English hold relative to the teaching of literature in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools.

## Methods of Data Collection

Data for the study were collected using a multi-method approach, which consisted of a questionnaire, interview protocols, and case studies. Sources agree that

qualitative phases of data collection and analysis are interactive research processes that occur in overlapping cycles, and each phase is dependent on a prior strategy and the data obtained from that strategy (Eisner, 1991; Gay, 1996; Maxwell, 1996; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997; Merriam, 1988). The questionnaire consisted of two distinct parts. The first part reflected concepts outlined on a semantic differential scale. The second part reflected statements outlined on a Likert-type scale. (See Appendix A.) This questionnaire was organized to reveal ideological, methodological, aesthetic, and political or contextual aspects of teachers' perceptions toward the teaching of literature.

This screening instrument was pre-tested on 22 teachers of English in and around Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A. Although the pre-testing was done in the United States, the majority of subjects interviewed were from Third World cultural backgrounds: West Indian/Caribbean, West African, Asian, and North American. The majority of these people shared similar cultural backgrounds and beliefs as teachers who live and work in the selected Caribbean territories. This participatory pre-testing, according to Converse and Presser (1986), established for the study an element of validity.

The instrument was then modified and adjusted to reflect recommendations and suggestions from respondents. Some of these modifications had to do with the content and structure of questions, while others had to do with the aesthetic nature of the questionnaire. For example, the original version of question 13 did not address the manner in which teachers approached the teaching of fictional works that contained a few expletives and/or sexual references. It merely asked for teachers' views on the study of fiction. Participants in the pre-testing of this instrument, however, recommended the division of the question into two parts–A and B–with options within each category for

respondents to check appropriately. Also, question 15, which dealt with concepts in analyzing teachers' perception of literature, was originally phrased as a single question. Pre-testing participants, however, suggested a variety of questions instead of only 1, with the added feature of arranging each on a semantic differential scale. The final version, therefore, of this question reflects 7 questions arranged on a continuum of 1 to 10 on a semantic differential scale. By way of aesthetics, only 3 questions on the original version of the questionnaire requested commentary from teachers, but over 50% of those who engaged in the pre-testing recommended that additional lines be provided for almost every question that was asked. These, they believed, would provide more information for analysis as well as create a balanced visual appearance. Furthermore, a significant number of participants recognized the need for at least three appropriate graphics to be interspersed throughout the questionnaire. The final version reflects four.

The questionnaires were then mailed to every teacher of English in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in selected regions of the Caribbean, a total of 34 teachers. The regions selected were as follows: Antigua, Barbados, Bequia, Dominica, Grenada, St. Croix, St. Lucia, St. Thomas, St. Vincent, Tobago, and Trinidad.

This was accompanied by two consent forms (see Appendix B) and three introductory letters (see Appendix C): one from the researcher to each teacher, one from the researcher to each school principal, and one from the Education Director for all these schools to each teacher and principal .

The return rate of the questionnaires was 100%–every teacher of English in the selected SDA secondary school filled out and returned the seven-page survey forms. Although the sample pool was relatively small, it was still incredible that all 34 subjects

returned the questionnaire, although some arrived beyond the deadline date. In about six instances, I made telephone calls to remind subjects to return the forms. They came through various means of delivery: regular postal mail service; express mail service; overnight mail service; fax, followed by regular mail; personal delivery; and messenger delivery. Everyone seemed eager to please the researcher who served at the time as an acting college administrator. Their responses revealed the orientations that they have for the teaching of literature as well as the factors that impinge on the teaching of this subject. This questionnaire served as a screening instrument for the further qualitative aspects of the study–interviews, observations, and case studies. Responses were then organized so as to determine the manner in which the instrument addressed the six research questions, namely:

1. What value do English teachers place on literature as part of the English curriculum?

2. How do administrative and other external expectations influence the literature teacher's choice of literary works?

3. How does the teacher's philosophy of life impact the selection and teaching of literature?

4. In what ways does Ellen White's counsel on literature influence its selection and teaching?

5. How do Seventh-day Adventist literature teachers relate to fiction as a genre in literature?

6. In what specific ways do teachers believe students benefit from the study of literature?

Teachers' responses from the questionnaire were then carefully examined to determine how each corresponded to these six research questions. All of the research questions could have been answered generally and specifically from the questions on the screening instrument. This authenticated the validity of the instrument.

Having established the instrument's validity, interview protocols were conducted as several respondents were interviewed by telephone and face to face. No fewer than 22 telephone calls were made to teachers of English in these regions for confirmation and clarification of responses made on the screening instrument. Calls were made to all 15 teachers who did not teach literature, and approximately seven calls were made to others who taught the subject in order to clear ambiguities, inconsistencies, or to verify or receive additional commentary on their written questionnaire responses. These interviews became a means of triangulating the study, as information given on the questionnaires was verified by what they said during the interview. (See sample interview questions in Appendix D.)

## Rationale for Selecting Case Study Approach

Although the survey instrument served as a screening instrument for eliciting the perceptions of teachers of English about literature as part of the English curriculum in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in selected regions of the Caribbean, it was necessary to focus on how these perceptions match teachers' classroom practice. Although teachers' practice was not one of the six research questions, it was important to the researcher to observe firsthand how survey items on the questionnaire were addressed in actual practice. For example, survey item 13 on the questionnaire asked teachers how

they would deal with a fictional work that contained a few expletives and/or sexual references, as well as a fictional work that gives a true representation of life. Teachers' responses to this twin question could only be verified by observing how they deal with this situation in their classes. Also, survey items 15 (4, 5, 6, 7) and 16, which address concepts relative to teachers' views on literature can be authenticated only by observing their classroom practices. Observation, then, which is an important component of case studies, is necessary for the validation of teachers' responses, and therefore, justifies the need for a case study approach.

Finally, since all of the 19 English teachers who teach literature expressed the view that literature was important for creating for students an awareness of meaning, values, and an understanding of life, and since they generally perceive literature as a powerful vehicle for helping students appreciate the language they speak, it was necessary to discover firsthand how this was done in actuality.

Classroom practice, therefore, became the unit of analysis or the bounded system to discover perception. And since a unit of analysis or a bounded system is influenced by an individual's philosophical, theoretical, or disciplinary orientation, according to Merriam (1988), and either of these could be anything from an institution to a single person, it was appropriate to choose a case study approach to inquire into how the teachers' perceptions of literature influence their practice in the classroom. Observations, interviews, and document analysis all play a necessary part in determining this, and these are all central components of the case study.

## Rationale for the Selection of Subjects for Case Studies

Since qualitative research is an interactive research process that occurs in overlapping cycles, and each phase is dependent on a prior strategy and the data obtained from that strategy, the next and final phase of my data collection entailed a more in-depth and focused approach to inquiry, which was the construction of three case studies. No stated legislation exists as to the number of case studies a researcher should undertake. It all depends on the topic under study and the nature of the inquiry. The decision to conduct three cases studies was made after examining the age groups of the teachers who taught literature in the geographic area that was the most convenient for the researcher–the island of Trinidad. The age range of literature teachers on this island spanned a 20-50 year period. Therefore, one teacher was selected from the 20-30 age group; one from the 30-40 age group; and one from the 40-50 age group. I believed that two teachers taken from both ends of the age continuum and one from the middle could provide a variety of perceptions about the teaching of literature that could be valuable to a wider cross-section of teachers. Other criteria, apart from age range, used for selecting subjects for the case studies were as follows: (1) convenience and proximity; (2) variety in years of teaching experience, and (3) variety of educational background.

Criterion No. 1, convenience and proximity: Because of the constraints caused by distance, time, and finances, the case studies were delimited to teachers of literature on the island of Trinidad. The closest neighboring regions were Tobago, a twin island of Trinidad, and Barbados to the north. On both of these islands, however, literature is not taught as a distinct subject in the English curriculum; hence, observations on these teachers were not appropriate.

Criterion No. 2, variety of teaching experience: The three teachers have had teaching experience ranging from 1 year to 22 years. The intervening year is 13. I believed that this diversity in experience could have provided a cross-section of perspectives that could be useful and meaningful to a wider audience of teachers.

Criterion No. 3, variety in educational background. Along with age and teaching experience differences, the academic preparation of a teacher might make a difference in the way he or she perceives a problem or line of study. Each of these teachers had academic preparation that spanned a continuum. These preparations were General Certificate of Education advanced levels (GCE), Associate's degree, and a Bachelor's degree.

The process of collecting data was the same for all three: class observation, document analysis, and interviewing. These were all conducted at the site of the individual schools. All the interviews were conducted after the final session of observation. These were tape recorded and reinforced by script writing. Teachers' responses and conversations were all later read back to them for verification.

## Classroom Observation

Visits were made to the classes each teacher taught over the course of 2 full days. Each teacher taught several literature classes each day. Observation was of a participant nature. This was done with the permission of both the teacher and the principal of each school. The areas observed were the physical classroom, time of day classes taught, teacher's method of teaching, classroom atmosphere and immediate environment, and attitudes of students toward the subject.

Before observing the classes in session and sometimes after class sessions, I examined a variety of documents. These included students' works by way of writing assignments, portfolios, literary device manuals, students' creative works, teachers' logs, forecast records, lesson plans, teaching outlines, creative teaching strategies, textbooks used, and library holdings.

## Interview Sessions

The final phase of the case studies was a face-to-face interview of each case subject. Interview questions, according to Merriam (1988), run along a continuum from highly structured, questionnaire-driven at one pole and to open-ended, conversational formats at the other (p. 73) Since highly structured formats are used for large samples when hypotheses are to be tested and less structured alternatives are used to extract certain information from respondents, the type chosen for the three case studies was less formally structured. These interviews were guided by a list of questions relating to the six research questions, responses from their questionnaires, and observations from classroom teaching, but neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions was determined ahead of time. This allowed for free and open responses to the individual mood and context of each occasion in terms of each teacher's philosophy and perspective, as well as any new ideas on the topic of teaching literature. Patton (1980) poignantly points out that "the purpose of interviewing . . . is to allow [the researcher] to enter into the other person's perspective" (p. 196). From the array of question types from which to elicit information, the *opinion/value* type was chosen since the purpose of the inquiry was to find out what respondents thought about the specific program at hand.

Other types, according to Merriam (1988), are "experience/behavior questions," " knowledge questions," and "sensory questions" (pp. 78-79). All interviews were conducted at schools after the final day of observation. Each interview was tape-recorded and carefully transcribed at the close of the sessions.

After the transcriptions, each teacher was once again called to verify specific statements made and information given. In most cases, teachers agreed with the reported statements and, on few occasions, modifications were made to the transcriptions. The case studies were then written up as Case Study No. 1, Case Study No. 2, and Case Study No. 3. Each case study began with a profile of the respective subject followed by "rich, thick descriptions," according to Eisner (1991, p. 35) and Geertz (1973), of the classroom observations, class settings, documents examined, and interview sessions.

# CHAPTER IV

## FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

### Questionnaire Demographics

Thirty-four questionnaires were sent to every teacher of English in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools within the selected regions of the Caribbean. The return rate was 100%. Women made up the greater portion of the respondents. There were 33 females and only 1 male, with an age distribution that fell between 20-55. (See Table 1.) As can be seen, the significant age cluster for respondents fell within the 20-40 age group category. By way of academic qualification and teaching experience, teachers ranged

1

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA: AGE DISTRIBUTION

| Age Group | No. of Teachers |
|---|---|
| 20-25 | 8 |
| 26-30 | 5 |
| 31-35 | 6 |
| 36-40 | 6 |
| 41-45 | 4 |
| 56-50 | 3 |
| 51-55 | 2 |
| 56+ | 0 |

from those with a Teacher's Training College Certificate to those with a Master's degree. Other qualifications included advanced levels of Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) and General Certificate of Education (GCE), Associate degrees, and Masters' degrees. The greatest percentage of teachers held Associate degrees. (See Table 2.)

2

TEACHERS' ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS AND GENDER

| Gender | Teacher's Training College Certificate | *CXC GCE | Associate's Degree | Bachelor's Degree | Master's Degree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Females | 6 | 9 | 13 | 4 | 1 |
| Males | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

* Caribbean Examination Council/General Certificate of Education.

In terms of years of teaching experience, the range encompassed teachers with 1 to 27 years of teaching experience. Of the 34 teachers who teach English within the selected Caribbean regions, 19 teach literature and 15 do not. The selected regions of the Caribbean were as follows: Antigua, Barbados, Bequia, Dominica, Grenada, St. Croix, St. Lucia, St. Thomas, St. Vincent, Tobago, and Trinidad. These are all beautiful islands which form an arc between Florida in the North, and Venezuela on the South American mainland. Most of them have magnificent beaches, colorful flowers, birds, plants, mountains, and rain forests to explore.

**Interview Protocol and Teachers' Comments**

Fifteen of the 34 English teachers surveyed (44%) do not teach literature as part of the English curriculum in these selected territories. All 15 of these teachers were contacted and interviewed as to the reason they do not teach literature as a separate subject. Since these teachers were spread throughout a wide geographic area of the Caribbean, it was difficult and costly to conduct personal face-to-face interviews. Most of these were telephone interviews. Research allows for this. Pratt (1994) says:

> Face to face interviews are time consuming and expensive to conduct. Consequently, the telephone interview has now become a standard method for opinion research. It is relatively fast and cheap, and with up to six call-backs, over 99 percent of the sample can usually be reached (p. 48)

In no way, this author suggests, is the quality of the data minimized because of this mode of interview. Pratt (1994) argues that respondents should not be underestimated in their ability to respond truthfully, for evidence suggests that "deception is rare in telephone interviews" (p. 48). The quality of the data will depend on the quality of the questions asked. Lavrakis (1987) gives the following suggestions for telephone interviews:

1. Determine the sample design
2. Choose a method to generate a pool of telephone numbers
3. Produce a call sheet for each call
4. Develop a draft introduction and fall-back statements in response to common interviewee questions (such as, "How did you get my number?")
5. Establish a manner of expressing appreciation for filling out the questionnaire
6. Establish a manner of greeting and conversation closure.

It was difficult to know the best time to call teachers since high-school teachers

teach all day. Knowing when a teacher might have a free period was almost impossible to ascertain, given the varied schedules of schools, teachers' individual timetables, and geographic distances between islands and territories. Several calls had to be made to one teacher before it was possible to speak with her. All the teachers were contacted at the schools where they work, and each call lasted for approximately 10 to 15 minutes. The specific purpose of the interviews was to clear ambiguities and inconsistencies observed on the returned questionnaire, to get answers for omissions to questions, to record teachers' views on literature as a subject in the curriculum as well as fiction as a genre in literature, and to document reasons for the non-inclusion of this subject. During the interview, each answer was script-taped and read back to the teacher for her verification at the end of the conversation. Interviewees confirmed that what was read back to them was exactly what they had said in the interview conversation. This strategy of using verbatim accounts served to enhance the validity of the research design.

The interview protocol centered around specific questions. These were asked not in a sequential order or in a predetermined manner. (See Appendix D.) Subjects responded conversationally after I greeted them and expressed thanks for the filling of the questionnaires. Each of the 15 teachers who does not teach literature as a separate subject gave reasons why literature was not taught. Some reasons had to do with the philosophy of individual teachers and that of the school relative to the teaching of literature inclusive of fiction; others had to do with the teachers' academic qualifications, their school's financial constraints, inadequate staffing, and history and practice over time. It was interesting to observe, however, that although literature was not taught by these teachers, most of them saw the subject as being valuable and central to the growth of students' minds.

The following are several verbatim comments made during the telephone interviews in response to questions connected to the respondents' views on fiction and the absence of literature from the English curriculum.

**Researcher's Question**: "What is your view on the teaching of literature in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools?"

> ***Teacher A:*** *Religion should never be a reason for not teaching literature in any Seventh-day Adventist secondary school. Why? because literature, especially fiction, is like life being acted out on a page. Whether it is poetry, fiction, or non-fiction–it is all about human experience, and no one can go wrong with that. I see no problem with fiction, for although the events may not actually have happened, they can happen. I am against romance novels because they give an incorrect view of love, but works like Jane Austen's writings, although fictional, are beneficial to students. They make students sensitive to the issues of life.*

**Researcher's Question:** "What are your perspectives on literature, inclusive of fiction, as part of the English curriculum in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools?"

> ***Teacher B:*** *Although I do not teach literature as a separate subject, I believe that literature can have a positive impact on students. Their education is not complete without it. I don't teach it because I don't have a first degree as yet. I don't have a problem with fiction because when I ask children to do creative writing, I'm asking them to write fiction. Fiction is a manipulative tool that I can use to stimulate their imagination. It helps students to get out of restricted thinking patterns. They [students] tend to have one set way of thinking. They must know that things don't always have to flow in an A, B, C manner. My students find it difficult to make applications to life out of their reading courses and even from basic poetry, simply because they have not been taught to think through literature. Imaginative thinking that comes with the study of literature allows them to be flexible in their thinking.*

**Researcher's Question:** "Why do you not teach literature as a distinct subject in your English curriculum?"

> ***Teacher C:*** *My school does not teach literature as a separate subject, but I do incorporate a little in my language classes. The reason I believe literature is not taught in its fullest form is because of E. G. White's counsels on this subject. The truth is, I personally enjoy literature, but some works such as most of our West Indian literature, for example, V. S. Naipaul's* A House for Mr. Biswas *and works*

*by Edgar Mittleholtzer pose a problem. They are questionable. So, to avoid all of that, we do not teach it as a subject labeled "literature." I teach some poetry and some works like George Orwell's* Animal Farm *when I teach English language classes, but literature as a distinct subject is not taught, and we do not send students to write it as a subject at the CXC or GCE examinations.*

**Researcher's Question:** "What are your personal views on the teaching of literature, and why do you not teach it as a distinct subject?"

***Teacher D:*** *My school does not have literature as a separate subject in English, and we do not send up students for the external examinations in literature. We send them up only for English language. But I believe that literature broadens thinking. I believe that language and literature go hand in hand. I teach some poetry but no fiction. The reason we don't teach it is because we want to be conservative; we want to be on the safe side. No literature is taught in the lower forms, and as a result, students have a real problem analyzing poetry in the upper forms.*

When asked about her personal view of fiction as a viable genre of literature, this teacher replied:

I *believe that fiction develops the creative side of students. Because our school does not teach it, students have a difficult time identifying simple imagery. They are very literal in their understanding and interpretation. This, to me, is a great disadvantage, and I don't think it is fair to the students to deprive them of this benefit. They will certainly run into problems when they get into college without these skills.*

**Researcher's Question:** "Has your school taught literature in the past, and if so, how would you personally account for its absence?"

***Teacher E:*** *Our school has never taught literature as a subject in the English curriculum. I believe that we as Adventists are afraid of the obscene language in literature, especially in Caribbean literature. Since I attended secondary school here as a student, this was so. This is one of the reasons why, after college, I returned here as a teacher because I was hoping to teach what I did not get before. Even in the rural schools on this island, literature is not taught. Recently, there has been a cry and request to the Government by the rural schools for the inclusion of this subject in the English curriculum. Some form of literature is, however, taught in the lower Forms–Forms I & II– but this is basically reading.*

When asked why other books with "cleaner" language could not be selected for

use, the teacher replied: "*Maybe the feeling is that rural children can't analyze. Educators, however, are now asking for literature to be taught in rural schools. The whole thing is that books recommended by the government [Ministry of Education] for students' use aren't good. Too much censoring is needed.*"

**Researcher's Question:** "I've observed that you do not teach literature. Why is this so?"

> ***Teacher F:*** *I do not teach literature, but I believe that literature is a vital subject and should be taught. My school [*the English Department*] does not teach literature, nor do we send students up to write the CXC or GCE exams in literature, but this is so only because of finance and staffing problems. We cannot afford to hire a teacher to teach this.*

**Researcher's Question:** "I know you enjoyed literature at college although you never felt fully satisfied with your own performance in these courses. Now that you hold an English degree, why do you not teach it at your secondary school?"

> ***Teacher G:*** *I am sorry that my school does not teach literature. The reason for this, I believe, is that in the past, books were chosen by the Examination Council, and these contained objectionable words and open un-Christian lifestyle references. That is why literature was discontinued and students were no longer sent up for the local CXC examinations in literature. We used to teach it before the recommended books became so questionable. Now, this has hampered us badly. Students just don't read anymore. I suffered from the lack of a literature background when I was in college because I did not have literature in high school. When I went to college and had to analyze and interpret literature, I was often at my wits end and didn't know what to do. I suffered as an English major in college because I attended this academy. I wish we could start to teach it once again.*

When asked if she did not think she could become a change agent, she remarked: "*We are working on it.*"

**Researcher's Question:** "You hold a first degree in English, why are you not teaching literature as a distinct subject at your high school?"

**Teacher H:** *"I wish I were allowed to teach literature, but my school does not teach it as a separate subject. It is taught in the lower Forms–Forms I & II– but not in the middle and higher Forms."*

When asked why this is so, the teacher replied:

*I believe it has to do with the type of books recommended. The administration of our school is of the belief that the literature program set out by the government is not suitable for our Adventist school–the material is not suitable. Our teachers wrote the Conference* [regional body where school is located] *about this lack and asked them for their permission to have literature taught as a separate subject, but we have not yet heard from them. I believe that students are robbed of a great value when literature is not taught. I think it is wrong for us not to have a literature program. I do my best to incorporate a little literature into my English language teaching, for I believe that English literature makes the whole English program better.*

When asked ot her view of fiction as literature, this teacher replied:

*Fiction is part of who we are and where we've come from. It widens our imagination. Of course, there is good and bad fiction. Students must be taught how to read and discriminate. There are negatives and positives, black and white, but the grey areas, which are what fiction is all about, are what make us who we are.*

These comments are a representation of others made by respondents who do not teach literature as a distinct and separate subject within the English curriculum in selected regions of the Caribbean. In most schools there is an average of three English teachers to each school, so what applies to one teacher automatically applies to the others. These comments suggest, on the whole, that most of the respondents would have liked to teach this subject as a distinct part of the English curriculum in their schools, but tradition, practice, fear of censure because of language, counsels by E. G. White on the subject, finances, and qualified staffing are just some of the reasons that have mitigated against the teaching of literature as a separate subject in these secondary schools.

## Analysis of Research Questions

The seven-page survey sent to all 34 teachers of English in SDA secondary schools within the selected Caribbean regions was analyzed along the lines of the six basic research questions:

I.. What value do English teachers place on literature as part of the English curriculum?

II. How do administrative and other external expectations influence the literature teacher's choice of literary works?

III. How does the teacher's philosophy impact the selection and teaching of literature?

IV. In what ways does Ellen White's counsel on literature influence its selection and teaching?

V. How do Seventh-day Adventist English teachers relate to fictional literature?

VI. In what specific ways do literature teachers believe students benefit from the study of literature?

Research questions I and VI may seem similar, but they are different in terms of focus. Question I asks respondents about their general view of the importance of literature in the English curriculum. They could view it as good, but not important or necessary, or they could view it as important and necessary. Question VI, however, asks respondents for specific benefits that could be derived from the study of literature. Research question I requests a broad panoramic, kaleidoscopic view of the importance or non-importance of the subject, but question VI requests a close-up view of it, with specific benefits that could be derived from its study.

Responses from the 34 subjects who filled out the questionnaire were examined in their relationship to these six research questions. For the purpose of this analysis, the term "survey items" will be used in reference to questions on the questionnaire, making a difference between these questions and the six research questions that control the study. (See Table 3.)

3

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SURVEY ITEMS DISTRIBUTION

| Research Questions | Survey Items |
|---|---|
| I. | 7, 8, 9, 15 (1) |
| II. | 10, 14 |
| III. | 9, 13, 14, 15 (4) |
| IV. | 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 (3,7), 16 (1,2,3) |
| V. | 8, 13, 15 (2), 16 (1,2,3) |
| VI. | 15 (2,7), 16 (1,2,3) |

The six research questions were analyzed by examining the responses of the entire group of 34 teachers where the questions applied across the groups of those who teach literature and those who do not. The method used for accomplishing this was both inductive and deductive. Each of the six research questions was laid out on an open floor separately. The questionnaire survey was then examined question by question as I ascertained which of the survey items on the questionnaire had a correspondence or a

relationship with each research question. When a decision was made on each item, that item was scissored out and placed at the top of the relevant research question. This was the procedure followed until all the items on the survey instrument were addressed. At the end of this procedure, I, along with another informed helper, rechecked each stack for accuracy. On several occasions, one survey item applied to more than one research question. When this occurred, the item was included with those stacks. This, however, was not perceived as a negative problem but rather as a form of triangulating the study in relatedness.

## Analysis of Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked: *What value do English teachers place on literature as part of the English curriculum?* This question was answered by both groups of teachers–those who teach literature and those who do not. The survey items that addressed this research question were 7, 8, 9, and 15 (1). Survey item 7 asked respondents to rank- order the relative importance placed on various areas of English: composition, drama, grammar, literature, and public speaking/journalism, with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important. Thirteen out of 34 subjects ranked it 1 and 2–38% of the total respondents (see Figure 1). For those who teach literature, 10 out of the 19, or 53%, gave it a ranking of at least 2 (see Figure 2); and of those who do not teach, 3 out of the 15 gave it a ranking of at least 2 (see Figure 3). It is of interest to note, though, that for those who teach, only 1 out of the 19 was not certain of the importance of literature; but for those who do not teach, 5 out of the 15 were not certain of its importance.

Survey item 8 asked for the relative importance placed on genres within the broad category of literature; for example: biography, drama, fiction/imaginative works, non-fiction, and poetry. This question evaluated the perception respondents have toward fiction as a literary genre. In response to this, 17 out of the 34 respondents gave fiction a or 2 ranking–a clear 50%. Of those who teach literature, however, 15 out of the 19 gave fiction at least a ranking of 2 (79%), but of those who do not teach literature, only 2 out of 15 (13%) gave fiction a ranking of at least a 2. These two teachers made comments as follows. Teacher 1: "Literature is not taught as a separate subject, but I

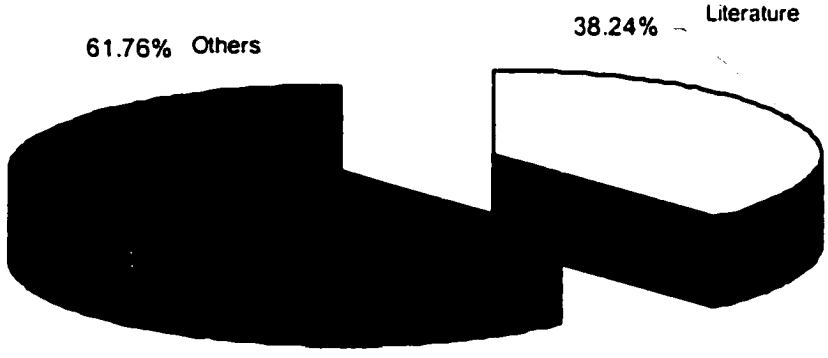


*Figure 1.* Percentage of Respondents Ranking Literature 1 and 2 in Language Arts

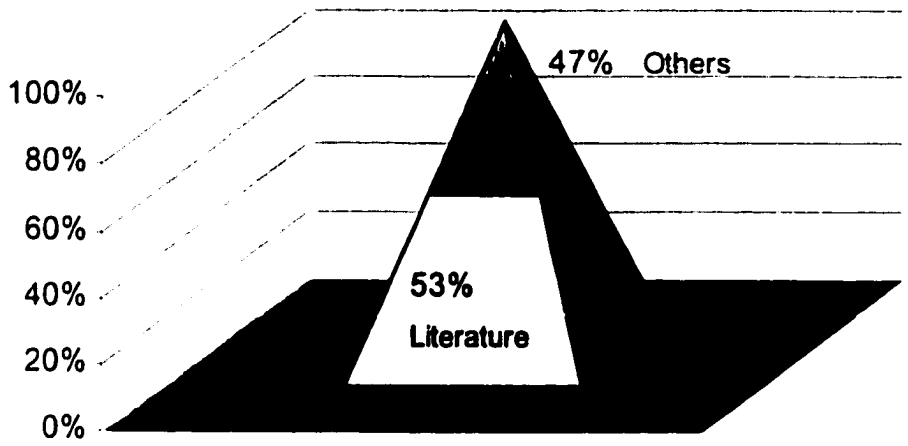


*Figure 2.* Percentage of Literature Teachers Ranking Literature 1 and 2 in Language Arts

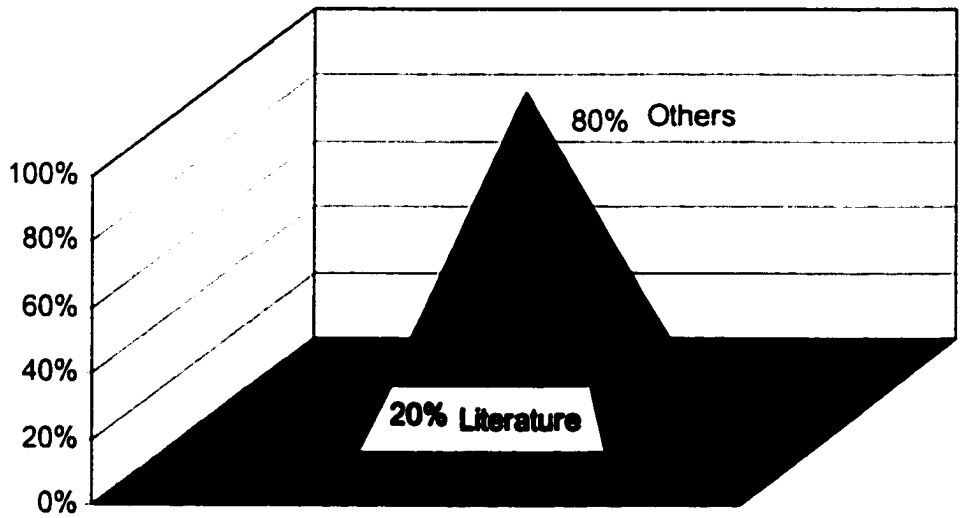


*Figure 3.* Percentage of Non-literature Teachers Ranking Literature 1 & 2 in Language Arts

include certain aspects twice a week." Teacher 2: "I do not teach formal literature, but I expose my class to some literary works." Clearly, for those who do not teach literature as a separate subject, some aspects of it are still incorporated into the language program. When each was asked why her commentary centered on *literature* and not *fiction*, which was the specific thrust of the question, each said she attached literature to fiction since, when the term literature is loosely used, it is tied to imaginative or fictional works.

Survey item 9 examined the importance of literature by types: biblical, Caribbean, classical, contemporary, and women and/or minority. Respondents were to rank-order these types of literature according to the importance they placed on each. Only those who teach literature were assessed. Results revealed that of the 19 teachers who teach literature, 10 gave the highest ranking of 1 to biblical literature; 5 gave the highest ranking of 1 to Caribbean; 1 gave the highest ranking of 1 to classical; 1 gave the highest ranking of 1 to contemporary; and 2 gave the highest ranking of 1 to women and/or minority, but these 2 combined their ranking of 1 with biblical literature. They ranked them equally. (See Figure 4.) No one directly gave women and/or minority a high ranking of 1. Additional space was provided on the survey for comments for each type of literature, and several respondents were uncomfortable with literature authored by women who project in their works a feminist agenda. Eight out of 19 gave this type of literature a low 4 and 5 ranking.

Survey item 15 (1) also addressed the first research question. This item listed concepts that fell along the line of a semantic differential scale. The first concept addressed literature as a component of an SDA high school's English curriculum. On a semantic differential scale of 1-10, with 1 being indispensable and 10 being dispensable,

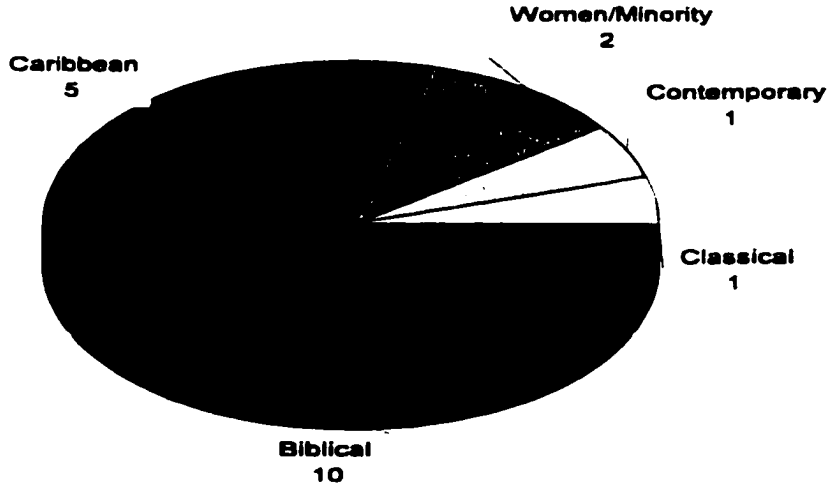


*Figure 4:* Ranking of Literary Types

29 of the 34 respondents, or 85% of the entire group, gave it a 1-3 ranking, deeming it as indispensable to the curriculum. A strong difference, however, was seen in the way respondents gave the highest ranking of 1. Of the 19 who teach literature, 13, or 68%, gave a 1 to its importance; and of the 15 who do not teach literature, only 7, or 47%, gave this high ranking of 1.

It could therefore be assumed from this analysis of Research Question I that literature is perceived by teachers of English as being important to the English curriculum in Caribbean Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools, but that there are reservations as to the type of literature that is preferable. Fiction is not a favored genre for teachers in schools that do not teach this as a separate subject, and biblical literature is the type most favored by both groups. It is interesting to note that although biblical literature is the type most favored, no one has listed any biblical title in the literary works he or she has planned to include during the 1999-2000 school year in English classes, in response to

survey item 14. Respondents were silent on classical and contemporary types even though these are the works most studied in schools, but they were very open in their low perception of literature authored by women and/or minorities.

## Analysis of Research Question II

Research Question No. II asked: *How do administrative and other external expectations influence teachers' selection and teaching of literature?* Only the 19 teachers who teach literature responded to this question. The other 15 teachers did not, since they did not teach literature. Survey items that related to this research question were 10 and 14. Question 10 asked respondents to rank-order, with 1 being the greatest, which of the following factors have exerted the greatest influence on their personal beliefs and preferences of literature selection for classroom study: (1) my own personal beliefs and preferences; (2) my school or administration; (3) my local conference/union education department; (4) the ministry of Education (government); (5) parents and the community; and (6) the local church pastor.

Additional space was provided for commentary as to one's selection. Ten of the 19 respondents who teach, 53%, gave a high-ranking 1 to personal beliefs and preferences; 7 gave a high 1 to their Ministries of Education within their given territories; and 2 rated school or administration influences as most important. (See Figure 5.) The 7 respondents who gave the highest rank to the Ministry of Education were the ones who usually prepare students to write the final regional examinations (CXC) or the London General Certificate Examinations (GCE). These are the examinations that give students entrance into college or university. Most of the respondents who gave a high 1 ranking to

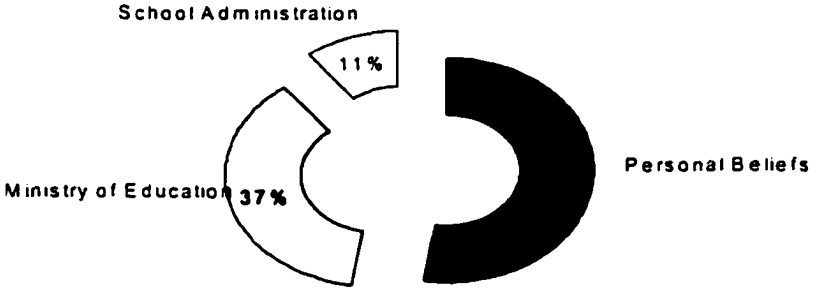


*Figure 5.* Percentage of administrative and other external expectations that influence the selection and teaching of literature.

personal beliefs and preferences explained that they do not prepare students to sit the regional or overseas examinations in literature. Their students write only the English language final evaluative examinations; hence, they have the freedom to choose their literature.

Survey item 14 requested respondents to list the types of literary works they planned to use in their curriculum during the current school year–1999-2000. These literary works ranged from educational journals and magazines to classical works. Twelve out of the 19 respondents who teach literature indicated texts that were of a contemporary and classical nature–63% of respondents. The teachers from the islands of St. Croix and St. Thomas listed an entirely different set of works from teachers in other islands. This difference occurred because, in these schools, students earn a high-school certificate at the end of high school years, which they use for entry into college and university, unlike other islands where students must earn passes at CXC or GCE for entry into college/university. Because of this practice, teachers are more free to make their own selection of texts without the control of the government. Among the titles listed by

teachers from these territories were: "The Smuggler" by Canning, "The Gift of the Magi" by Porter, "The Road Not Taken" by Frost, "The Fox and the Woodcutter" by Aesop, "Prologue to the Canterbury Tales" by Chaucer, and "Sonnets" by Shakespeare; short stories such as "The Boar Hunt" by Vasconcelos, "The Necklace" by de Maupassant, and "TheTell-Tale Heart" by Poe; drama such as Twelve Angry Men by Rose, Our Town by Wilder, The Glass Menagerie by Williams, Macbeth by Shakespeare, and Pygmalion by Shaw; novels such as David Copperfield and Great Expectations by Dickens, The Mill on the Floss by Elliot, and The Last Specimen by Aiken. These are representative of works used by teachers in the northern Caribbean islands.

Most of the literary works listed for use during the 1999-2000 school year by teachers outside of the American Virgin Islands were contemporary and classical works such as: Bite In 1, 2, 3, by Gray, Sun Song by Mordecai and Walker-Gordon, "The Cay" by Taylor, Native Son by Wright, "Crick Crack Monkey" by Hodge, "A Cow Called Boy" by Palmer, Shane by Schaefer, "The Sun Salutes You" by Palmer, "The Necklace" by de Maupassant, The Smuggler by Canning, Animal Farm by Orwell, The Merchant of Venice and Much Ado About Nothing by Shakespeare, The Scarlet Letter by Hawthorne, Canterbury Tales by Chaucer, Tales from Shakespeare by Charles and Mary Lamb, Oliver Twist by Dickens, Lord of the Flies by Golding, and The Pearl by Steinbeck.

In conclusion, administrative and other external factors appear to influence the teacher's choice of literature depending on whether students are prepared by teachers to write the CXC or GCE examinations. In schools where students are not sent up for these examinations, English teachers seem to be more free in choosing texts based on their own personal beliefs and preferences.

## Analysis of Research Question III

Research Question III asked: *How does the teacher's philosophy of life impact the selection and teaching of literature?* This question was not addressed by those teachers who did not teach literature because they did not identify with the practice. Everyone was asked to fill the entire questionnaire, but those who did not teach literature did not respond to items that they thought did not apply to them. Survey items that related to this were items 9, 13, 14, and 15 (4). Survey item 9 asked respondents to rank-order the relative importance they placed on various of types of literature, with 1 being most important. This was previously addressed in the preceding research question, which showed biblical literature being given the highest ranking by 11 out of the 19 respondents who teach literature. Caribbean literature followed, with 8 respondents giving it the high ranking of 1. As was previously mentioned, writing of the CXC or GCE examinations seemed to make a difference in the emphasis placed on this type of literature.

Classical and contemporary literature were not given a ranking in relationship to this question. Out of the 19 who teach literature, only 1 ranked it first. Literature authored by women and minority people was given the lowest ranking of 4 and 5 by 8 respondents. It seemed obvious that scepticism toward literature by women prevailed. Additional space was given for comments on this type of literature in survey item15 (7) on concepts toward the teaching and selection of literature, and some respondents made comments as follows: "Many of these women do not have a Christ-centered approach, and much of what they advocate leans heavily on a type of liberalism, which has been responsible for some of the chaos in our world." "My personal dislike for the feminist movement would prevent me from teaching literature that promotes a feminist agenda."

"[It] should not be the main text for focus." "There is a difference between a feminist agenda and bringing to others the consciousness of women and their survival. Such works should be carefully screened before they are selected." These statements projected a measure of uncertainty and fear toward this type of literature. The teacher's philosophy of life obviously impacted on the non-preference of this type of literature.

Survey item 13 addressed the issue of dealing with a few expletives and/or sexual references in literary works and the perception of fictional works as a true representation and philosophy of life. This item was examined by the 19 respondents who teach literature. Four of the 19 perceived works that contain some expletives or sexual references as not being worthy to be taught at all; 9 indicated that they would choose an alternative text; 2 indicated that they would use the works but delete the "unworthy" sections; and another 4 indicated that they would use the work without calling attention or referring to the sexual references or expletives. Clearly, a large percentage of Seventh-day Adventist English teachers who teach literature, 13 out of 19, or 68%, would discard a literary work that contains even a few expletives or sexual references, or choose an alternative, regardless of the value of its general content or its artistic and stylistic literary features.

By way of methodology in teaching, the majority of SDA teachers would rather use a didactic approach in their teaching than allow students to discover meaning and value from the work. Eleven out of 19, or 58%, indicated that they would use a fictional work that gives a true representation and philosophy of life in such a way as to *teach* as against approaching its study in a manner that would allow students to *discover* meaning. Didacticism seemed to be a comfortable way of working with literary texts.

Teaching the moral appeared to be more important than the literary beauty of the work itself: If there is no "moral" in the story, then that story is no good.

## Analysis of Research Question IV

Research Question IV asked: *In what ways does Ellen White's counsel on literature influence its selection and teaching?* Survey items that related to this were 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 (3, 7), and 16 (1, 2, 3). Survey item 11 requested respondents to rank-order factors that have exerted the greatest influence on their own personal beliefs and preferences regarding the selection of literature, with 1 being the greatest. The catalogue consisted of the following: (1) childhood/family experiences; (2) school/college English classes; (3) biblical and philosophical perspective; (4) E. G. White's writings; (5) book reviews and catalogs; (6) recommendations from other teachers; and (7) other (specify).

The entire group of teachers who teach English responded to this question. Seven gave school/college English classes a ranking of 1;16 gave childhood/family experiences a high ranking of 1; 6 gave biblical/philosophical perspective a ranking of 1; 4 gave E. G. White's counsel a ranking of 1; and only 1 gave a high ranking of 1 to book reviews and teachers' recommendations. It is of interest to note, though, that of the 19 teachers who teach literature, 11 gave the lowest rating of 4 to E. G. White's counsels on literature. This is a significant 58% of those responding. It would appear that teachers tended to select from these options works with which they were comfortable because of childhood experiences, family experiences, and school and/or college English classes. It seemed obvious that they were not willing to explore new territory easily since no one gave a high ranking to book reviews and catalogs or even recommendations from other

teachers. Also, the counsel of E. G. White on the selection of literature has not apparently exerted a high impact on literature selection.

Additional space was provided for respondents to comment on their ranking of these influences in the following question–survey item 12. One of the 4 who gave a high 1 ranking to E. G. White's counsels declared in a commentary:

> *My early exposure to good, clean literature influenced the direction of my life educationally and my choice of career as an English teacher. The text, Phillipians 4:8, became the standard applied to my choices in reading material and still applies today. Also, exposure to professors of English in SDA institutions and consultations with other English teachers with values similar to mine have further enhanced my ability to discriminate. It's my habit to check the writings of E.G. White when confronted with grey areas. Book reviews and catalogs are perused, but are treated with caution if reviewers do not share my philosophical perspective.*

For this teacher, a woman who holds a master's degree with 24 years of service in Seventh-day Adventist schools, book reviews and catalogs are treated with caution.

Another respondent within the 20-30 age-group-category, holding a bachelor's degree, and one who gave a high 1 ranking to White's counsel, commented as follows: "The devil is presently utilizing the written word to sway the minds of young people. As a young Adventist, I want to make sure that my students will not stumble through a work in literature and then fall into the New Age trap."

A third respondent who gave a high ranking of 1 to E. G. White's counsels spoke of how she moved from one form of reading to another because of this influence. This teacher holds a bachelor's degree and has 26 years of teaching experience. She declared:

> *As a high-school student, most of my assigned reading involved poetry and works by Shakespeare. My independent reading, however, consisted of romance novels for the most part. Later, as I read the Spirit of Prophecy books, my views began to change as I saw what Mrs. White had to say about the effects of such reading on the mind and morals. Even in my own teaching experience, I have found that*

*some students are affected by certain types of reading material. Therefore, I avoid using material that does not ennoble morals and my spiritual life.*

One respondent who gave a high ranking to childhood/family experiences, a graduate from the Teachers' Training College in her country, within the age group of 41-45, believed that recommendations from outside sources cannot surpass the influence of one's early experiences. She asserted: "My childhood experiences were influenced by biblical teachings from my parents. I spent most of my school life in Seventh-day Adventist institutions, which further enhanced what I learnt from my parents. This foundation enhances my way of thinking more than other people's work." From another respondent who ranked childhood/family experiences with a high 1, someone with a bachelor's degree, within the 46-50 age group and 22 years of teaching experience, comes the following comment:

*The importance of reading was influenced by my parents who are/were avid readers. Worship sessions, especially during my formative years, were used to reinforce reading with understanding skills. Family discussions aroused a desire to investigate and acquire further information. In addition, my mother verbally encouraged reading. From early primary school days, my teachers encouraged me to join the public library where the librarian encouraged my passion for books and gave me six library cards. Note must be made of the effect of timetabled reading periods within the curriculum of my primary school.*

Among those who gave the highest ranking to the influence of their school and college English classes was a young respondent within the 20-25 age range, with 4 years of experience, and the holder of an associate degree. Her comment on her choice was as follows:

*My selection of literature for the classroom hinges greatly on what I have been taught in my school's English classes. All the factors listed above [the catalog of choices] are important, but I feel more confident with what I have been taught in school. That was my greatest influence in my selection of literature.*

A final commentary from one who gave a school/college English class a high 1 ranking did not see herself as an SDA English teacher veering greatly from the literary selections she used when she taught in the public school system. She fell within the 41-45 age group and has had 17 years of teaching experience. She declared:

> *I don't find that I vary too much from the way I taught in the public school system. The Christian school setting, though, gives me greater leeway to use the biblical perspective to an even greater degree. In the public school system, I always used biblical allusions that were present in the literature to speak on God's side.*

These are some commentaries from respondents on factors that have exerted the greatest influence on their the selection of literature for classroom study.

Survey item 13 inquired into the approaches that teachers of literature take when dealing with works that contain expletives and/or sexual references. Ellen White's counsel on literature could have an influence on how such works are treated. Because of these counsels, 8 out of the 19 respondents (42%) chose to use alternative works; 4,or 21%, would not use the work at all; 5, or 26%, would pretend the sections were not there; and 2, or 11%, would delete the section(s) completely. The majority of Seventh-day Adventist English teachers, therefore, would have nothing to do with works of literature that contain even small doses of expletives and/or sexual references. (See Figure 6.)

The second part of this survey item dealt with the methodology or approach that teachers have toward fictional works that give a true representation and philosophy of life. They were asked to choose from the following options: (1) use the work in such a way as to allow students to *discover* value for themselves; (2) use the work and *teach* the value; (3) *discard* the work because it is non-factual; (4) other: (specify).

Of these options, 8 of the 19 teachers who teach litera ture (42%) chose to *teach* the value; 6, or 32%, chose to teach in a manner so that students could *discover* the value within the work; and 5, or 26%, chose to combine both the *teaching* and *discovering* simultaneously. White (1952b) advocates that students should be taught to think critically and analytically, and not be mere reflectors of the thoughts of other (p.17). When teachers feel they have to teach the value, then students' minds are not allowed to grow and develop in a manner to help them think critically and analytically.

White's counsel was also reflected in the type of selections teachers make for classroom study. Survey item 14 requested respondents to list the titles of works planned in the curriculum for the school year--1999-2000. Twelve out of the 19 respondents (63%) listed selections that fell in the general category of the contemporary, which includes Caribbean literature, and the classics with emphasis on works of Shakespeare and Dickens.

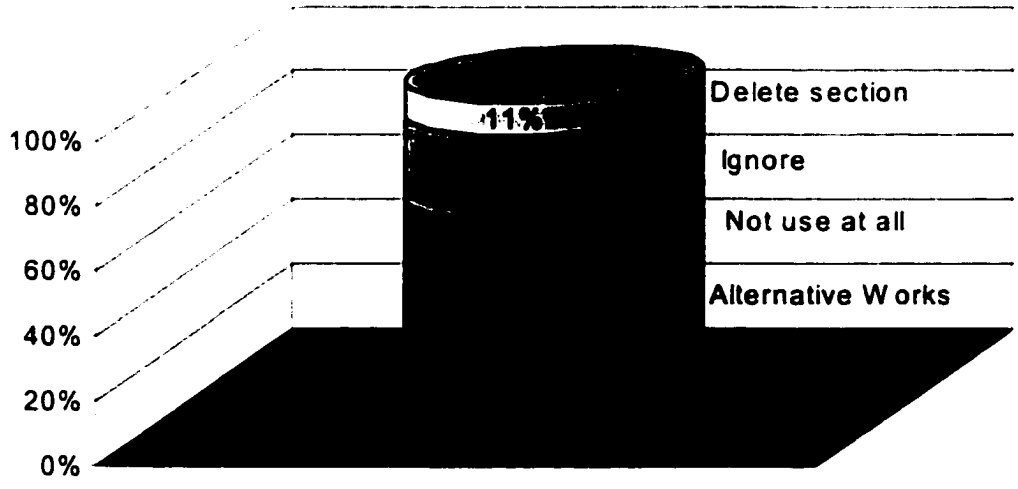


*Figure 6.* Dealing with Expletives and Sexual References in Literature

Survey item 15 gave several concepts that fell along the lines of a semantic differential scale, but sections 15 (3,7) were pertinent in assessing the research question on the influence of E. G. White's counsels relative to the selection of literature. Concepts fell along a continuum of 1-10, and both groups of teachers responded to this concept. Survey item 15 (3) posed the concept of guidelines published by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in determining literary selection. Seven of the 19 respondents (36%) who teach literature gave this a high 1or 2 ranking; 5 gave it a ranking of 3; 6 gave it a ranking of 4 or 5, and 1 gave it a low ranking of 6. Only the group of respondents who teach literature as a separate subject responded to this concept. It was interesting, however, to note that although 12 respondents gave the concept of SDA guidelines a high ranking of either a 1, 2, or 3 on a scale of 1-10, almost all were not conversant with the published General Conference Guidelines on literature. They simply assumed that the guidelines would be in keeping with Ellen White's counsel and biblical injunctions.

Survey item 15 (7) raised the concept of the development of empathy and the imagination as positive outcomes of the study of literature. This item was addressed by both groups of respondents–those who teach literature and those who do not. From those who teach, 9 out of the 19 respondents gave it a high 1 rank; 6 gave it a high 2; 1 gave it a 3; 1 gave it a ranking of 5; and 2 gave it a low ranking of 9. A significant 79% saw empathy and imagination as a positive outcome giving it a 1 and 2 ranking. From those who do not teach literature, 4 gave it a high 1; 2 gave it a 2; 3 gave a 3; 3 gave a 4; and 3 gave it a low ranking of 5. A mere 26% of the 15 respondents gave this concept a high 1-2 ranking for this outcome.

Survey item 15 (7) addressed the subject of empathy and the imagination as positive outcomes of the study of Literature. Seventeen of the 19 respondents (89%) gave a 1, 2, or 3 ranking to the concept of the development of empathy and the imagination as positive outcomes of the study of literature. This means that those who teach literature in SDA secondary schools within the selected regions of the Caribbean really believe that literature can produce highly positive outcomes–outcomes that could build a better society through empathy and the imagination. Empathy promotes kindness, caring, openness, and tolerance; imagination allows people to live in hope and to know that tomorrow could be better than today.

The final survey item that related to the research question of Ellen White's influence on the selection and teaching of literature was 16 (1, 2, 3). This item followed a Likert-type scale with statements relating to the teacher's perception of the teaching of literature. In response to the statement in item 16 (1): *Factual accounts only should be used for classroom study in literature*, 6 of the 19 who teach literature strongly disagree and 12 of this same group disagreed . This overall positive response represented 100% of the total of those who teach literature. For the 15 respondents who do not teach literature, only 3 strongly disagree and 9 disagree. This represented 80% of those who do not teach literature. Looking at the general response, therefore, 30 of the 34 teachers of English, or 88%, believe that factual accounts are not the only forms of writing that should be studied by students in SDA secondary schools. It is of significance to underscore that whether or not schools teach literature as a separate subject, teachers' perceptions of fiction as a genre in literature are highly positive.

In response to the statement in survey item 16 (2), which states that *works of*

*fiction represent true-to-life experiences*, three of the 19 respondents who teach literature strongly agreed, and 12 agreed. This represents an agreement response of 79% . Two disagreed and 1 strongly disagreed. From the 15 respondents who do not teach literature as a separate subject, only 1 strongly agreed and 9 agreed. It was not surprising that from this group, 4 disagreed, but no one strongly disagreed. Analyzing the combined groups of those who teach and those who do not, 24 out of the 34 respondents–71%–feel strongly that fiction reflects true-to-life experiences.

The final statement on this Likert-type scale centered on fiction as being "true" to the highest principles of living. From the 19 respondents who teach literature, 4 indicated a strong agreement and 10 an agreement. This gave a general total agreement of 74%. Of this group, only 1 strongly disagreed and 4 were not certain. For the 15 respondents who do not teach literature, only 3 strongly agreed and 5 agreed. This gave a general total agreement of 53%. Furthermore, no one disagreed and no one strongly disagreed; however, 7 were not certain that literature measures up to this standard.

It is obvious that in respect of these concepts, 18 of the 19 of those who teach literature, or 95%, perceive that not only factual accounts should be used as literature in SDA schools. Also, of the combined group of 34 respondents, a high 30, or 74%, see fiction as reflecting true-to-life experiences, and 22, or 65%, perceive that there is a body of fictional works that is true to the highest principles of living. Therefore, in response to Research Question IV, the influence of Ellen White's counsel on the selection and teaching of literature seemed to be understood in its contextual sense by the majority of SDA English teachers, where her counsels are taken not in isolation, but rather in their broad and general settings and perspectives.

## Analysis of Research Question V

Research Question V addressed specifically the view of teachers relative to the genre of fiction: *How do Seventh-day Adventist teachers relate to fiction as a genre in literature?* Survey items relating to this were 8, 13, 15 (2), and16 (1, 2, 3). Only respondents who teach literature responded to survey item 8. This was already discussed in the analysis of Research Question I. Respondents were asked to rank-order the relative importance they placed on the following genres of literature: biography, drama, fiction/imaginative literature, non-fiction, and poetry, with 1 being the most important. Of the 19 respondents who teach literature, 12 (63%) gave fiction a high ranking of 1. The other 7 teachers gave a high ranking of 1 to the other genres as follows: 2 teachers gave poetry 1; 2 gave biography 1; and 3 gave non-fiction 1. Fiction, therefore, was perceived as being a high priority genre in literature for the majority of Seventh-day Adventist English teachers in the selected Caribbean regions.

Survey item 13 related to the manner in which expletives and/or sexual references in literature were dealt with by English teachers, and was already analyzed in Research Question IV. This question was answered only by teachers who teach literature. It was evident from responses that the majority of teachers would choose a desirable alternative work if possible. Eight of the 19 who teach literature indicated that this would be their option; 5 indicated that they would use the work without calling attention to the undesirable sections or words; 2 elected to delete the section entirely; and 4 chose not to use the work under any condition. In terms of teaching approaches and methodology, of the three options given, the didactic approach of *teaching* the value as the work is discussed seemed to be the most favored approach. Others were as follows: Use the

work in such a way as to allow students to *discover* the meaning and value for themselves; and discard the work because it is non-factual.

Teachers were asked to add other options of their choosing. Six of the 19 who teach literature gave their preference for teaching the work in such a manner as to allow students to think and discover the meaning and value within the work for themselves; 5 indicated their preference for combining both the didactic ( i.e., *teach* value) and the inductive ( i.e., *discover* value) approach. No one favored the option of discarding the work because it was non-factual. The evidence is clear that those who teach literature value the genre of fiction but recognize that students in Christian schools would encounter problems with language and questionable life-practices in narrative accounts. However, they are prepared to work around these issues by their various approaches and teaching methodologies without sacrificing the value that can be derived from the genre.

Survey item 15 (2) addressed the topic of fiction. Because of its general nature, both groups of teachers–those who teach literature and those who do not-- responded. Survey Question 15 dealt with a variety of concepts surrounding the teachers' perceptions of the teaching of literature, and teachers were asked to circle a number that falls closest to their opinion of each of the given labels attached to those concepts. Additional space was provided for further comments. Concepts ran along a continuum of 1-10 on a semantic differential scale, with 1 being most positive and 10 the most negative. The concept outlined in item 15 (2) was concerned with imaginative works as a vehicle for insight and understanding of human life. Of the 34 teachers who responded, no one's response fell lower than the midpoint of 5 on the semantic differential scale. From the 19 of those who teach literature, 14 gave this concept a 1-2 rating (74%); of the 15 who

do not teach literature, 8 gave the concept a 1-2 rating (53%). Even though both groups rated this concept positively with at least a 5 on a scale of 1-10, those who teach literature definitely saw this outcome as a higher priority than those who do not teach the subject.

Survey item 16 (1, 2, 3) was the final item that related to the research question about the value teachers place on fiction as literature. This item was discussed before in Research Question IV. Both groups of teachers responded to this. Statements were given on a Likert-type scale, and teachers were asked to circle whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or whether they were not sure (NC) of the given statements. Survey item 16 (1) presented the statement that factual accounts **only** should be used for classroom study in literature. Of the 34 respondents, 31 (91%) indicated their general disagreement by circling either SD "strongly disagree" or D "disagree." Of the 19 teachers who teach literature, 7 indicated strong disagreement and 12 indicated disagreement. This gave a full 100% support for non-factual works of literature. Of the 15 teachers who do not teach literature, 3 indicated strong disagreement and 9 indicated disagreement. This rendered an 80% general support for the inclusion of non-factual works of literature even from those who do not teach literature as a separate subject. Overall, therefore, there is a general consensus among English teachers that a body of non-factual works of literature should be used as part of the English curriculum in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools.

Survey item 16 (2) addressed the opinion that fiction reflects true-to-life experiences. To this, both groups again responded. Of the 34 respondents, 24 (77%) indicated their general agreement with this statement with either (SA) or (A). Of the 19 who teach literature, 3 indicated strong agreement and 13 indicated their agreement. This

positive response for fiction as a reflection of life represented 79% of those who teach literature. Of the 15 who do not teach the subject, only 1 indicated a strong agreement, but 9 indicated their agreement. This represented 67% general agreement with the statement. With a mere 10% difference between those who teach and those who do not, it is reasonable to conclude that the perception of fiction as being true-to-life for SDA teachers of English is more positive than negative.

Survey item 16 (3) posed the statement, *Fiction can be true to the highest principles of living.* Several respondents in both groups gave not certain (NC) as their response to this statement. Of the 19 who teach, 3, or 16%, were not certain; and of the 15 who do not teach literature, 7, or 46%, were not certain. Because many teachers feel that fiction has the power of leading students in any direction, care and serious attention to the selection of works for classroom study are given by those who teach literature. This uncertainty about the direction of fiction accounts for the (NC) response of teachers in both groups, especially the non-literature teacher group. Of the 19 teachers who teach literature, however, 4 indicated strong agreement that fiction or imaginative literature can be true to the highest principles of life, and 11 indicated their agreement. This gave a general agreement level of 79%. Of the 15 teachers who do not teach literature, 3 indicated their strong agreement and 5 their agreement. This gave a general agreement level of 53%. Of the 34 respondents, 23 or 68% have indicated an overall agreement with this statement.

The perception relative to the value SDA teachers of literature have placed on fiction as a genre in literature is marginal for those who do not teach literature and well above the average for those who teach the subject. They have perceived it as being a

viable course of study. They have recognized that all works of imagination may not reflect or exemplify the language or life practice of SDA Christians. When this becomes evident, however, they are prepared to work around the problems by choosing alternative works or by using a methodology that will not highlight or glorify the undesirable language or lifestyle reflected in the literary work. Both groups of teachers recognize that fiction does reflect true-to-life experiences, and 23 (68%) out of the total number of 34 respondents indicate that fiction can be true to the highest principles of living.

## Analysis of Research Question VI

The final Research Question, VI, examined teachers' perception of the benefit students gain from the study of literature: *In what specific ways do literature teachers believe students benefit from the study of literature?* Both groups of teachers responded to this since every teacher of English has a perception of the value or non-value of literature. Survey items that related to this were 15 (2, 7) and 16 (1, 2, 3). Survey item 15 (2) has already been analyzed with Research Question 4 when respondents were asked to rate on a semantic differential scale of 1-10 their view of literature as a vehicle for insight and understanding of human life. If literature could help to give students an insight into the complexities of life and help them understand how to function amidst its randomness, then, as a course of study, it is worthwhile. For the 19 teachers who teach literature, no one fell below the midpoint of 5 on the scale. Six gave it a high ranking of 1; 9 gave a ranking of 2; 2 gave a ranking of 3; and 2 gave a ranking of 5. For the 15 teachers who do not teach literature, a similar range occurred–no one ranked the concept below the midpoint of 5, but the distribution was different. On a scale of 1-10, 5 teachers gave the concept a high ranking of 1; 3 gave a ranking of 2; 3 gave a ranking of 3; 2 gave

a ranking of 4; and another 2, a ranking of 5. It is significant to note that for both groups of respondents, literature was perceived as a vehicle for insight and understanding of life.

Survey item 15 (7) developed the same theme of the value derived from the study of literature as survey item15 (2). It addressed the concept of empathy and the imagination as positive outcomes of the study of literature. Fifteen out of the 19 teachers, or 74% of those who teach literature, indicated a high ranking of 1 or 2 on a scale of 1-10 for this concept. For those who do not teach literature, however, only 6 of the 15, or 40%, indicated a high ranking of 1 or 2. Although both groups recognized that empathy and the imagination are positive outcomes of the study of literature, teachers who teach literature appeared more confident on this concept than those who do not teach literature. Empathy allows people to be more caring, sympathetic, and honest. It works for the building of a better society. The development of the imagination allows people to see beyond their present state, making them more hopeful and confident.

Survey item 16 (1, 2, 3) dealt with perceptions about the teaching of literature, which related specifically to the value that could accrue from the study of literature. Again, those who teach literature indicated more assurance and confidence in the perspective that literature can give to students a true representation of life. According to Ryken (1973), it is the "interpretive presentation of experience in artistic form" (p. 13 ). One hundred percent of those who teach literature agreed that literature should be inclusive of non-factual works. For those respondents who do not teach literature, 12 out of the 15, or 80%, indicated their general agreement with the concept. There was, therefore, in both groups, an overall positive perception of the inclusiveness of literary works (fiction and non-fiction) for the benefit of students.

Survey item 16 (2) addressed the statement that literature/fiction reflects experiences that are true to life. Unlike the 100% agreement with the previous statement for those who teach literature, only 1 teacher indicated strong disagreement and 2 indicated disagreement with the statement that works of fiction reflect true-to-life experiences. When interviewed, these teachers showed a difference between their view that the study of literature should be inclusive of a variety of works and this statement about the true-to-life nature of fictional works. They indicated that "some" works of literature do reflect true-to-life experiences effectively, but others are deeply "fictitious" and unreal; hence they do not qualify as being true to life's experiences and therefore should be discarded. Of the 15 teachers who do not teach literature, only 8 (53%) indicated their general agreement with the statement. It was interesting to note, though, that no one outrightly disagreed and no one strongly disagreed with the statement; nevertheless, seven were not certain that literature/fiction reflects true-to-life experiences. This large percentage reflected the problem that non-literature teachers have in their schools relative to the offering of this course as a specific subject in the English curriculum. Most of them are not clear on what constitutes acceptable works for literary study in high school and are still unsure of the role of fiction as to "if" and "how" it should be approached for study in the SDA English classroom.

The final survey item was 16 (3). This addressed the following statement: *There is a body of literature, though fictional, that is true to the highest principles of living.* Both groups of teachers responded to this statement. Of the 19 respondents who teach literature, 15 (79%) indicated a general agreement with it. Eleven teachers expressed agreement, and 4 expressed strong agreement. One disagreed with the statement, and 3

were not certain. Of the 15 respondents who do not teach literature, 8 teachers (53%) expressed general agreement with the statement; 3 teachers strongly agreed and 5 agreed. No one from this group strongly disagreed, but 7 were not certain. The hesitation to give an opinion by the 47% of those who do not teach literature is worthy of note. The same percentage was not certain on the previous statement that suggested that fiction reflects true-to-life experiences. From this observation, it appears that in spite of the plethora of published opinion on the importance and value of imaginative works of literature, there is still a degree of reticence and resistance on the part of some SDA secondary school English teachers in certain sections of the Caribbean region to include fictional works in the English curriculum. The study of fiction remains an unsettling problem for a significant percentage of SDA English teachers.

## Summary of Survey Analysis

As noted, the six research questions of this study have attempted to analyze the perceptions of teachers of English in all of the Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools within selected regions of the Caribbean. These perceptions to some extent have coincided with the actual practice of some teachers in the classroom. In other cases, the perceptions are not supported by practice, for a large percentage of teachers who do not teach literature know and believe that this subject is important and vital for high-school students. For these teachers, other factors militate against the inclusion of literature from the English curriculum. Some of these factors are linked to the tradition or history of the school over several years: Literature simply was never taught. Other teachers are uncomfortable with the types of books selected by the Government Ministry of Education in their territories for classroom use. Within the Caribbean, students are required to write

a local or external final qualifying examination at the end of their fifth year in high school, which will give them entrance into college or university. These examinations are the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) or the London General Certificate Examination (GCE). For the local examination, texts for literature are prescribed by the Government. Often, the recommendations made by the Government Ministry of Education are not viewed favorably by the administration and teachers of English at some Seventh-day Adventist schools; hence, students are not sent for the examinations and no literature is taught. Some teachers do not teach literature because their church school cannot afford an additional staff budget. For still others, literature is not taught as a separate subject because of the influence of Ellen G. White's counsels on the selection and reading of fiction, which is a significant part of literature. In order, therefore, to be conservative and "safe," both the school's administration and English teachers do not teach literature.

The survey, however, showed that several teachers do incorporate some genres of literature into their English language program. In the lower Forms, selected poetry is used, and in the upper Forms some narrative works, especially works from the classics, are selected with care. Contemporary works, which include Caribbean or local literature, are not popular since these are often very realistic and reflect language and lifestyles that are not approved by many teachers or school administrators. On the surveys, when teachers did indicate their use of contemporary and/or Caribbean or West Indian literature, it was because these teachers prepared students for the local CXC examination. It is of interest to note that, in many instances, when teachers who do not prepare students to write the final evaluative examinations were asked why other works

of literature could not have been chosen for classroom study so as not to rob students of the benefit of the subject, they could not give a satisfactory response. These are teachers who teach in schools where the tradition of a non-literature curriculum has a binding effect.

Overall, English teachers in these selected regions of the Caribbean believe that the study of literature is beneficial to students and that literature should be taught. They believe that fiction, chosen with care, reflects the experiences of life, and students can come to terms with realistic situations in their own lives and also relate to the life situations of others. They can discover that things are not always "black" or "white," but are more often "grey," which is where reality for many falls, and which is generally the area that fiction addresses. Teachers also believe that literature helps students to become better thinkers because of the analytical and interpretive skills required to work with images, symbols, and nuances in works. Furthermore, they believe that literature helps students become better writers because of the constant exposure to a variety of writing styles and the effective way in which language is used in literature to convey meaning. However, these same teachers, because of factors outside of their personal perception of literature–factors over which they have little or no control–do not teach it as a separate and distinct subject in their school's English curriculum.

# CHAPTER V

# CASE STUDIES

## The Validity of Case Studies

A common understanding held by many researchers is that the possibility to generalize findings rests primarily on a statistical process through which a sample is randomly selected from a given population. The larger the sample, the greater the generalizability (Gay, 1996; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). Eisner (1991) points out that "through the development of inferential statistics, truly elegant procedures are available for selecting and analyzing samples in ways that allow researchers to extend what they have learned to a larger world" (p. 197). He says researchers see not only sampling, "but *random* sampling as being the cornerstone on which statistical inferences are built" (p. 197). In this setting, what is true of the sample is, to a large extent, true of the population. For this reason, quantitative researchers feel that this mode of research can best deal with threats to validity, which is an essential aspect of research. Maxwell (1996) points out that "quantitative and experimental researchers generally attempt to design, in advance, controls that would deal with both anticipated and unanticipated threats to validity" (p. 88). He cites Campbell (1984) who endorses the effect of randomization when he says: "*Randomization* purports to control an infinite number of 'rival hypotheses' without specifying what any of these are" (Campbell, 1984, p. 8). Critics of the qualitative approach to research see this mode of inquiry, inclusive of case

studies, as being weak in terms of its ability to generalize to other populations as well as to establish validity, especially in relationship to threats. According to McMillan and Schumacker (1997), "[Quantitative] designs maximize objectivity by using numbers, statistics, structure, and experimenter control" (p. 34). It views the world as a single objective reality, establishes relationships between measured variables, organizes procedures in sequential steps before the study begins, provides designs to reduce error and bias, and has a goal of universal contest-free generalizations.

How then can case studies establish generalizability or validity when there is no random sampling, for example, N=1, and no design made in advance to deal with anticipated and unanticipated threats? Brinberg and McGrath (1985, p. 13) attempt an answer. They posit: "Validity is not a commodity that can be purchased with technique" (cited in Maxwell, 1996, p. 86). Instead, these authors see validity as depending on relationships of the researcher's conclusions to the real world. Maxwell (1992, 1996) sees it as goal rather than a product. He perceives it as being relative since "it has to be assessed in relationship to the purposes and circumstances of the research rather than being a context-independent property of methods and conclusions" (Maxwell 1996, p. 86). And Eisner (1991) pursuasively points out that "although the logic of random sampling is impeccable, it is also apparent that in our daily lives, we do not randomly sample in order to generalize" (p. 197). Generalization in qualitative research has to do with the creation of an image, which could become a prototype that could be used generally. The case study, therefore, is one of the most powerful ways of creating this image that is generalizable. Because of the rich descriptions, narratives, holistic observations, analyses, and interviews that are involved in focusing on a particular case,

it is difficult not to see these as reflections of the real world–they engage the reader and cause him or her to see, feel, and often touch the reality of a given situation. The case study makes the researcher a "connoisseur," according to Eisner (1991)–one who not only tastes the wine, but senses the awareness of appearance, smell, color; he/she *experiences* the wine. The wine making becomes an art (pp. 64, 65). Such is the case study in qualitative research. Because of its vividness and concreteness, it is particularly strong at giving a picture of real life. Merriam (1988) declares: "[It] is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 16). Clifford Geertz, one of America's leading anthropologists, is known for his emphasis on "rich, thick descriptions," which he associates with qualitative inquiry. This, he feels, is what makes this approach to inquiry valid and generalizable as against a quantitative inquiry (Geertz, 1973). Concurring with him, Eisner (1991) posits:

> Qualitative inquiry, and even more generally, qualitative thinking, is not some form of exotic activity reserved for those of special talent or for those who have been properly initiated into special forms of cultural anthropology, it pervades our day-to-day judgments and provides a basis for our most important decisions: whom one chooses for a mate, where one chooses to live, the kind of career one chooses to pursue, how one relates to family and friends. . . . This mode of thinking constitutes one of the ways in which human intelligence is manifested. (pp. 15, 16)

A case study is an effective way of gathering data in qualitative research since it provides insights into and interpretation of a chosen phenomenon. Instead of hypothesis testing, as is the goal of quantitative research, a case study provides discovery of a given situation and this could be particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, or inductive by nature. According to Merriam (1988), it "does not claim any particular methods of data collection or data analysis" (p. 10). She goes on to suggest that any or all methods of

gathering data could be used, and these could include anything from testing to interviewing. This holistic approach to research has resulted in several definitions from writers in the field of qualitative research. For some, it is seen as a process which tries to describe and analyze a complex phenomenon as it unfolds over a given time (Wilson, 1979). For others, it is an examination of a particular instant that reveals the body of the class to which the "instant" belongs (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Walker, 1980); and still for others, it is "to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the groups under study" as well as "to develop general theoretical statements about regularities in social structure and process" (Becker, 1968, p. 233). It is an appropriate design to use when the researcher finds it impossible to separate the variables of the phenomenon from their context (Yin, 1984).

Deciding whether to use the case study as a vehicle for research depends on several factors, e.g., the nature of the research questions, the amount of control, and the desired end-products (Merriam, 1988). Another factor given by Merriam (1988) and supported by other writers is what is called a "bounded system," which can be identified as a focus of the investigator, e.g., an instance drawn from a class. This could be a teacher, school, or program (Alderman, et. al., 1983; Smith, 1978).

Merriam (1988) describes the four essential properties of a qualitative case study–particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, inductive (pp. 11-13)–and other writers have supported her descriptions. The property of being *particularistic* suggests that the case study focuses on a particular situation. She cites Shaw (1978) who sees this property as "problem-centered, small scale, entrepreneurial endeavors" (p. 2). The property of *descriptive* suggests that the end-product is a "rich and thick" description of the

phenomenon under study. The *heuristic* property suggests that the case study should illuminate readers' understanding of the phenomenon. This could show how previously unknown relationships and variables, according to Stake (1978), "can be expected to emerge from case studies leading to a rethinking of the phenomenon being studied" (p. 47). Finally, according to Merriam (1988) the *inductive* property suggests, for the most part that case studies rely on inductive reasoning (p. 18).

In light of this holistic approach to research and inquiry that penetrates a phenomenon in depth in order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of teachers' perceptions about the teaching of literature in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools within selected regions of the Caribbean, a case study approach was chosen.

The cases were delimited by the following criteria:

1. Convenience and proximity by way of geographic location. All the subjects taught on the island of Trinidad. The two nearest islands to Trinidad were the twin island of Tobago and the island of Barbados. In both of these areas, however, literature was not taught as a distinct subject in the curriculum.

2. Variety in ages. Teachers were chosen from the youngest, middle, and oldest age category on the island.

3. Years of teaching experience. Experience included the least, the greatest, and the middle in terms of service years.

4. Variety in educational background. English teachers in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools were chosen with the lowest, middle, and highest educational qualification on the island.

## Methodology for Selected Case Studies

All of the three case studies were female. Each subject was observed as she taught several literature classes, documents (where necessary) were examined, and interviews were done with each teacher by means of a tape recorder. Since the strength of qualitative research derives primarily from its inductive approach, its focus must, therefore, be on understanding meaning. Maxwell (1996) sees "meaning" in this sense as the inclusion of "cognition, affect, intentions, and anything else that can be included in what qualitative researchers often refer to as the participants' perspective" (p. 17). Yet, Maxwell (1996) sees this perspective not simply as the accounts of events and actions held by the participants, but as part of the reality that the researcher is trying to understand. Understanding must be experienced by both the participant and the researcher if meaning must result. Several sources see this focus on meaning as being central to the type of interpretive approach that is done in the area of the social sciences (see Bredo & Feinberg, 1982; Geertz, 1973; Rainbow & Sullivan, 1979).

Thus, it is not necessary to collect data and study large samples of population. Maxwell (1996) makes this very clear when he says: "Qualitative researchers typically study a relatively small number of individuals or situations and preserve the individuality of each of these in their analysis, rather than collecting data from large samples and aggregating the data across individuals and situations" (p. 19).

The three subjects chosen from the 34 teachers surveyed fell within the 20-30, 30-40, and 40-50 age ranges. For convenience and proximity, they all taught at different points of the island of Trinidad–east, west, and south. Their teaching experience ranged from 1 year to 22 years, and their educational backgrounds ranged from advanced levels

at the General Certificate of Education (GCE–London), to a bachelor's degree in education. The intervening qualification was an associate's degree. The process of collecting data was the same for all three–class observation, document analysis, and interviewing. Several class sessions were observed, documents were examined, and interviews conducted in relationship to the six research questions, the survey questionnaire, and classroom observations. The type of observation carried out was one from a participant's perspective. Although some authorities see difficulty in this perspective, (Bogdan, 1972; Gans, 1982; Kazdin, 1982; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1980), it was convenient to observe in this way because of the manner in which the secondary school classes were conducted.

According to Merriam (1988): "Participant observation is a schizophrenic activity in that one usually participates, but not to the extent of becoming totally absorbed in the activity. At the same time one is participating, one is trying to stay sufficiently detached to observe and analyze" (p. 94). Earlier, Gans (1982) described the distress of being a researcher participant. He cites four reasons for this: the ambiguity of being two persons at the same time, worry about the flow of research activities, anxiety over how to make sense out of what the researcher is studying, and feeling guilty over the tendency to over-identify with the one(s) studied (pp. 94, 95). I, however, was able to engage in this type of observation with ease, having been an English teacher myself for several years.

**Case Study No. 1**

Teacher No. 1 is a dynamic and effervescent woman in her 40s. Her very appearance gives the impression that teaching and learning in her classroom will be

exciting. She holds a bachelor's degree and has had 22 years of teaching experience in a variety of subjects in Seventh-day Adventist schools and 1 year at a secular school. All of her primary, secondary, and tertiary education was completed at Seventh-day Adventist schools. Before this current year, 2000, she had taught English for 9 years in SDA schools. This gives her a strong exposure to denominational influence in relation to the teaching of literature and the selecting of appropriate texts.

I was able to observe this teacher at work on several occasions in the Forms where she taught English–Forms III and IV. [1]All the students wore uniforms. The girls' blouses were of the same color as the boys' shirts, and all wore school badges of identification. The school building is an L-shaped, brightly-painted, green and white concrete building that houses two stories with ventilated walls all around and a long corridor running along the southern side of the building. It is ideally situated in a tranquil valley surrounded by lush mountains in the eastern region of the island of Trinidad and has an enrollment of 400 with a teaching staff of 29. Of this number, only 4 are teachers of English language

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[1]Secondary schools in the Caribbean pattern their academic levels of instruction after the British system. There is not a direct correspondence between "Grades" and "Forms." Generally, students in the Caribbean complete high school about 1 to 2 years earlier than students in the American system. Form V is the final high school Form. The following is an approximate guide to equivalency:

| Age | US (Grade) | Caribbean (Form) |
|---|---|---|
| 10-11 | 5 | I |
| 11-12 | 6 | I |
| 12-13 | 7 | II |
| 13-14 | 8 | III |
| 14-15 | 9 | IV |
| 15-16 | 10 | V |
| 16-17 | 11 | V |
| 17-18 | 12 | -- |

and literature. Literature was not always taught at this institution. In an interview, the principal explained that this subject was once thrown out because of the nature of books that were recommended for classroom study. For many years, parents and teachers were uncomfortable with recommended selections from the Ministry of Education. However, after she assumed her role as principal, she worked along with the English staff and reinstated the subject as part of the English curriculum.

Teacher No. 1

On the first day of my observation of Teacher No. 1, I arrived approximately 20 minutes before the class was scheduled to start, and I was invited into the staff room where every teacher was assigned a small portion of space–just enough for the teacher's desk and two extra chairs for students. I was invited to sit and was shown several creative works in language arts done by students who responded to an assignment given by teacher No. 1. This assignment was for them to make an original device that would help a student who is a non-native speaker understand and enjoy the English language. Devices were colorful and engaging. These included a range from simple to sophisticated literary games with printed rules, Valentine and other cards, portfolios, and literary device manuals complete with tables of content. One of the games was as large as 18" x 12," complete with a colorful spinning wheel, rules, and answer sheet. To the right of the suspended spinning wheel were pockets fitted with cards, which dealt with spelling, pronouns, nouns and verbs, figures of speech, and bonus blanks. After looking through these, teacher No. 1 and I walked down the open corridor to the classroom of Form IV, where the students had already assembled for class. Seating followed an

orderly pattern of two persons to a short desk. Boys and girls were evenly mixed.

Classrooms were not exclusive to particular subjects taught. Several subjects in the curriculum were taught in the same room. The walls were bare of pictures or posters. There were no book or magazine racks, library shelves, or reading corner. Nevertheless, a dynamic atmosphere prevailed as students chatted easily with each other. Although there was no air conditioning or fans, the classroom was relatively cool. Cool air seeped through an open doorway and ventilated walls constructed of concrete blocks.

As the teacher and I entered the classroom, 45 active students became very quiet as the teacher called the class to order, said a prayer, and introduced the literature lesson for the day, which was a poem by D.C. Berry (USA) entitled: "On Reading Poems to a Senior Class at South High." This was a work taken from Cecil Gray's Bite In IV, a Caribbean text, published in London by Thomas Nelson and Sons (1994). This book is a government-recommended text used at different levels in high schools within the Caribbean region. The teacher's objective for that lesson was to demonstrate the effectiveness of figurative language in poetry and to show the difference between the presentation of poetry and prose. D. C. Berry's poem powerfully utilized the devices of figurative language. The poem is given below:

"On Reading Poems to a Senior Class at South High"

Before
I opened my mouth
I noticed them sitting there
as orderly as frozen fish
in a package.
Slowly water began to fill the room
though I did not notice it.

till it reached

my ears
and then I heard the sounds of fish in an aquarium

and I knew that though I had
tried to drown them
with words
that they had only opened up
like gills for them and let me in.

Together we swam around the room
like thirty tails whacking words
till the bell rang
puncturing
a hole in the door
where we all leaked out.
They went to another class I suppose and I home

where Queen Elizabeth
my cat met me
and licked my fins
till they were hands again.

After reading the poem, teacher No. 1 asked the students if they understood the work. To this question, almost all replied, "No." She then proceeded to tell them that poets utilize various styles and strategies to convey specific messages, and one must understand the language in which the poem is couched in order to extract the meaning. Some of the figures of speech the class examined were symbol, metaphor, simile, personification, and paradox. Teacher No. 1 then asked students to describe how each of these could be seen in the poem. Students responded enthusiastically, and before very long, the class that once looked "as orderly as frozen fish" was transformed into "the sounds of fish in an aquarium." The class became an almost literal re-enactment of the poem under study. A couple of students seated at the back of the class were sleeping, but they woke up as the rest of the class discussed the symbolism of "frozen fish," "water," "package," and other words.

One female student who demonstrated a nonchalant attitude to all that was taking place in the class was asked by the teacher the meaning of the term "symbol." Her response was "I don't know." The teacher, determined to change the student's attitude, used the visual aid of a fluffy teddy bear and asked the student how she would feel if someone had given her that as a gift. The student, determined to be uncooperative, said she did not like bears. But with gentle persistence and perseverance, the teacher was able to bring her to such a point where she was able to say that the gift of the bear could be perceived as a symbol of love, caring, and appreciation.

At a subsequent lesson on the following day, teacher No. 1 continued with the analysis of D. C. Berry's poem "On Reading Poems to a Senior Class at South High" and she reminded the students that the study of poetry was one of the best ways to develop their critical thinking. Having given students some time to think, she asked them to give their informed interpretation of each of the main ideas within the poem. The teacher informed the class that all interpretation had to be supported by the logic within the work. Discussions were wisely guided by her, and the class became a symbolic aquarium with fish swimming all around "till the waters reached my ears." The teacher could not "drown" their discussion, for "they had only opened up like gills for them to let [her] in." Two students sitting next to me finally asked me: "Miss, who do you think Queen Elizabeth was? Was it the teacher's wife or the teacher's literal cat?" I had to conclude that it could have been either. For the class's homework, the teacher gave two assignments:

1. Identify the moods in the poem and use evidence within the work to support your answer.

2. Give the poem another title.

These questions allowed students to use both the affective and cognitive domains of learning.

Teacher No.1 also taught literature in Form III in a different classroom. This classroom was illuminated by the sun's light that peeked through ventilated walls and an open door. These openings also let in fresh air, which kept everyone awake and alert. The classroom was just large enough to accommodate the 40 Form III students who sat two to a desk. Yet, no one felt cramped because, by subtle movements of students throughout the course of the lesson, they were able to expand their own space. This was accomplished through the methodology the teacher used for the day's lesson–role playing. Students were asked to move from their seats and stand to the front of the class to read the sections from the text that represented their roles in the drama they were about to study. Some students played one role up to a point and others took over at later points. This movement of students within the session was helpful in psychologically removing the feeling of congestion in what was perceived as a relatively small classroom.

Pictures hung on the walls of the classroom, but these did not pertain to writing or any form of literature. No book or magazine racks adorned the room; nevertheless, class sessions were always engaging and dynamic. On one of the days, I observed the teacher teach a literature lesson in this Form. On this particular day, she began by introducing her lesson in a very exciting way. In high dramatic fashion, she exclaimed: "Weddings are lovely occasions!" Suddenly, all the young eyes gleamed with light, and they were ready for the next sentence: "Today, we'll be looking at the wedding scene, Act III, Scene V, of William Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing."

Immediately, the classroom was filled with comments and chatter as students turned the pages of their books to the section under study. But before she introduced the scene, she presented a short case study of two young people who were in love and decided to marry because they always felt too sad when they had to say goodbye to each other. Just before the proposed wedding date, however, an argument ensued between them as to the differences in meaning of the words: "wedding," "marriage," and "reception." The young lady had one view while the young man had another. Students were then asked to work in groups and write advice to the couple as to the meanings of these words. After this was done and the advices were shared with the whole class, students noisily volunteered to role play the parts of characters in the wedding scene of Claudio and Hero. I noted with great interest how they vicariously entered into the characters' roles using the Elizabethan version of the Shakespeare text. The teacher used this opportunity to remind the class that English is a dynamic language, always changing, and that people did not always speak it in the way they do today.

After an exciting wedding ceremony, the teacher pulled together the theme and focus of the lesson, calling attention to the contrasting nature of good and evil–two forces that are pervasive in the world. This afforded her the opportunity to integrate faith in the process of learning. She then asked the class several questions based on the wedding scene, and students responded as they were called upon. This brought about a good closure to a class session that included all the main segments of language arts–reading, discussion, and writing. Take-home assignments were finally given, which were geared to help students think factually and critically:

1. Describe the character of Claudio and Hero.

2. Compare the qualities of love and honesty that you have seen in both Hero and Claudio.

3. Do you think that Claudio deserved to have someone like Hero for his wife? Discuss your answer by using examples from the scene to support your position.

Summary of Observation

From observation, Teacher No. 1 appears to be an exciting and innovative person who exudes an atmosphere of confidence and inspires imagination and creativeness in literary appreciation and language learning. Her students' works testify to this in the form of creative and, in some cases, elaborate language games; colorful and innovative literary device manuals; and informative greeting and Valentine cards. She sees literature essentially as a description of life arranged in artistic ways, hence its importance for young students. She indicates this perception from her response to question No. 15 (1) on her questionnaire. This question asked for her response and commentary to the concept–"literature as a component of a high school's English curriculum." On a semantic differential scale of 1-10, teacher No. 1 circled 1, with the following comment: "I believe that young minds should be exposed to literature for information, exposure, and insight." Further, in response to question No. 15 (2), which dealt with the concept of imaginative works of literature, or fiction, she indicated her strong agreement that imaginative works do provide a medium for giving students insight and understanding of human life. The artistry with which good literature is usually clothed must be understood before it can be appreciated. She, therefore, spends time helping students develop an eye for artistic approaches. This is reflected in the many ways she gets her students involved

in the use of symbols, images, recurring patterns, and figures of speech, for in these, meaning is couched. When meaning is discerned, people become excited, and this excitement becomes contagious to the extent that it wakes up students who tend to be sleepy in class.

Teacher No. 1 believes that excitement comes from an understanding of meaning, and this understanding is spawned by teaching strategies and methodology. Her Forms III and IV language and literature classes give evidence of this perception. During the observation of her Form III literature class as students analyzed D.C. Berry's "On Reading Poetry to South High," a couple of students were apparently tired and fell asleep earlier, at the rear of the class. However, shortly after students began getting excited in the explication of symbols, imagery, and figures of speech within the work, these two students awoke and became keenly involved. Another female student who, was formerly demonstrating a nonchalant attitude toward everything that was going on around her and was creating a mild challenge to the teacher, became very cooperative and responsive to the extent that she was able to answer correctly and politely to questions on meaning that were posed to her by the end of the session. This was possible through the teacher's use of a visual symbol of love, a teddy bear, along with quiet persistence, in helping her understand the meaning of the literary device, "symbol." Methodology is a medium for extracting meaning. As an introduction to the Shakespeare comedy Much Ado About Nothing, the teacher gave the class a case study of two young people strongly in love, but who had a misunderstanding over the meaning of three words connected with marriage. Having gotten the class in interactive group sessions for proposing advice to this fictitious couple relative to their misunderstanding, she proceeded to teach the scene from the

comedy. Interest was high, and everyone was ready for the lesson. Teacher No. 1 also perceives literature as a catalyst for provoking critical thinking and analytical writing on the part of students. Evidence of analytic writing was seen from the type of assignments given to students. For example, one take-home question given at the end of the Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing class was as follows: "Do you think that Claudio deserved to have someone like Hero for his wife? Discuss your answer using examples from the scene to support your position."

This teacher demonstrated in her literature classrooms her perception of literature as a subject that is vital for students both for its literary content and aesthetic value.

## Teacher's Perception of Literature

At the end of several observation sessions, the teacher was able to give her perceptions about literature as a viable subject within the English curriculum for SDA secondary schools. This was made possible through the medium of interview. Participant observation of the teacher as she taught several sessions of literature was not enough to determine her perception as an English teacher relative to the teaching of literature. This had to be supplemented by a face-to-face interview. Merriam (1988) observes that participant observation is a major means of collecting data in case study research since it gives a firsthand account of the situation under study, but she emphasizes, "when combined with interviewing and document analysis, allows for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated" (p. 102). And Patton (1980) declared earlier: "We interview to find out those things we cannot directly observe" (p. 196). She moves on to further define this when she says:

> We cannot observe feeling, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world–we have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. (p. 196)

Since, according to Merriam (1988), the key to getting good data from interviewing is to ask good questions, the type of questions chosen for this interview was opinion/value questions in a semi-structured form. Opinion/value questions, according to Patton (1980), are questions that try to find out "what people think about the world or about a specific program. They tell us people's goals, intentions, desires, and values" (p. 207). In an effort to explore the teacher's perception of literature as a viable subject in the English curriculum in SDA secondary schools, several questions were asked the teacher in the quietness of the vice-principal's office. When asked about the importance of the teaching of literature in SDA secondary schools, she said:

> *To me, literature is the embodiment of English, for it opens the door for a wider experience in the use of language. It exposes students to a wide experience so they could become critical thinkers. As a result, they can make informed decisions, they can make intelligent decisions, and they can make unbiased decisions. Then you can have a better society.*

In the light of her answer, I then asked her to what extent she thought the SDA English teacher should be empowered to select the type of books that should be used in the classroom. She replied by saying that the teacher should be the one to determine that since he or she knows the level, ability, and ages of the students. Someone or a group of people in a government office or in an organization's curriculum committee could make suggestions or recommendations, but the final empowerment should be the teacher's. Given that empowerment, it must be assumed that the teacher has a moral, religious, or

philosophical base that would inform his or her judgment on the selection of books. The question was therefore posed: Do you think that the philosophy of the teacher impacts the selection and teaching of literature? To this, she replied:

> *The philosophy of the teacher would definitely influence the choice and selection of literature books, especially if the school is a Christian school. We believe that the purpose of education is mainly to restore the image of God in people; therefore, the teacher's philosophy will allow for the selection of books that will help students to understand the concept of God and salvation in this process of restoration.*

She continued by showing a link between the spoken "word" and the person "Word" as outlined in John 1:1: "In the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "*Literature becomes a part of everything we do; it touches every area of our lives.*" Therefore, she argued, if the teacher is teaching the "word," then the word should point to the Word–a person, and only one with a Christian philosophy can do that effectively.

My next question had to do with her answer to survey item 7 on the questionnaire where teachers were asked to rank in a 1-2-3 order factors that have exerted the greatest influence on their own personal beliefs and preferences regarding the selection of literature. The options listed were childhood influences, school/college English classes, biblical/philosophical perspective, E. G. White's writings, book reviews and catalogs, and recommendations from other teachers. This teacher gave E. G. White's writings no ranking. When asked why E. G. White's counsel on literature did not have an influence on her selection of literature for classroom study, she replied:

> *If I had to redo that questionnaire, I would respond differently; I would have given another perspective. I want you to know that her writings have impacted on my selection of literature. Ellen White spoke out against the reading of cheap literature–novels that cheapen our desires for the heavier material. She calls*

*these cheap books. When we read them, we no longer want to get into the depth of critical thinking. What she is suggesting is that whatever books we choose for study should help students to be individual thinkers because when we engage our desires into the reading of such novels, we are really exercising a certain type of control–mind control– that is crippling. This prevents us from reaching the "higher than the highest human thought could reach" principle.*

"So," I questioned, "why would you give E. G. White's writings a different rank if you had to redo the questionnaire?"

*This is strange, but since I have become so involved in your project, I have re-investigated my own reasons for what I am doing. I was answering those questions from a purely academic point of view and was not as truthful as I should have been. As I think of it now, I would give it a ranking of 2, and where I have given a 3 to biblical/philosophic perspective, I would now give that a ranking of 1.*

My next question had to do with the study of fiction: "Now, tell me something about fiction and how you see it as a viable genre in literature. You said earlier that when White spoke out against the reading of fiction she was talking about light, cheap, trashy material. Tell me, how do you interpret her counsel against the reading of fiction?" To this, she responded:

*White was not advocating that we should not read or teach literature. If she did, then she was actually denying the power of the "word." And she wasn't. Also, we have to look at it by way of one's Christian experience. The only way one can develop a Christian experience is to know the word–the word in both writing and the person of Jesus. So, if students don't read, then they won't be able to understand the Word. Then the Bible will be of no meaning to them.*

"That was very nicely articulated," I told her, but then I asked her specifically: "What then is your view of fiction as it relates to the English curriculum?" She explained:

*Okay, let's look at both sides–negative and positive. In a technical sense, fiction could place limits on the student in terms of the development of the imagination; however, it is positive. It is different from fantasy. Fantasy keeps the student in the given experience, and that can have a debilitating effect on relationships, on*

> *outlook, and on life. It takes imagination to enter into everything. It does not keep you on the earth, but allows you to aspire on the life to come. With fantasy, students don't know at what point to cut off from their fantasy world. They are stuck in that world. They find it difficult to adjust to real life.*

What I heard her say was that imagination is positive since it could result in hope, but fantasy is limited since it keeps the reader in a present state of illusion. My next question, therefore, had to do with this teacher's questionnaire response to survey item 15, which listed concepts pertaining to the teaching of literature. Concepts were given for analysis on a semantic differential scale of 1-10, and teachers were asked to circle a number on the continuum that lay nearest to the variables "meaningful" and "meaningless." Survey item No. 15 (7) stated the concept of empathy and the imagination as positive outcomes of the study of literature, and this teacher circled 1, indicating that these were meaningful. My question to her, therefore, was: "Given what you've indicated about the imagination, how do you see imagination and empathy as outcomes of the study of literature?" She then explained that the development of the imagination helps students to come out of themselves and enter into the experiences of others; it helps them to be able to relate to the experience of others. She saw empathy as going beyond sympathy–she saw it as a deep feeling, a sensitivity to the feelings of others.

I then asked if she thought empathy and imagination could help to reduce prejudice and hatred in society. "*Definitely,*" she replied, *because it helps people to understand differences in others, and this could bring about a better society. People will be more concerned with others' feelings than with their own. Here is where the 'golden rule' will apply.*" She went on to suggest that many of the crimes committed today, such

as robbery, rape, incest, abuse, and murder, could be reduced considerably.

"Now, this may now be an unnecessary question," I concluded, "but as a teacher of writing and literature, how do you see literature as being beneficial to students? What do you want them to have after they've left your literature classes?" She said that students should be able to discuss their thoughts, ideas, and requests clearly. They should be able to think clearly and critically because their minds are trained in interpretation and analysis. She concluded: *"Through the study of literature, students should be able to use words to express themselves through a variety of writing styles. Literature is about life."*

My next question concerned this teacher's response to survey item 7: "Why did you give an equal high ranking of 1 to composition, grammar, and literature on the question that asked you to rank in a 1-2-3 order the relative importance you place on various aspects of English?" Her response was as follows:

> *I did this because I see all of these aspects of language teaching as being equally important. Grammar and literature are equally important. In order to express ideas, you need to have writing skills, and in order to understand and appreciate literature, you also need to be able to appreciate good writing style, which includes the correct use of writing mechanics.*

I then posed my penultimate question: "I noticed that on survey item No. 9 of the questionnaire where you were asked to rank in a 1-2-3 order the relative importance you place on various types of literature: biblical, Caribbean, classical, contemporary, and women and/or minority, you gave women and/or minority zero ranking. Could you explain your decision?" *"I see that differently now,"* she replied:

> *I think I answered that question in a hurry. If I had to answer that again, I would give it a ranking of 1 just like the biblical literature. You see, even in the Bible, women were not given adequate credit and opportunity to express themselves. Today, we are in a women-dominated world, and they are not given enough opportunity to express themselves. A man cannot write like a woman would write.*

*Women can write from a particular experience in a way much different from a man, and people would understand her better than they would a man . Women are people of emotion, and emotion plays a very important role in life. It is not to be perceived as negative, but positive, and we must pay attention to that. Women writers can better articulate the issues of life.*

"If you were asked to give in one sentence your overall perception of literature as a subject in the English curriculum in SDA secondary schools, what would you say?" To this, she unhesitatingly replied: *"Literature is the essence of education."* I then thanked her for facilitating my research by way of the questionnaire, class observations, and interview.

Document Analysis for Teacher No. 1

Apart from observation and interviews, most authorities in the field of qualitative research encourage the use of document and/or artifact examination. Some see this as a broad category of material used in conjunction with other media of research. Holsti (1969) , for example, defines documents as anything including novels, diaries, newspapers (p. 1); and Goetz and LeCompte (1984) use the term "artifact" to cover an equally wide range of material including symbolic records kept by or on participants (p. 153). Other writers see document as any available material or data (Riley, 1963; Selltiz, Jahado, Deutsch, & Cook, 1959).

Teacher No. 1 devises her own method of lesson planning for all her literature and language arts classes. This serves as her personal guide for teaching. Also, an outline of material to be used for language and literature and behavioral and instructions objectives is set out at the beginning of each quarter. This is accompanied by a forecast log that reflects the title of unit or topic to be covered, reference and/or resource material

to be used, teaching/learning content to be covered, and assignments for and methods of evaluation. This forecast log is made at the beginning of each week and is not for a principal's evaluation, but for her own guidance. Along with these, teacher No. 1 has created an original program that utilizes the Bible and the Reader's Digest. It is called the Reader's Digest Home Study Program for it utilizes both the Bible and Reader's Digest. This program involves both parents and children, and it is aimed at strengthening students' writing and reading skills as well as creating a desire for reading outside of the classroom. The child along with the parents selects an article from the Readers' Digest each week. A theoretical framework for this program includes a study of where the child is on the achievement scale in language learning and the appreciation of the aesthetics of language.

The program is structured for students who have not covered important concepts in English and are experiencing difficulty in comprehension and expression skills. Since the program is in a lesson plan format, parents are also shown how they can structure study programs for other subjects. A tentative theory of this knowledge will inform the time and manner of approach for this program, although anyone could benefit from it. Below is a theoretical outline of this teacher's original program:

Readers' Digest Home Study Program

| | |
|---|---|
| LEVEL: | Forms I to V (freshman to senior year) |
| TIME: | 20-30 minutes for each session |
| AIM: | To give students practice in vocabulary development, reading with understanding, oral comprehension, and oral language skills. |

PREPARATION: Student: Writes out a list of words and their meanings for spelling and vocabulary drill on filing cards–two words per card. Use an Oxford Dictionary. Carefully read the selected Readers' Digest's article.

Parent: Prepares Readers' Digest's article. Constructs questions for oral comprehension.

PROCEDURE: 1. Begin each session with the following:

(a) Bible Reading: James 1:5 (promise for wisdom)

(b) Pray and claim the promise in James 1:5

2. Vocabulary Development Exercise:

(a) Student is asked to submit prepared filing cards.

(b) Parent quizzes child on spelling and meanings of each word.

(c) Child is asked to construct sentence with word meaning.

DAY ONE: Oral Comprehension:

(a) Parent discusses and administers prepared questions.

(b) Child responds orally in standard English.

DAY TWO: Article Recall:

(a) Child is asked to orally recall detail in the article.

(b) Child orally paraphrases story/article in standard English.

DAY THREE: Summary Writing:

(a) Child is asked to select main ideas in article/story.

(b) Child is asked to write summary in paragraph form.

DAY FOUR: Correction of Summary:

(a) Parent corrects summary for facts and mechanics.

(b) Child rewrites summary and saves in binder.

The Digest is used because it provides the student with stories and articles that can give information and guidance in creative writing and logical sequencing. Other sources recommended for use in a similar way are Newsweek and National Geographic. These sources are recommended because of their up-to-date content and good writing style. This program has been very successful. She reported that students who have failed the CXC examination, succeeded after 4 months on this study plan.

Although literature classes are not assigned specific classrooms, and no magazine or book racks adorn the English/literature classroom, there is, however, a good library at the school where teacher No. 1 teaches. Here, students can freely access supplementary literary works of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction. This library houses approximately 1,000 books. These include contemporary and classical works by William Shakespeare, John Milton, Charlotte Bronte, Jane Austen, Thomas Hardy, and West Indian

compositions. Poetry from the literary periods in collected and individual works is part of the library's holdings, and students are encouraged to read for classroom assignments as well as for reading pleasure.

Summary of the Perceptions of Teacher No. 1

Teacher No. 1, an English teacher with 22 years of experience and 9 years as an English teacher, sees fiction as being paramount among other genres of literature. She gives it a ranking of 1 above other areas such as biography, drama, poetry, and non-fiction. Yet, in relation to other areas in the language arts curriculum, she gives the teaching of literature a ranking of 3. Grammar and composition are given a preference above literature since she perceives these as a basis for understanding and appreciating literature. This could be a result of her role as an English teacher. In a commentary on her questionnaire response, she says: "I teach literature in a limited way at the Form III level. At this level, literature is approached as language arts." However, her love for this subject makes it come alive in the classroom in exciting and dynamic ways. In her Form IV classroom, she deals with this subject in a more specific way.

Her preference for imaginative literature among other literary genres was motivated by her early childhood experiences, when, as a child, she observed her parents reading separately and to each other. She made the following comment in her response to question No. 12 on her survey questionnaire, on which respondents were asked to explain in some detail their response to question No 11 that asked them to rank in a 1-2-3 order factors that have exerted the greatest influence on their personal beliefs and preferences. The options outlined in question No. 11 included childhood experiences, English classes,

biblical/philosophic perspective, E. G. White's writings, book reviews and catalogs, and recommendations from other teachers. To these, teacher No. 1 gave the option "childhood/family influence" a ranking of 1. She commented: "*The importance of reading was influenced by my parents who are/were avid readers. . . . From early primary school days, my teachers encouraged me to join the public library where the librarian encouraged my passion for books and gave me six library cards.*"

She perceives literature as being highly indispensable as a component in a high school's English curriculum. She sees empathy and the development of the imagination as positive outcomes for students, and literature authored by women as worthwhile even if their writings promote a feminist agenda. One reason for this openness, I believe, is her method of teaching. She works around any negative concept espoused by authors since she has trained her students to think through issues critically. She asks questions that provoke thought and even, at times, plays the role of "devil's advocate" to bring them to the point where she wants them to be.

From my observation of her as she taught D. C. Berry's poem "On Reading Poems to a Senior Class at South High," students were not allowed to simply "scratch the surface" in their interpretations of the work at hand. Superficial answers to questions were met with further questions on the same point to allow students to rethink their first response in more depth. She sees critical thinking, therefore, as a positive outcome of the study of literature and is not afraid of the type of literature used since students will be taught how to evaluate and discriminate the worthwhile from the worthless. This can be supported by her response to question No. 15 (5) on her questionnaire that listed various concepts toward which respondents were asked to indicate by circling on a semantic

differential scale, 1-10, a number that falls closest to the variables: "justifiable" and "unjustifiable" at each end of the continuum. The given concept was: "Tendency of Caribbean and other contemporary authors to use expletives in their works." She circled the number 2, which indicates the fact that she has little disagreement with the justification for the presence of some impolite expressions in local literature. She could work around these without missing the value of the work. At the same time, this teacher would not outrightly choose a work that was out of sync with a Christian philosophy of life.

Finally, teacher No. 1 perceives the teaching of literature as a component in the English curriculum of SDA secondary schools as indispensable. In her interview, she says it is "the essence of education"–the subject in which, for many students, reality dwells.

**Case Study No. 2**

Approximately 30 kilometers from the school where teacher No. 1 teaches is the school of teacher No. 2. In order to reach this school, one must travel south for several miles then west along a busy industrial section of the island of Trinidad and then move south on a long highway, which is smooth and rough at different points of encounter. At the end of this long stretch of paved open highway, followed by meanderings through city streets, the large modern two-storied, cream-and-royal-blue school building looms. Situated on seven acres of land, this school is ideally poised for students in the southern region of the island. It has a large play field and enough space for two additional phases of the school's developmental plan, which include a science block and a vocational center. This school, founded in 1953, presently houses in its relatively new quarters

several departments including a library, food and science labs, a principal's office, and teachers' staff room. It has a current enrollment of 348 students. In some sections of the school, classes are separated by blackboards that form a wall of partition.

The Form I English classroom was cool and bright. Lots of fresh breeze zipped through the several rows of louver windows that opened up into a long corridor. To the opposite side of the classroom were ventilated walls that also served as a natural air-conditioner to the room. In this class on the day of observation, 33 young students, seated on individual chairs with self-attached desks, eagerly waited for their teacher.

Teacher No. 2

Teacher No. 2 appears as a very even-tempered woman in the 30–40 age range, and she holds an associate degree. Her primary and secondary education took place at Seventh-day Adventist schools, and she has had 13 years of teaching experience in SDA schools. The teaching of English language and literature, however, was not her primary area of concentration. Therefore, she sees her present position as a literature teacher as a great challenge, especially since her level of teaching is the earliest Form–Form I. Here she is challenged to get young minds interested enough in reading and appreciating literature so they will have a positive perspective and attitude toward this subject in their later years. Her daily challenge is to engage and hold their interest in a subject that they would not otherwise probably care to appreciate. Before this current year, 2000, she has taught English for 3 years. Her second challenge has to do with the number of students she has to teach in her two Form I literature classes–a total of 74: 41 in one class and 33

in the other. Because of the closeness of the classes within certain sections of the school building, sound from above the blackboard-separators sometimes becomes intrusive. In spite of this apparent discomfort from an observer's perspective, however, students were attentive to the teacher, who made no great effort to pitch her tone above the hum of sound. She spoke, and the students listened and responded.

On the first day of my visit as a participant observer, teacher No. 2 called the class to order at which time all stood while she prayed. The literary work under study on that day was C. Everard Palmer's The Sun Salutes You, published by McMillan Education (1984). The specific chapter assigned for the day was chapter 5, entitled "Pinching the Tiger's Tail." The teacher read the plot, and students followed in their texts. After this, she asked such questions as, "Who is the tiger here?" "What is meant by the tiger's tail?" and "Can a Christian be a tiger in this sense?" To this last question, students voiced different points of view: some agreed and some disagreed; some felt that Christians could be like tigers on occasions, but that they really should not be. Teacher No. 2 capitalized on this conflicting response, sensing the need to integrate an element of faith in the process of learning. As questions were asked, students raised their hands and waited to be called upon to answer. The teacher made allusions to events that took place in the country that paralleled events in the chapter. With these, students were quite familiar and responded with enthusiasm as they made connections from fiction to real life situations. When asked about the themes within the work, they were able to identify such ones as "love your enemies," "always be fair in dealings and business transactions," and "avoid illegal dealings." Students also engaged in a whole-class characterization exercise as they examined the characters represented by "tiger"–Matt Southern–and "tail"–Knowles

Pasture. They also examined figures of speech as evidenced in the title of the chapter: "Pinching the Tiger's Tail."

At the close of the whole-class discussion, students were asked to find the meanings of words written on the blackboard, which were drawn from the text. Having done that, they were asked to construct sentences using the following words:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| genially | contract | quandary |
| pitch | gadifying | ribbing |
| symposium | appraising | disdainfully |
| deputation | dormant | debase |
| flabbergasted | bouncer | barometric |
| obliged | plummeted | compiled |

Two days after, this section of Form I reconvened. Once again, the teacher called the class to order. After some introductory remarks, teacher No. 2 announced the *modus operandi* of the class: group discussions. Thirty students were present on this day, so they separated into five groups with 6 to a group. Since, in this classroom, each student had individual chairs with a self-attached desks, it was easy to move furniture around quickly. Having drawn together closely–knee to knee and face to face–the students put their heads together to find answers to individual questions presented to them by the teacher. Questions were written on slips of paper, and these were taken from the chapter under study. Each group was given 10 minutes to read and discover the answers, which were to be written in correct sentence form and read before the whole class. At the end of the period, everyone was not finished, so an additional period of 5 minutes was given, after which, each group was asked to read its questions and give its answers to the whole

class in session. If an answer was incorrect, someone from another group was asked to respond. This method of question and answer generated much interest and heated enthusiasm among students. A second assignment was then given. Teacher No. 2 asked the groups to confer with each other and write the meaning of the new chapter's title–chapter 6–"The Sun Salutes You"– which is also the title of the book. Again, a healthy discussion ensued as "family" groups strove for the best answer. Family groups were asked to write their meanings in clear and complete sentences and then read their decisions for all to hear. This interactive session brought the class to a close. For homework, the teacher asked the class to look up in the Encyclopedia the meaning of "pocomania" in relation to details in the chapter and then describe the role that this religion plays in the chapter, "The Sun Salutes You." Pocomania, a religious cult that practices its rituals in the mountains of the island of Jamaica, is a cross between voodoo and Christianity.

## Summary of Observation

By observing this teacher in several of her classes, I recognized that she substantiates what she indicated on question No. 13 of her questionnaire response when she was asked: How do you deal with a fictional work that gives a true representation and philosophy of life? To this she answered, "*Use the work and teach the value.*" Other options included: (1). Use the work in such a way as to allow *students* to *discover* the value for themselves. (2). Discard the work because it is non-factual. (3). Other: specify. For teacher No. 2, *teaching* the value is important. She would not risk the option of allowing the student to *discover* the value; neither does she have a problem with

literary works that are non-factual. Her performance in class also reinforced the emphasis she places on the importance of various types of literature. In question No. 9 of her questionnaire, when asked to rank in a 1-2-3 order the relative importance she places upon each of the following types of literature: biblical, Caribbean, classical, contemporary, and women and/or minority, she ranked biblical, Caribbean, and Women and/or minority as a high 1. She sees all of these as being equal in value. Often, in her class discussions using the local literary text, I observed how she comfortably slipped into a type of didactic, value-oriented discussion that engaged the students, but channeled their thoughts in a value-oriented dimension of thinking.

Altogether, though, students seemed inspired by and enthusiastic about this approach. But whereas on question No. 9 she ranked in an equal way biblical, Caribbean, and women/minority literature, on another question, No. 15 (5), on which respondents were asked to circle on a semantic differential scale a number on the range of 1-10 that reflected their perception toward "the tendency of Caribbean and other contemporary authors to use expletives in their works," teacher No. 2 circled the number 5, with variables on the continuum being "justifiable" at the positive end and "unjustifiable" at the negative. Her commentary on this was that *"it is the accepted tendency of people in today's society to speak that way."* This, however, does not destroy the true value of the work. According to her, *"The problem of expletives comes when children have to read portions of the work in the hearing of the rest of the class, for in this school, it is against the rules to use expletives."* Although English as a subject was not her major concentration in her academic preparation for teaching, her performance in classes authenticates her perception that literature should be a necessary component in a high

school's English curriculum. This was strongly indicated by her in her answer of question No. 15 (1) that asked for a response to the following concept: Literature as a component of a high school's English curriculum. To this she replied: *"I think literature should be compulsory because it helps students in all areas of their language arts–composition, reading, grammar, and literary appreciation."*

## Teacher's Perception of Literature

Through an interview with Teacher No. 2, I endeavored to ascertain her perception of literature as a viable component in the English curriculum in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools. I began by telling her that I was impressed by the way she was able to get her young students interested in literature, especially with the competition of noise intrusion on that particular day of observation. While I experienced a measure of discomfort, I noticed her quiet excitement over the subject although she had said that literature was not her academic strength and that she did not think she was "good" at it. In light of that I asked her, "How important do you think literature is to the English curriculum?" Without hesitation she replied, *"Very important for it helps students with all the areas of language learning, for example, vocabulary, grammar, composition, reading, and speaking. Furthermore, when students read, somehow, they write better."*

"How is this so?" I asked.

> *Because when students are asked to write, somehow, they bring to mind things they have read, and words–vocabulary–and writers' styles come to mind, and they are able to incorporate some of these in their own writing. They also receive ideas of things to write about. Another reason for this is, when they read literature, although the work may be fictional, they derive morals, which are true to life, and this helps them to come up with themes for their own writing.*

"So, are you saying, that although fiction is not factual, it can be valuable to

students even in their writing?"

"*Of course. Remember Jesus did a lot of story telling when He was on earth. And many of these were not factual–He made up some of those stories, drawing from the environment and situations around which, the people to whom He was speaking, were conversant. He took the earthly stories to portray a spiritual meaning. Literature can help us to do just that. Literature teachers can take some parts of the stories studied in classes and relate them to things spiritual or religious. Literature can help students to be creative in their composition classes as well as lead students to a knowledge of God.*

"In light of what you've said, do you then think that literature teachers should be empowered to choose the texts they use in the classroom?" In a very nonchalant and unobtrusive manner, she casually replied:

> *I think they should be. I don't think anyone or ones apart from the teachers, should dictate what should be read. Many times, for example, the Ministry of Education may choose authors who use obscene language in their texts, and I don't think such works should be used in Christian schools.*

I then tried to determine how the English Department of this school selects its literary texts for classroom study and whether or not students were sent to write the CXC examination in English language or English literature. In all the secondary schools within the Caribbean region, English is taught in two tracks–A and B. English "A" is considered the language component, and this will include composition and creative writing, spelling, grammar, and some poetry. English B is the literature component of the language, and this will include historical and biographical literature, poetry, short stories, drama, fiction, and non-fiction. Students who take English B are sent to write the government examination in literature, and the books for this examination are prescribed by the

Ministry of Education. So I asked teacher 2: "Does your school send students to write literature at the CXC or GCE examinations?"

"*Yes.*" "And how do you manage with their recommended texts?" She then explained that lists are sent to the schools with several options from which to choose. When this is received, she said, the chair of the English Department along with other teachers of English go through that list and make the best selections in relation to the prescribed themes.

"At your level of teaching, Form I, do you have to contend with undesirable texts that contain language and lifestyle practices that are questionable?"

"*At my level, not as yet. I don't personally choose the texts; we do that as a department together.*" My next point of interest was the perception of this teacher on the role of the teacher's personal philosophy. On survey item 15 (4) of her questionnaire response to concepts on the teaching of literature, she was asked to circle a number on a semantic differential scale that lies closest to the variables "great effect" and "little effect." On a scale of 1-10, she was asked her view on the impact of the teacher's philosophy of life on the teaching of literature. To this, she circled the number 3 indicating a relatively moderate importance. I wanted to know why she chose 3 instead of a higher or lower number. So, I asked her specifically: "How important do you think the literature teacher's philosophy is to his/her choice of literary works to be studied?"

"*I think it is very important,*" she emphatically declared. "*It is important because one's philosophy is what he or she believes about life and existence, and what a person believes that is what the person will communicate whether consciously or unconsciously.*"

"So, you don't subscribe to the school of thought that says one could teach to please his or her employers without communicating beliefs. Do you think it is possible for a teacher of literature to teach without communicating to the class his or her personal philosophy?"

*"I don't think so,"* she affirmed, *because what you believe is what will come out in your communication. You cannot hide yourself from you. Especially is this so when one is dealing with literature, which is so much like life itself."*

I needed to determine her perception of E. G. White's counsel on fiction as a genre in literature. She had indicated on her questionnaire response that E. G. White's writings have exerted a great influence on her own personal beliefs and preferences regarding the selection of literature. Survey item 11 on her questionnaire asked respondents to rank in a 1-2-3 order, the relative importance they placed upon each of the following: (1) childhood/family experiences; (2) school/college English classes; (3) biblical/philosophic perspective; (4) E. G. White's writings; (5) book reviews and catalogs; (6) recommendations from other teaches; (7) other: (specify).

Teacher No. 2 gave childhood/family experiences, school/college English classes, biblical/philosophic perspective, and E. G. White's writings a high ranking of 1. In an effort to discover why all were given the same ranking, I asked the reason. She concluded that she was brought up in a Christian environment and was encouraged as a child to read extensively. Extensive reading, therefore, included all of those influences; hence she could not separate them. Since, however, I needed to know specifically the influence of E. G. White's counsel on her perceptions, I said to her: "I'm sure you're acquainted with E. G. White's writings and her views on fiction for both young and older

readers since these could affect their attitude toward the responsibilities of life (White, 1948, 7: 271-74). I also noted that you gave a high ranking to White's counsel on the selection of reading material. Could you describe this impact in some depth?" "*Yes,*" she said.

> *I have not read everything–I have read some. I know, though, that what she has written coincides with the Bible since her writings are the lesser light to the greater one. And the greater light says: Whatsoever things are lovely, pure, and noble, think on those things. So, I try as much as possible to be in harmony with the Bible. For example, last quarter, we were doing John Steinbeck's* The Pearl *as our literature text. At one point in the story, after Kino, the central character in the story, was in possession of the great pearl, and the doctor, who had previously ignored him returned to help him, he [the doctor] began thinking what he could do with some of Kino's wealth. One of the things he thought about was his dead wife and how he could perhaps pay a priest for the release of her soul. As we discussed this point, my class automatically became a Bible class on the state of the dead.*

"So, it was convenient and natural for you to integrate faith at that point!" "*Yes. Anytime I feel I can integrate faith, I do.*" "Well, let's get back to the topic of fiction and its worth. What is your view of fiction? How do you relate to it in your teaching of literature at the lower level of Form I?. You've discussed this already in a limited way. Could you now elaborate?"

> *Well, I think that fiction, although not factual, accounts for issues and stories that are true to life for my students. Often, they can identify with the sequence of events and details in the plot. Fiction helps them to know that sometimes they are not the only ones who go through a certain type of experience, and that encourages them.*

"Are you saying then that your Form I students can benefit from such a course and line of study, and if so, how? But before you answer me, let me pose another question. I notice on your questionnaire response that you gave a high ranking of 1 to imagination and empathy as positive outcomes of the study of literature. Could you tie these two

responses together? I don't think this will be too difficult for you."

> *Let me put it this way. Literature can help prepare students for things to come. For example, I have 74 children in my literature classes, and they come from varying backgrounds, but I never know what they are going through in their lives, and some of these experiences come through in the fiction that we study. So, when we look at the work together, I can make things clear to them so they could understand. Especially is this so when they see how other characters in the story have dealt with their situations. They can then compare these experiences with their own. Children go through things that the teacher may never dare to dream they are going through. The teacher can always draw positive lessons from the fictional work that is well chosen.*

"So, you think that even at your Form I level, children may have problems that literature, and more specifically, fiction addresses?"

*"Yes, they do. You would not imagine! They sit before you in class like they're okay with no problems, and you'll never know unless something comes up in the lesson and you have to talk with them."* I then needed to know how this teacher ranked the study of literature with other areas of language arts, e.g., composition, drama, grammar, and journalism. She had indicated on her questionnaire response to survey item No. 7, which addressed the relative importance of various areas of the language arts, that composition, grammar, and literature were equal in rank. She gave them all a high 1. Furthermore, on question No. 8, where she was asked to rank in a 1-2-3 order the relative importance she placed on different genres of literature, she gave fiction, non-fiction, and drama an equal ranking of 2. So, I asked her the reason for these two responses. Her answer was exciting:

> *I did that because I really do perceive composition, grammar, and literature as being equally important. They should always be integrated. When it comes to drama–that, too, is literature, but it is of a different mode. We all need drama to lighten difficult situations; when things are dramatized, people tend to remember better. This form of literature carries a message over in a better way to students' minds.*

I then observed that she did the same thing when asked to rank different types of literature in a 1-2-3 order of priority. The options from which she had to choose were biblical, Caribbean, classical, contemporary, and women and/or minority. In response, she gave biblical, Caribbean, and women/minority an equally high ranking of 1. I asked for a quick explanation of this perception. Her response was that women are not usually given sufficient recognition for their talents and ideas, and women have a lot of good ideas to communicate. She emphasized that since women make up the larger percentage of the world's population, and since they are the molders and shapers of the human race and seem to know more about life than men do, then their writings should be given more attention. When asked why she ranked women writers and Caribbean writers equally, she replied:

> *Because the problem is the same. Caribbean writers are not usually given the credit they deserve. People tend to glorify other known writers–European and American, and these types of literature are esteemed above the local form, but Caribbean writers, like women, have a lot to communicate with which students can identify. Hence the books are more meaningful.*

I noted that on her response to survey item 15 (6), where, on a semantic differential scale of 1-10 she was asked to respond to the concept of literary works authored by women who promote a feminist agenda, she gave the concept a ranking of 5 in relation to the variables "worthwhile" and "worthless," which fell at either end of the continuum. When asked about this seeming low rank as compared with her previously expressed high view of women writers, she declared:

> *I see that as being slightly different. Writers should be fair. I think the Bible should be our guide in all things, and all other literature should be in sync with it. A feminist agenda puts on literature a different emphasis. If it is simply focusing on equality of the sexes, then that's okay, but if it goes off the deep end, then I have a little problem with it.*

I then asked her how she perceived empathy and the imagination as outcomes of the study of literature. In her response to this concept on survey item No. 15 (7) of the survey questionnaire, she had given this a high ranking of 1. Now, I wanted her to elaborate on her decision. Did she see these outcomes as being beneficial to students, and if so, how? She then explained that the development of empathy can allow students to extract "feelings" from the text as they experience a character's situation. It makes what they read appear real. When it came to the imagination, she declared that literature itself "is the use of the imagination." "But how are these positive outcomes?" I asked her, and "how could these help students become better people?" Her response was spontaneous:

> *When students read stories, fiction or non-fiction, they develop an appreciation for people's feelings. This takes place with the aid of the teacher who guides their minds in critical directions. . . . People don't have a conscience these days. They don't feel for each other. With the development of empathy, change can take place in a society. Empathy could reduce crime, abuse, and prejudice because people will be able to feel what others are going through. When students are tempted to do something evil, they may remember something they have read and will change their course of action. Imagination can also be seen as a positive outcome because it helps people to see how their situations could change. Imagination helps them to be able to see tomorrow–a better day.*

"But don't you think imagination could also be negative?" I queried. "*Well, of course. People could also use their imagination to think all sorts of evil against others. But when I speak of empathy and the imagination, I'm looking at these as positive outcomes. Almost every good thing has a negative side.*"

In closing off the interview with teacher No. 2, we addressed the topic of the tendency of Caribbean and other local authors to use expletives in their works, and I asked how she deals with this. She immediately made reference to the book she was

presently using The Sun Salutes You by C. Everard Palmer and declared that it was a good book. When I asked the reason, she observed:

> *The theme of this work is that evil will never prevail. It is another way of saying, 'If you are digging a pit for a neighbor, you yourself will fall into it.' Even though it is a fictional work, it teaches a truth. If I find that a recommended book contains any form of expletive or unacceptable social behavior, I will choose a desirable alternative.*

Regarding the use of "Seventh-day Adventist Guidelines on the Teaching of Literature" as being "essential"or "unessential" on a semantic differential scale of 1-10, she had indicated in her questionnaire response a ranking of 3, in a 1-2-3 order of importance. When asked if she had seen these guidelines, she said "No," but that she imagined they would be in keeping with biblical guidelines. *"I don't think any of our teachers has ever seen these guidelines,"* she declared. Finally, she had stated on a Likert-type scale of the questionnaire survey that she disagreed (D) with the statement that only factual accounts should be used for literary studies in SDA secondary schools. I sought an explanation to this perception, and she posited:

> *You see, in order to teach the factual, you have to teach the fictional. This is exactly what Jesus did while He was on earth. Also, many times, younger students are not always ready for the factual, for this could be harsh. Really, some factual stories should never be used because they are so sordid–so far removed from the Christian philosophy of life. Yet, they are factual. So, we have to be careful when we speak of factual and fiction in terms of literature for our students.*

Finally, I asked if she had one or two last sentences to say about her perception about the teaching of literature, what would she say? With an air of satisfaction and confidence, she concluded:

> *I would say that the teaching of literature in Adventist secondary is very important especially since so much of language development is tied to it. The study of literature can help them to be better people. In this, teachers play a great*

*part, for they help students to see the positive and not the negative and the should guide them along that path.*

Document Analysis for Teacher No. 2

Teacher No. 2 plans her teaching activities and strategies on a monthly basis. These are recorded in what is called a Forecast and Record Log book. This is an orderly ruled 11" x 14" log that outlines such topics as the title of the unit or topic to be studied, behavioral and instructional objectives, reference/resource material, learning content to be covered, and assignments for and methods of evaluation. The teacher prepares this log at the beginning of each week, and this is reviewed periodically and signed by the principal of the school. Students were *not* introduced to journal writing, which was a disadvantage, but I was privileged to review several attractively prepared book reports already graded. Students' works are usually returned to them after evaluations are made.

Another source of "documents"–books– was examined. Stacks of newly published, colorful, classical works by William Shakespeare adorned the desk of the principal, and these were being made ready as new acquisitions to be placed in the library. Most of the books in the literature section of the library were classical works and very old. Very few contemporary works were on the shelves. Actually, no young adult literature was obvious nor current journals or magazines. This was a great disadvantage to students of literature and students in general since there was nothing beyond their required literature texts for them to have fun reading.

Some of the library's holdings included books by the Bronte sisters, Mansfield Park by Jane Austen, The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Grahame, Hard Times by Charles Dickens, Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan, The Grapes of Wrath by John

Steinbeck, Men and Gods by Rex Warner, The Sun also Rises by Ernest Hemingway, Far from the Madding Crowd by Thomas Hardy, and several anthologies of poetry covering various literary periods. Students were free to visit this library situated on the first floor of the building anytime between classes. Teacher No. 2 expressed regrets over the limited range of reading material available to younger students who were not ready for serious works of literature.

Summary of the Perceptions of Teacher No. 2

Teacher No. 2 sees literature as an effective vehicle for teaching all aspects of language arts. Her ranking of its relative importance indicates that composition, grammar, and literature are all on the same level of importance. She sees literature as a catalyst for creative and essay writing since ideas generated in imaginative and other narrative works could form a basis for students' composition or creative writing classes. Also, by observing the style of writers, students could improve their own writing styles. Furthermore, she sees little distinction between biblical literature and literature of a local color, or literature written by women and/or minority writers. Her reason for this is that both local writers and women or minority writers possess a quality of mind that speaks to the common or underprivileged person, which is essentially the theme of the Bible. Readers could, therefore, identify with the experiences of writers and receive encouragement and hope for the continuation of life.

Yet, she does not hold the identical view for literature authored by women who postulate a feminist agenda, for she sees this form of literature as being out of sync with the Bible, which teaches that all people are equal. Literature that focuses mainly on

women's rights, she feels, has a tendency to slide off the wrong end of a continuum. So, in response to question No. 15 (6) on her questionnaire that asked a response to the literary concept: "literary works authored by women who promote a feminist agenda," she circled the number 5. Variables to this concept on each end of the continuum were "worthwhile" and "worthless," and the scale ranged from 1-10. This suggests that she was just about halfway sure that such works produce good results for students in SDA secondary schools.

In terms of her perspective of fictional vs. non-fictional works, she sees no difference in these. Her responses to question No. 8 on her survey questionnaire where respondents were asked to rank in a 1-2-3 order the relative importance placed on different genres of literature, for example, biography, drama, fiction/imaginative literature, non-fiction, and poetry, she gave both fiction and non-fiction a ranking of 2. She perceives both of these as being equally good or equally bad. Fiction that is not maudlin, sentimental, violent, or plot-dominated could be meaningful to students. Fiction that is theme-oriented and rich in style, characterization, setting, and point-of-view could be helpful to students in their own writing, as well as in their appreciation of the aesthetics of the language. Conversely, fiction that is cheap and trashy could have a disabling effect on the mind. On the other hand, non-fiction that is factual, but sordid and vulgar could do as much harm to the reader as the cheap and trashy literature. But non-fiction that addresses the realities of life with attention to themes, values, recurring motifs, and style appeals to the minds of readers in positive and meaningful ways. Comments made by her in her interview support this duality in her perspective of fictional and non-fictional works. She declared:

> *Sometimes, factual stories are slushy and sordid–so far removed from the Christian's philosophy of life. . . . It cuts both sides: factual stories should not be the only ones to be used, and fiction, if it has a true philosophy, should be used.*

This teacher's method of dealing with seemingly good narrative works except that they reflect a few expletives and/or sexual references would be to choose a desirable alternative, according to her response to question No. 13 (A). On the other hand, if she uses a work that gives a true representation and philosophy of life, she would use it in such a manner to *teach* the value. This was her response to question No. 13 (B), where she rejected all the other options such as: "use the work in such a way as to allow students to *discover* the value for themselves," or "discard the work because it is non-factual." Teacher No. 2, therefore, appears as a values-oriented person. She does not lose a chance to *teach* a value. This was demonstrated very clearly from my observation of her in class as well as from my interview with her. In these, she was consistent. In my interview with her, she told of how one of her literature classes during the first quarter of the 1999-2000 school year was transformed into a Bible class on the subject, "the state of the dead." This happened when the class discussed John Steinbeck's The Pearl. At one point in the story when the doctor's wife died and he began praying for her soul, the teacher guided the discussion to the biblical position of the true state of the dead. And in my classroom observation of her, she did not lose the opportunity to integrate faith into the process of students' learning when she discussed the chapter, "Pinching the Tiger's Tail" from the book The Sun Salutes You by C. Everard Palmer. As she examined themes within the chapter, she encouraged her students to do the following: "*Love your enemies, always be fair in dealings and business transactions, and avoid illegal drugs. Should Christians be like the character 'tiger.'* (Matt Southern)?" she questioned, and by

implication, she cautioned, "*They should not.*"

Finally, this teacher does not believe that only factual accounts should be used for classroom study in literature. Fictional works can result in rich dividends to the students. One of these dividends, she feels, is the outcome of the development of empathy and the imagination. On a semantic differential scale of 1-10, she has given this concept a ranking of 1, with variables at both ends being "meaningful" and "meaningless." She sees fictional works as being reflective of true-to-life experiences, and such works can help students as young as those in her Form I classes to cope with the exigencies of life. She perceives the study of literature as a subject that makes students better writers and better thinkers, but she sees the Bible as the measuring rod for all works of literature.

**Case Study No. 3**

One must travel in a northwesterly direction and then clear east for about 30 miles on a smooth and alluring highway, with stolid palms on both sides waving their branches to the music of whispering winds, beneath a royal-blue sky, as one moves from the school of teacher No. 2 to that of teacher No. 3. This school, an older two-storied cream and dark-brown building, has served students in that area of the island for almost half a century. It has an approximate enrollment of 275 students, who daily wear uniforms with school identification badges on the pockets of their blouses and shirts. Except for a brief period, literature was always taught at this school. In an interview, the school's principal observed that the brief period of the non-inclusion of literature in the curriculum became necessary for the administration and staff to re-assess the reason for having the subject because of the type of values that was surfacing in recommended texts. Having

examined and re-evaluated the objectives for the continuance of this subject, it was reinstated and enjoys a healthy life in the school's curriculum.

This is the school where teacher No. 3, a young female teacher, teaches literature in Forms I through V. Two days a week, she teaches literature every period of the school day with 10-minute breaks in between and a lunch break that separates her morning classes from her evening ones. She is a young woman who falls within the 20-25 age group category. The period under observation was the first year of her teaching career. She holds advanced-level certificates at the General Certificate of Education (GCE) examinations, of which literature is one, and has had the greater portion of her academic preparation at government schools. Observing her at work on her full days reveals her as a teacher whose standard of academic excellence includes a love and openness for the value, discipline, and aesthetics of literature. Observation alone, however, was not adequate for a full description of this teacher; so, after following her around and participating in several of her classes, we engaged ourselves in two sessions of semi-structured interviews.

Maxwell (1996) posits the widespread assumption that "observation is mainly useful for obtaining descriptions of behavior and events, whereas interviewing is mainly useful for obtaining the perspectives of actors" (p. 76). He, however, goes on to suggest that both have the immediate result of description and one could triangulate the other. He says: "Observation often enables you to draw inferences about someone's meaning and perspective that you couldn't obtain by relying exclusively on interview data." (p. 76). Denzin (1970) recommends the use of both observation and interview from a variety of sources and settings. He believes that interviews can provide information that is missed

in observation, and observation can supply a perspective that may never be gained by interview. That is why Weiss (1994) suggests that, for interviews to be useful, "[researchers] need to ask about specific events and actions, rather than posing questions that elicit only generalizations or abstract opinions" (pp. 72-76). To this, Maxwell (1996) concludes "triangulation of observations and interviews can provide a more complete and accurate account than either could alone" (p. 76).

## Teacher No. 3

On my first day observing teacher No. 3, I followed her through six classes in a row interspersed by 10-minute breaks and a lunch break. In each of these classes, the teacher demonstrated that she was in control of the classroom climate and students. She moved easily from class to class without the slightest appearance of mental tiredness, and she spoke at each class as if that were her first for the day. Because of the large enrollment, some Forms have two sections, so on this particular day, she taught two Form II sections. Whenever the noise level rose above a degree of comfort, she simply exclaimed the name of the Form, e.g., "Form IV!" and almost immediately everyone became quiet. If anyone insisted on being talkative, that one was asked to stand at the back of the class for a given period so that he or she felt the censure of discipline, but not miss out on instruction. From my observation, these students never appeared to be dissatisfied with this type of discipline.

The teacher's first class for the day, under observation, began at 8:55 a.m. This was language studies in Form II. This class was followed immediately by literature in Form III. In this Form, 36 students, who fell within an approximate age range of 14-16,

stood to welcome their teacher. Generally, the age range for students in this Form is lower, but since this is a private school, ages tend to be higher. When all were quiet, she offered a prayer. She then introduced the lesson for the day–a story entitled "Aunt Suzie's Rooster,"--taken from the text Wavelengths, a local Caribbean text that carries stories that are unique to certain Caribbean islands and regional territories. The teacher read the story while the students followed in their books. One of the amusing but central characters in this story was an old yard cock that was given a human name, George, since he demonstrated human-like qualities. For example, sometimes George would wink his eye at Beulah, the cook, as if on a mischievous excursion. Other times, he would stand on one leg in a provocative manner as he daily entered Beulah's kitchen, or pick at Aunt Suzie's iced-cake that was sitting on the kitchen table, as if wanting to steal. This behavior was very provoking to Beulah, the cook, who threatened to kill and cook the old cock someday except, to her regret, that his flesh would be too tough for tasty consumption. A healthy whole-class discussion period followed the reading of the story as students engaged in a period of characterization and discovering of themes within the work.

After an appropriate writing exercise and a 10-minute break, we moved on to Form V. This literature class convened in the school's library. Students sat around rectangular tables with shelves of books behind and at both sides of them. The setting was conducive for study, and information needed was readily accessible from dictionaries and encyclopedias. Apart from books, various awards and trophies were displayed all around the library. The teacher called the class to order, offered a brief prayer, then proceeded with the section of the book under study, which was chapters 15

and 16 of Shane by Jack Schaefer. These chapters, which the students had already studied, were now ready to be examined critically and in more depth. The teacher announced the format for the class, and very quickly several small families of threes were formed around the long rectangular tables to engage in a type of character exercise. The teacher gave to each family five questions that should be used in the exercise. Each question was thought-provocative, and these ranged from an evaluation of the emotions that Joe, a central character in the story, experiences, to speculations about the future of a prominent family–the Starrets. This interesting range of questions was to be asked of the central character, Joe, in a manner that was original and creative to the family groups of three. With just 15 minutes to prepare, these small groups of students were able to come up with exciting and innovative methods of getting information from the dramatized character, Joe. Some groups chose a talk-show format with Joe as an invited guest. Others chose a family scene format with Joe being interviewed by family or outside members.

Each question given by the teacher had to be addressed in the inquiry, and answers, though original in style, had to reflect the narrative account in the literary work. Questions reflected the emotions, feelings, dreams, and aspirations of the character, and the short demonstrations by the family groups indicated a good understanding and interpretation of the work, which the students put up in artistic and innovative ways.

At the end of this class period and another 10-minute break, the teacher and I moved along an outside corridor to another literature class–Form II-Y--where approximately 30 students eagerly awaited our arrival. In this classroom, students sat on individual chairs with self-attached desks. Seven louver windows and two open doors,

along with overhead and standing fans strategically placed, and long white flourescent overhead tubes provided both air and light to the classroom. This created a comfortable physical climate. On the walls were painted pictures that added color to the already brightly lighted atmosphere.

Poetry was the literary genre discussed in this class. The text used for literature in this lower Form was West Indian-based. In this text, short stories and poetry are written by authors from several West Indian islands, Jamaica, and Guyana. Guyana is a country situated on the northern rim of South America at eight degrees north latitude away from the equator, a relatively hot country. It is bounded on the east by Surinam (Dutch Guyana), on the west by Venezuela, on the south by Brazil, and on the north by the Atlantic Ocean. Its 270 miles of coastlands are washed by the Atlantic Ocean. Seven races make up the population of this country, but the two dominant ones are East Indians and Negroes. The poetic work under study for Form II-Y on that day, taken from page 37, describes the life of a poor Indian (coolie) who merely eked out an existence in this country. This work appears below:

"Pundit"
by
Selwyn Bhayan

A cold mud walk, a bed on bags on boards
His house
Sudama sits upon the cow-dung pasted floor
And chants a morning Puja before the milking of the cow.

A village folded in the fist of forest wakes
The cutlass sack laced on his back
Poor coolie, barefooted like his father was,
And his children are,
Makes the cocoa land.

Poor coolie's wife
The bake in sack, laced on her back,
Trods lightly steps behind.

Slow muted toil
Slow stubborn sweat
A break for bake
Slow muted toil, there is more joy in death
And then, again sun dies
Again with night, their chants, slow rise
The Puja has begun.

Come sad chants, return
Refresh a longing mind
Sudama's voice must break the evening's cold,
The cutya's smell of mud and ash,
The brass
The turn of moth-tongued pages
Heavy with grease of fingers
Searching after Sanscrit's hymns.

Return childhood's evenings,
Lend me coolie voices oiled with cocoa sweat,
Let me hear again a Pundit's yearn,
There is much solace in those dry throats.

--C. Gray, 1994, p. 37

Notes:
1. Puja: a prayer or rite
2. Coolie: a labourer in South East Asia
3. Cutya: a hut for prayers
4. Sanscrit: ancient language of India.

After critically analyzing and interpreting this work in a whole-class discussion style, noting artistic language complications–alliterations, metaphors, similes, symbols, assonance, imagery, personification–and meaning in context, with appropriate whole-class writing response, students and teacher left the class at the end of the period with a feeling of appreciation for the power of words to capture a sentiment and paint a mood.

## Summary of Observation

Teacher No. 3 moved with an air of easy abandonment from class to class on her "full" days of classes without the slightest appearance of fatigue. She seemed always well-prepared for her class sessions and utilized various skills and methodologies to gain her students' attention and engage their interest. Although small in physical stature and young in age, she commanded the attention and respect of grown young men and women, and they obeyed her. Her flair for order and discipline, however, did not diminish the students' apparent enjoyment of her classes. Through the interactive nature of her upper-level classes, students were able to discuss the short stories, develop themes, observe patterns of recurrence, make transfers from fiction to real life, and respond to works through writing exercises. They seemed to do these with much enthusiasm.

Students always appeared eager to welcome her when she entered her classes. In the lower Forms in which critical thinking was not as evident, students still seemed anxious to read the short stories or listen as these were read to them while they followed in their texts. Discussion time was enlightening to almost everyone. It was obvious that the teacher, to a large extent, was successful in transferring her enthusiasm for literature to her students.

## Document Analysis for Teacher No. 3

Several documents assisted teacher No. 3 in mapping out the course of her literature classes. These include a syllabus in English prepared by the Government Ministry of Education and a personal forecast log prepared by her at the beginning of each week. The government syllabus is an official document that gives the language

needs of students in all secondary schools, the aims of the language program, and skills to be developed by students. For example, the skills development includes an understanding of material to be studied and expression of thought in good standard English. The syllabus also gives a catalog of themes for study in literature, for example, heroism, freedom, attitude to power, attitudes to the past, love and family relationships, dreams and aspirations, and women in society.

Next to these are selected literary works, and these works are cataloged to fit the given themes. At this school, the Department of English reviews these texts and themes and decides which literary works would be used in all the Forms–I-V. These works fall under the categories of drama, novels, short stories, and poetry. Also in the syllabus, is the format of the CXC examination and the weighting of skills so teachers could know ahead of time how to prepare their students for this examination taken at the end of Form V. Finally, specific objectives for literature and writing courses suggested learning activities, testing activities, and general explanatory notes.

Teacher No. 3 was very careful in the recording of her weekly forecast record log. This log reflected her general and specific objectives. Each lesson had at least three objectives. It also showed all her references and resources material (texts and authors) she planned to use for each week. Under the heading of "pre-active evaluation," she recorded what students in each Form will be asked to do in class and homework assignments. Under the heading "teacher/learning content covered," she showed what students actually completed. Finally, under "evaluation and related objectives," she recorded in detail how successful each lesson was, the percentage of students who did assignments well, the percentage of those who had problems, the percentage of those

who failed, and an overall assessment of all who did poorly. These documents provided for the teacher a regular overview of students' performance in all her literature classes–those who were doing well and those who were in need of remedial help. Whereas the government syllabus serves as a guide to her in her planning and strategizing, the personal forecast record log serves as a personal evaluation and assessment tool for her and her students.

The school has a small library that students in general can access. Students of English language and literature can also find some works of interest, but on a limited basis. However, they are also encouraged to read and borrow books from the public library. Some of the school's library holdings in the area of literature include works such as the following: Now That I Know by Norma Klien, English for Life by Cecil Gray, English for the Caribbean by Faith Linton and Lena Wright, English Writers by Gross, Smith, Stauffer, and Collette, To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee, and Reading for Meaning by George Carr. The magazine racks held such periodicals as Journal of Adventist Education, Scope, Time, and Newsweek.

Very few classical, modern, or contemporary works in the area of fiction or non-fiction were seen, but the teacher remarked that positive efforts are being made to improve library holdings in the area of literature. Books and other source material on language were more evident. Since students owned their literature texts from which they prepare for classroom discussion, home assignments, and CXC examinations, there was no felt need for a variety of other literature books. Language and literature teachers, however, regularly encourage students to visit the public library from time to time to gain the necessary benefit from wide reading. The lack of a variety of literary works in the

classroom did not appear, however, to inhibit the enthusiasm of students toward the study of literature. They seemed excited when they were working with the prescribed texts and were able to relate incidents studied to their own lives and those in their communities. The literature studied spoke to their own local needs, and they were able to identify with the accounts. This makes the study of literature meaningful to them.

## Teacher's Perception of Literature

As I talked with teacher No. 3 in the quietness of the library one day after her last class, I shared my perception of her as someone who enjoys the study and teaching of literature. But since appearances may not be authentic, I asked her: "What is your personal perception of literature as a viable subject in SDA secondary schools?" Her response was spontaneous:

> *I perceive literature as being a very important and necessary subject; why? because it exposes students to the best styles in reading as they study the works of Shakespeare and other European classics, American, Caribbean, and West Indian writers. These writers haven't written merely for entertainment: their works give values that I can share with students who study them. Literature is also important and necessary because it helps students improve their vocabulary, hence it makes them better speakers and writers.*

"What I hear you say then is that literature is an education all by itself. Also you've said that when students study it, they become better writers. How is this so?"

> *You see, reading is essential for writing. If you don't read, your vocabulary becomes very limited, and your expressions become poor. Young students need models from which they could draw. For example, when I was younger I read a lot of Enid Blyton's works, and when I wrote, her style came back to me naturally, and this made my own writing style exciting. That is why I know for sure that reading helps writing.*

"I agree with you," I said, for I have had that experience myself and have witnessed it with our last child, who by the way, is an English teacher today. We flooded her with

books as a young child, and reading became her greatest hobby. As a result, she is a good writer. Everyone enjoys reading even her letters. My next question has to do with empowerment. In light of what you have said, do you think that the literature teacher should be empowered to select the texts used for classroom study?" *"Of course,"* she exclaimed.

> *It is not fair to the teacher that some board or persons outside of the school's setting should say what texts should be used. They may recommend, but when you, as the teacher, could 'feel' that short story or poem, you know how it will affect your students. The teacher should be given some measure of choice in book selection.*

"And how does this work for you? Do you have that privilege?" She explained that when she came to the school as a new teacher at the beginning of the current year, those selections were already made. *"That choice will be up to me in the following year,"* she concluded. "Do you send your students to write the CXC examination in literature?" I inquired. Her response was *"yes."* So, I asked, "Do you have the last word in determining what texts they would use, or does the government ministry dictate this?"

> *The Ministry plays a great part in book selection. They have a syllabus, and on this syllabus there are lists–lists of short stories, plays, poetry, and one could choose which works to use. We don't have to choose all, but we need to choose about five or six for our Form V classes because from these, examination questions are set. You see, the syllabus focuses on themes–love, relationships, power and authority, women, etc.*

"What happens when you're dealing with the earlier Forms–Forms I-III? Are those texts prescribed by the government also? *"We begin using these lists from Form IV. We have more freedom in Forms I-III."*

"If you have to make selections from a given list, it means that a certain type of philosophy should inform your choice of books. Could you explain how this works? I've

noticed that you have given the highest ranking to this concept on your questionnaire."

*The way I see it is like this: My personal philosophy is tied to my experience. My philosophy informs my experience, and my experience with literature will help me determine what is of value from what is not. I will be able to pick out in works of literature what's right and what's wrong, because not everything that is in print is right. My philosophy, therefore, will inform the texts I select and also the way I teach literature in all of my English classes on a regular basis.*

"When we speak of literature, automatically we include the genre of fiction. As you may know, Ellen White has written widely on this subject, and I have observed that on your questionnaire response, you have given a high ranking of 1 to its influence on your personal beliefs and preferences. In what ways will her counsel on literature influence your future selection of literary works for the next school year when you will have the privilege of selecting your own texts?"

*The texts I use now are okay; they are all good works. Ellen White has given guidelines for the selection of reading material. She speaks out against works that create illusions of life, works that are not suitable in language, morals, and values. She says what one reads remains in the subconscious mind and affects behavior. Teenagers, generally, like to read books that are borderline, that promote promiscuity and other vices. So, her counsel is good. In Seventh-day Adventist schools, teachers must integrate faith with learning. I don't see her counsel as something to which we must all mindlessly conform; I see her counsel as something that makes sense.*

"Well," I conjectured, "that brings me to a topic that she specifically addresses in her writings, the subject of fiction reading. What is your personal view of fiction as a genre for SDA high schools' English curriculum? Is it useful, doubtful, taboo?"

*We have to be careful in the way we look at this. I cannot say 'there should be no fiction.' Many times we come across true life stories in our texts, but we cannot advocate their values. On the other hand, we can have imaginative of fictional works and these portray a true and valuable perspective of life from which kids can benefit. This is more so true with biographies. One must always ask, 'what is the motive for this book?' Many biographies are printed for money making. They are sensational. Young people generally look up to celebrities and other famous people, who are the subjects of these biographies, and they tend to be influenced*

*by their lives. A literature teacher exerts a great influence on students, and so long as he or she teaches a literary work, students believe that the work is good because they trust the judgment of the teacher. We cannot be dogmatic in our view of fiction. Each work must be tested on its own value.*

"What I'm hearing you say is that the study of fiction in schools does not have to do merely with whether the work is factual or non-factual; rather, it has to do with its overall quality by way of worth in content and style. So, could you tell me to what extent you believe students from Forms I-V could benefit from their study of literature? Do you think students in the higher forms can benefit from this subject more than those in the lower?"

*All can benefit equally because literature is important from the basic level. You need that foundation upon which to build for the higher Forms. Literature helps with writing and expression. From as early as Form I, students can learn to appreciate poetry and discover morals and value in short stories. If a child doesn't learn to appreciate literature from early, it becomes difficult for him or her to do so at a later stage. From the lower Forms, they learn to express themselves better; they become open to different cultures and races. They come to understand that the average person is so similar to other people. It doesn't matter whether that person is Irish or Caribbean. Literature helps people to accept each other for who they are–people.*

"I've noticed in your answer to survey item No. 9 on your questionnaire where you were asked to rank in a 1-2-3 order the relative importance you placed on different types of literature: biblical, Caribbean, classical, contemporary, and women and/or minority, that you gave women/minority a high ranking of 1. However, on survey item No. 15 (6) where you were asked to circle a number that lies closest to the variables "worthwhile" and "worthless," in regard to the concept "literary works authored by women who promote a feminist agenda," you circled the number 5. What makes the difference between these two responses in relation to women's literature?"

*I see literature authored by women as being extremely important. Students and*

*persons should be exposed to this type of literature because women address topics that the average man may overlook–topics that deal with family values and home relationships. This type of literature is also important for it provides encouragement and support to female readers. Men can also benefit from a novel authored by a woman. Generally, these works deal with a sensitivity to family needs and family values, which are concerns for everyone. Readers have gotten accustomed to a male slant of writing even on these themes, but a woman's slant is more sensitive, and students need this.*

*In a way, however, literature authored by women who promote a feminist agenda can be negative. These works could sometimes be very narrow, and we have to avoid narrow-mindedness. Sometimes, these cause strife between the sexes and breakdowns in family values. They destroy the very things literature authored by women tries to provide.*

"Well," I concluded, "that was an interesting perspective on women and their works." I then indicated to her my observation of her as a stickler for discipline in the classroom and that students were generally quiet and controlled when she entered her classes. I wanted to know how she managed to maintain this discipline and still got students to enjoy her literature classes. She responded by saying that she accomplished this in several ways. First, she made sure that she was fully prepared for all her classes. Second, she studied ways to make each class interesting. Third, she always let students who misbehave know why she was disciplining them, and this always included their preventing others from concentrating. Fourth, she always chose a disciplinary method that would bring on a measure of discomfort, for example, doing additional work, or standing at the back of the class for some time. Finally, she never allowed offenders to leave the class or miss the session. In this way, students would never feel that she was "picking" on them; instead, they would know that she was trying to keep them from preventing others from learning and at the same time helping them to learn.

"You teach literature in all the Forms at your school," I reminded her, "and some

days you teach every period of the day. How do you keep the subject fresh and alive for your students and yourself?" To this she replied:

> *I always try to prepare my lessons ahead of time so I don't feel rushed and uncertain, and I try to enjoy the lesson myself. When I'm excited, they tend to become excited, too. Then I think of the time of the day the class is taught and plan a methodology to suit that time, for example, if the literature class is the first period after lunch on a hot day, I will use a cooperative teaching style so students can interact with each other and keep alert. If it is a morning class, I could risk a lecture type approach. Students are more receptive to the subject according to the time of the day.*

"So, do you find group work effective?" I queried. "*Very effective,*" she replied.

> *Students are able to help themselves and each other. Often they come up with innovative ways to help each other understand the material that you would normally miss. They think of a slant. Then there are students who are more reserved than others, who in a normal setting would not speak out. In a small group setting, however, they will speak and contribute to a discussion.*

She went on to state how students sometimes help her think of a creative way to conduct a class–a slant–and she believes that this ability helps them with examination questions. For example, questions are usually set in a particular way, but if the same questions were set in a different way, some students become confused and perform poorly. However, students who are accustomed to think of a different slant for their class sessions are better able to answer questions in whatever form they appear on examination papers.

When asked how she went about getting students to read works outside of the required texts since the school's library does not have a lot of literature books, she said she goes about that in several ways:

1. For the lower Forms, she lends some of her own to those who desire.

2. She encourages the non-readers to read on topics that they enjoy, e.g., airplanes, art, designing, cooking.

3. Once a week, she organizes a newspaper day–a day when all students will read the newspapers for news or stories, then retell to others.

4. She asks them to come up with solutions to deal with or eradicate problems cited in the newspapers.

5 She encourages them to visit and borrow books from the public library on any subject of their choice.

I then asked her what was her personal objective for the teaching of literature. Very emphatically, she declared that her objective for the teaching of literature in all her classes was not merely to impart knowledge, but at the end of a year of literary studies, every student would have gained values that would help them in life; that they would be able to make a connection between literature and life, and develop an openness to different peoples, races, and cultures; that they would be able to break down barriers of prejudice and live at peace with others who may be different from them; that they will develop creativity and an improved writing and speaking style; and that they will develop an appreciation for poetry and a wide range of literature including the literature of the Bible.

I then thanked her for her time and the opportunity she afforded me to interview her. I told her I was impressed by her approaches to teaching and the many ways in which she made literature meaningful and enjoyable to her students. I wished her well.

## Summary of the Perceptions of Teacher No. 3

Teacher No. 3 perceives literature as one of the best sources for helping students to become better writers, since by so doing, they are exposed to a variety of writing styles.

This was consistent with her evaluation of the relative importance of this subject on her questionnaire response. On survey item No. 7, on which she was asked to rank in a 1-2-3 order the relative importance of the different aspects of language arts, she gave literature, composition, and grammar an equal high ranking of 1. Although a good literature teacher, having earned an advanced certificate in this subject at the GCE examination, she does not value literature in isolation, but perceives it as ranking equally with grammar and composition. "*The mastery of one helps in the mastery of the other.*" she declared. When asked in an interview why she gave an equal ranking of 1 to composition, grammar, and literature, she responded, "*They are not separate. Good literature comes from good grammar and composition. Literature is all about writing. If you have one without the other, you can have problems in communication.*"

On the following survey item, No. 8, where she was asked to rank literature by genres, she gave fiction, non-fiction, and poetry a similar equal ranking of 1. When asked in a personal interview why she ranked them all as being equal in importance, she concluded:

> *Literature is everything expressed in written form, and the best in literature means the best in writing. When it comes to poetry, this genre is a beautiful way of expressing feelings, describing cultures, using language, exhibiting style, and fostering creativity. They make up one unit of artistic communication. It is difficult to compartmentalize the various areas. They make up a unified whole.*

Although hedged in by prescribed works of literature from the Government Ministry of Education, she believes that teachers of literature should have the first preference in the selection of texts to be studied in the classroom since they work closest to students. However, since students must compete with others in an external examination for the sake of a certificate, she would place the personal preference and the

Ministry of Education on the same level of importance. She clearly supports this by her response to survey item No. 10 on her questionnaire, which asked respondents to rank in a 1-2-3 order the importance they placed on various factors that influence their selection of literary works. These factors included the following: (1) my own personal beliefs and preference; (2) my school or administration; (3) my local conference/union education department; (4) the Ministry of Education (government); (5) parents and the community; and (6) the local church/pastor. For these, she gave both the "Ministry of Education" and "My own personal beliefs and preference" a high ranking of 1. For her, therefore, personal commitment to a work is important–a commitment to the specific values it teaches and the specific aesthetic value it shares with the reader. She describes this as a "feeling" for the work.

She further substantiates her commitment to a personal preference in the selection of literature by her response to survey item 13 (B), which dealt with respondents' handling of a fictional work. They were asked to check in a given slot the method they would use when dealing with a fictional work that gives a true representation and philosophy of life. Options included: (1) use the work in such a way as to allow students to *discover* value for themselves; (2) use the work and *teach* the value; (3) discard the work because it is non-factual; (4) other.

Teacher No. 3 checked the option "Use the work and *teach* the value." Her perception of literature is that its "value" content should not be left to chance. The teacher, therefore, having developed a "feel" for the selected work, will be able to help students experience it. When it comes to a work where a few expletives and/or sexual references are evident, she will opt for a desirable alternative, which is in keeping with

her philosophical stance. She sees the teacher's philosophy as paramount in this type of decision making. In her interview she stated this poignantly: "*My philosophy informs my experience, and my experience with literature will help me determine what is of value and what is not.*" She further supported her stance by the way she responded to survey item 15 (4) on her questionnaire. This question asked her to circle a number on a continuum of 1-10 that fell closest to either of two variables: "great effect" and "little effect" in relation to the concept "Impact of the teacher's philosophy of life on the teaching of literature." Teacher No. 3 circled 1, indicating her strong feeling that the teacher's philosophy impacts highly on the teaching of literature.

She perceives the guidelines given by Ellen White relative to the reading of fiction as being sound. According to her in an interview, "*They make good sense.*" Her interpretation of White's counsel surrounds the quality and value of selected fictional works. She believes that works of fiction that give readers an illusion of life, a false definition of love, and poor writing models are not recommended for reading and study. This type of literature is what White labels "trashy." However, fictional works that portray a true philosophy of life and foster critical and analytic thinking on the part of students and readers can be of great value to high-school students. Some non-fictional works including histories and biographies, though true to fact, can be sordid and harmful to readers. Therefore, she sees imaginative literature as calling not for a "yes" or "no" response, but one that calls for responsible judgment, informed by a personal Christian philosophy. She strongly supported this view in her response to question No. 16 (1) on the questionnaire. This question asked respondents to circle a category of response on a Likert-type scale that dealt with the concept "factual accounts only should be used for

classroom study." To this concept, she circled "strongly disagree." Her concept of Ellen White's counsel on the study of fiction is one that calls for responsibility on the part of the reader and teacher.

Teacher No. 3 perceives literature as a subject that benefits everyone. Its benefits and values are not limited to the age of readers. Young students in the lower Forms can derive from poetry and short stories the same joy and value as older students in the higher Forms. The only difference is that older students have more exposure to a wider variety of reading material, hence their sense for aesthetic appreciation is more heightened. According to her in an interview: "*If a child doesn't learn to appreciate literature from early, it becomes more difficult for him or her to do so at a later stage. Literature is important from the basic level because* [students] *need that foundation upon which to build for higher level thinking and appreciation.*" Further, she sees it as a powerful tool for expression in writing and speaking as well as for helping readers to be open-minded and less prejudiced to other races and cultures. In my interview with her, she cited her own experience with one of her Form II classes in which children from different races make up the class enrollment, and there was a subtle feeling of separation among them. However, as students read the short stories, made relevant applications, and worked in groups, they became more open and expressive with each other, and small cliques that were once there, were broken.

Finally, teacher No. 3 perceives the study of literature as that one subject that can be considered indispensable to the Seventh-day Adventist high-school student. She summarized this in her response to my final question posed to her during our interview: "What is your personal objective for the teaching of literature?" Her overall perspective

was tied to her response relating to her objective for the teaching of this subject. She said that she perceived literature as not merely another subject that imparts knowledge about real or fictional characters in life settings, but as a subject that helps students come to terms with the importance of a personal philosophy that will impact on attitude, behavior, and perspective. She sees it as a subject that will help in the development of students' creative and imaginative skills, writing and speaking skills, and an appreciation for the beauty of literary content and aesthetics in language and literature.

# CHAPTER VI

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Summary of Teachers' Perceptions on the Teaching of Literature

Perception, as it relates to ideas of the mind, has always been an area of interesting debate and philosophical thought. The way in which something is perceived can be influenced by knowledge gained from forces outside of the self, but it can also spring from the mind itself, or intuitive feelings, or what Schopenhauer (1788-1860) in his essay "The World as Will and Idea," calls "genius." Schopenhauer (cited in Rand, 1936) sees perception in two ways: (1) "a way of viewing things independent of the principle of sufficient reason [which he calls genius] and (2) a way of viewing things, which proceeds in accordance with sufficient reason which is the method of experience and science (p. 657). The former, he says, is the method of Aristotle; the second is, on the whole, that of Plato.

Another early philosopher, Locke (1632-1704), in his "Essay Concerning Human Understanding" (cited in Rand, 1936), describes perception in a somewhat different way. He posits: "Whatsoever the mind perceives in itself, or is the immediate object of perception, thought, or understanding, that I call *idea*; and the power to produce an idea

in our mind, I call *quality* of the subject where that power is" (p. 238). Then in his own original manner of expression and use of archaic language, he describes everyone as a conscious being, conscious of him or her self–someone who thinks. In the minds of people, he says, are ideas expressed by both concrete and abstract things such as "whiteness, hardness, sweetness, thinking, motion, man, elephant, army, drunkenness, and others" (p. 227). A person's first duty, therefore, is to find out how she or he generated these ideas.

Finally, a third philosopher, Kant, in his "The Critique of Pure Reason" (cited in Rand, 1936), describes perception as the embodiment of what he calls a threefold synthesis, which springs from knowledge. Knowledge of what is real requires perception, so there can be no knowledge without perception. He sees this threefold synthesis as the "modification of the mind, reproduction of ideas in the imagination, and recognition of ideas in conception" (p. 398).

Perception, however it is perceived or understood by philosophers or others, has to do with the way one views issues, concepts, things, or people. The purpose of this research was to discover and document the different perceptions that teachers of English in selected regions of the Caribbean have about the teaching of literature in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools. A discovery and documentation of these perceptions could serve as a catalyst in helping teachers who believe in the study of literature to affirm their own philosophical positions on the teaching of this subject. On the other hand, the discovery and documentation of these perceptions could help teachers who do not teach literature and who believe that it should not be taught in Seventh-day Adventist secondary

schools to become sensitive to the important function this subject plays in the lives of students.

In this study, 34 teachers who teach English in selected regions of the Caribbean were asked to give their perceptions of the teaching of literature in Seventh-day Adventist schools through a survey questionnaire, interviews, and case studies. Of this group, 19 teach literature and 15 do not. There was only 1 male. All of the 19 teachers surveyed who teach literature indicated their belief that literature is an important subject in the English curriculum and should be taught in all schools; however, these perceptions ranged in varying degrees of importance when compared with other subjects in language arts. While some teachers believe that it should be placed above grammar and composition, others believe it should evolve from these two subjects. Still others believe that all the subjects in language arts should be integrated, with no one having precedence over the other.

Regarding teachers' perceptions on the various types of literature, for example, biblical, classical, Caribbean, contemporary, and women and/or minority, the majority of those who teach literature indicated that biblical literature should have the preeminence above all other types. Ten of the 19 teachers gave it the highest ranking of 1, in a 1-2-3 order of importance. Ironically, however, no one has indicated on the questionnaire or through interviews or case studies that they used any portion of the Bible as literature.

With regard to women and/or minority literature, teachers indicated mixed perceptions. Whereas some perceive literature authored by women as an important and necessary type of literature since it addresses life's issues from a more sensitive

perspective than that given by male authors, others believe that it should be treated with careful attention especially if the stories promote a feminist agenda. Of the 19 teachers who teach literature, only 2 gave women and/or minority literature the highest ranking of 1. Furthermore, teachers were very specific in separating women's literature from minority literature and made comments on women's literature only.

Concerning the various genres of literature, for example, biography, drama, poetry, fiction, and non-fiction, teachers who teach literature perceive fiction as the most important genre. They rank biography as being next in importance. In most of their comments, they indicated that fiction addresses the various nuances and shades of life, but especially the grey area of life, which is where most of life's realities lie. Seventeen of the 34 teachers of English gave fiction a high ranking of at least 2, in a 1-2-3 order of importance. Of the 19 teachers who teach literature, however, 15 gave fiction at least a ranking of 2. Of great concern, though, for the majority of both groups of teachers, was the problem of language use and values espoused in many of these fictional works which are recommended for study by the various ministries of education. Their problem with fiction centers around the areas of language use and value judgments more than in the concept that fiction is false and not true to fact.

Differences between gender perspectives were few. Like the majority of the female teachers, the single male perceived literature as indispensable to the English curriculum in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools. He perceived imaginative works of literature as a vehicle for providing insight and understanding into human life and experience. He also perceived literature as a subject that helps to develop in readers

empathy and imagination. However, slightly different perceptions from the majority of females teachers surfaced in the ranking of three distinct areas: (1) the teaching of literature in relation to other language arts studies; (2) literature authored by women and/or minorities in relation to other types of literature; and (3) fiction in relation to other genres of literature. These areas were given lower rankings than those given by the majority of the female respondents.

Finally, all three teachers, who were the subjects of case studies, as well as those interviewed, perceive literature as the height of English studies although each had slightly different perspectives on various types of literature that are suitable for classroom study. Moreover, all believe that the study of literature exposes students to a variety of writers and styles, which in turn helps them to become better writers and thinkers.

## Findings and Conclusions of Research Questions

Following are summary findings and conclusions on the six research questions that guided this study through questionnaires, interviews, and case studies:

**Research Question No. 1:** "*What value do English teachers place on literature as part of the English curriculum?*" It can be concluded from both groups of respondents–those who teach literature and those who do not–that this subject is very important to the English curriculum in Caribbean Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in general if not in specific ways. Reservations, however, exist among some respondents as to the type of literature that should be allowed for classroom study. Fiction that challenges the values for which the Seventh-day Adventist church stands is

not looked upon with favor by some school administrators and teachers; hence, students from these schools do not write the subject at the local CXC or London-based GCE examinations.

The case studies reinforced the centrality of literature as a part of the English curriculum. In case study 1, for example, the teacher perceives literature as that single line of study, apart from biblical studies, that students take with them for the rest of their lives. For her, she declares, "it is the essence of education." This teacher sees literature as a subject that empowers teachers to teach values because the very nature of the works permits a comfortable point of departure for the integration of faith into the process of learning.

**Research Question No. 2:** "*How do administrative and other external bodies influence the literature teacher's choice of literary works?*" Responses revealed that to a large extent, the literature teacher's personal beliefs and preferences do influence his or her choice of literary works used in classrooms. In many schools, however, it is the administration, not the teachers, that decides whether or not literature should be taught and whether or not students will be sent to write this subject at the CXC or the GCE examinations. Some schools have made their decision not to teach literature and not to send students to write this subject at the local or external examinations. The majority of schools, however, have decided that although this external factor--the government's Ministry of Education--provides the list of books to be used, they would use their own value system to choose from that list the books most suitable for the recommended themes. In two regions of the selected territories, where these examinations are not a

requirement for high-school completion certificates, teachers use their freedom to select appropriate literary texts for classroom study, and students prepare to answer examination questions from these selected texts.

Other external factors such as parents and the community, the local church and pastor, and the local conference/union education department did not appear to exert a great influence on determining what type of literature should be studied in schools. No more than 3 of the 19 teachers who teach English indicated that these factors exerted a high influence in the selection of texts.

**Research Question No. 3:** *"How does the teacher's philosophy of life impact the selection and teaching of literature?"* Depending on how the teacher views spiritual and moral development, he or she would decide to choose and teach literature differently. Of the 19 teachers who teach literature, 11 (55%) would rather take a didactic approach to the subject, emphasizing morals and *teaching* values, as against teaching the work in such a manner as to allow students to *discover* the value and meaning for themselves. Of the 19 respondents who teach literature, 4 (21%) would never use a text that contains expletives and/or sexual references; 13 (68%) would discard such a work entirely or choose a desirable alternative; and only 2 (approximately 11%) would use such a work with care and a sense of responsibility.

As an example of how the literature teacher's philosophy could impact on the selection and teaching of works, I asked the teacher in case study 1 her opinion on this. She declared:

*The philosophy of the teacher would definitely influence the choice and selection*

> *of literature books, especially if the school is a Christian school. As Christians, we believe that the purpose of education is mainly to restore the image of God in people; therefore, the teacher's philosophy will allow for the selection of books that will help students to understand the concept of God and salvation in this process of restoration.*

The response of the teacher in case study 3 was also supportive of this position. She was asked what role her personal philosophy would play when texts are recommended to her from the Ministry of Education for examination purposes. To this, she responded:

> *The way I see it is like this: My personal philosophy is tied to my experience. My philosophy informs my experience, and my experience with literature will help me determine what is of value from what is not. I will be able to pick out in works of literature what's right and what's wrong because not everything that is in print is right. My philosophy, therefore, will inform the texts I select and also the way I teach literature in all my English classes on a regular basis.*

The teacher's personal philosophy, therefore, stands central in the selection and teaching of literature. Choosing what to read, as well as what to highlight and how to highlight portions of the works under study, is critical to the benefits and values students can gain from the study of literature. Teachers cannot extricate themselves from their belief systems.

. **Research Question No. 4:** *"In what ways does Ellen White's counsel on literature influence its selection and teaching?"* Responses revealed that Ellen G. White's counsel on the selection of literature has not apparently exerted a high impact on teachers' selection of literature for classroom study. Only 4 of the 19 respondents who teach literature, a mere 21%, gave her counsels on this subject a high ranking of 1 from among other options such as *childhood/family experiences, school/college English classes, biblical/philosophic perspectives, book reviews and catalogs, and recommendations from other teachers.*

A major portion of her counsel centered on the reading of fiction, and a majority of teachers subscribe to the understanding that works of literature studied in SDA secondary schools should not be limited to factual accounts. Eighteen of the 19 teachers who teach literature indicated this on their questionnaire responses. Also, of the entire group of 34 teachers surveyed, 30 (88%) perceive fiction as reflecting true-to-life experiences, and 22 (65%) believe that there is a body of fictional works that is true to the highest principles of living. An example of this belief was reflected in commentary given by the teacher in case study 2. She expressed the view that Ellen White's counsel on literature should be central in the mind of every literature teacher. She especially values what White (1948) says in Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 11, where her counsel does not merely focus on fiction as it does on "trashy" literature. Fiction that is "cheap" and "trashy" could be equally harmful as factual works that are sordid, vulgar, and far-removed from the Christian's philosophy of life.

This teacher concludes that White's writings have influenced her selection and teaching of fiction in a way that prevents her from being dogmatic on the topic. She says: "*We have to be careful in the way we look at this [fiction]. I cannot say there should be no fiction. . . . Each work must be tested on its own value.*"

Teachers, therefore, perceive the thrust of Ellen White's counsel on literature as one that calls them to take a responsible approach to their choice of literary works. They believe that her counsel should be understood in its contextual settings and should not, therefore, be interpreted in isolation.

**Research Question No. 5:** *"How do Seventh-day Adventist literature teachers relate to fiction as a genre in literature?"* Findings revealed a mixed response. Almost everyone recognized that not all imaginative or fictional works qualify for study in the SDA secondary English classroom, and many indicated that after evaluating literary works for classroom study, they would choose a desirable alternative if the works examined contained unsuitable values, unacceptable language, skewed philosophy, and questionable lifestyle, or they would choose a method or an approach in teaching that would not glorify or highlight the flawed characters or actions.

Both groups of teachers–those who teach literature and those who do not–recognize some value in fiction. In their response to question No. 15 (2), which stated the concept, "imaginative or fictional works as a vehicle for insight and understanding of human life," no one circled a number below 5 on a semantic differential scale of 1-10, with 1 being the most positive and 10 the most negative. Also, of the 19 respondents who teach literature, 14 gave this concept a 1 or 2 ranking (74%), and of the 15 teachers who do not teach literature, 8 (53%) gave the concept a 1 or 2 ranking. This was further heightened by the way teachers responded to question No. 16 (1, 2, 3), which addressed the value of fiction. One hundred percent of those who teach literature agreed or strongly agreed that this subject should be inclusive of fictional works, and 80% of those who do not teach literature indicated a strong agreement or agreement with this concept on a Likert-type scale of value. Overall, both groups placed a relatively high value on fiction.

**Research Question No. 6:** *"In what specific ways do teachers believe students benefit from the study of literature?"* This was a personal question that required an honest

response from every teacher. In a general sense, teachers believe that, to a large extent, their students do benefit from the study of literature. Almost all respondents indicated that literature could help students become better writers and clearer and more analytic thinkers; moreover, they believe that themes in literature, carefully handled, could help them come to terms with realistic situations in their own lives and also relate to life situations of others.

In her interview session, the teacher in case study 3 told how the study of short stories helped to integrate several of her Form II students who were subtly alienated from each other because of race. Two major ethnic groups made up the composition of her class. After several literature sessions of short stories and group discussions, her students were able to work together and relate with each other better. Also, students who were very introverted and secretive about relational problems in their homes and lives were able to match events in the texts with those in their own lives and were, therefore, strengthened to move on in positive ways. This teacher perceives literature as a tool for breaking down walls of prejudice, for fostering open-mindedness to other peoples and cultures, for helping students to be better writers, and for developing within them an appreciation for the aesthetics of language.

In spite of reservations that several teachers had about specific genres within this discipline, for example, "the study of fiction" and "literature authored by women and/or minority," each one emphasized several benefits that the study of literature brings to students.

## Implications of Teachers' Perceptions as Related to Published Literature

Overall, teachers in the selected regions of the Caribbean believe that literature is beneficial to all students and should be taught. The selected regions were Antigua, Barbados, Bequia, Dominica, Grenada, St. Croix, St. Lucia, St. Thomas, St. Vincent, Tobago, and Trinidad. Their view was in keeping with those of sources who have written on the topic both from a Seventh-day Adventist and a non-Seventh-day Adventist perspective. Sauls (1978) highlights the important process of growth in the life of the Christian student that comes about through the study of literature. In fact, he concludes that students should not be allowed to miss out on the opportunity of developing critical and analytical skills and the refining of values that accrue from this subject. When teachers in church-run educational institutions throw out the study of literature, Sauls (1978) declares, "[they] are throwing out the best models of effective use of language, and one of the most effective means of helping students develop creativity and the ability to discriminate" (p. 33).

Implied in White's (1952a) counsel, as found in The Adventist Home, is the thought that good literature could strengthen the mind to think above the level of superficiality. She declares in her condemnation of "cheap" literature: "Old and young form the habit of reading hastily and superficially, and the mind loses its power of connected and vigorous thought" (p. 415). And later, her son, Arthur L. White (1968), in a letter to Eloyce Scharffenberg, explaining to her the importance of understanding the principle that should govern the reading of fiction, stresses the positive outcome that

results from the study of literature. He says: "We have to get down to principles on this thing [fiction]. What is the fruit of the reading? What may be the tendencies? To what do these things lead?" (A. L. White,1968). If the end results are beneficial, he argues, then the act of reading is justified. Other Christian writers, such as Bradley (1970), Cobb (1967), Gabelein (1968), Gibbs (1962), Jones (1989), Knight (1977), Moncrieff (1993), Ryken (1974), TeSelle (1974) and Waller (1965) emphasize in different ways the important function of literature, inclusive of fiction, on the lives of students. They see this as a subject that helps students discover themselves, develop speaking and writing skills, foster higher level critical thinking, nurture an appreciation for the aesthetics of language in good reading, and accept and deal with circumstances in their own and others' lives.

Other sources such as Applebee (1974); Coles (1989); Graff (1989; and Meek (1991); and more contemporary ones like Dilg (1997), Farrell (1995), Freed (1997), Hipple (1997), Israel (1997), Mitchell (1997), Stanford (1997) emphasize unequivocally that literature provides a way for people to understand and live with each other. More than any other literary form, they see "stories" as a powerful vehicle for yielding insights and allowing for new dimensions in personal discovery.

It is interesting to examine the published literature related to research question No. 6 of the questionnaire that asked "*To what extent do teachers feel their students benefit from the study of literature?*" Dilg (1997) points out that contemporary authors, more than any other authors from various literary periods, "speak" to young people in compelling ways since actions and experiences in contemporary narrative works correspond with the experiences of today's youth and those of people they know. Young

people can, therefore, identify with the literary works they study.

But literature as a track in English studies is fast giving way to other areas in this field; thus, the values that the study of literature provides are being submerged as other areas in the field of English become more lucrative. Because of this, Rutledge (1968); Hansen (1979); Bowers (1991); Monseau and Salvner (1992); Bancroft (1994); and Gillespie (1994) have all expressed concern over the apparent loss of these values to the minds of the young. They recognize a heightening emphasis on another track of English, rhetoric and composition, as crowding out the discipline of literature. Bancroft (1994) sees this ascendency, along with the emergence of new critical theories, as being the "stepchild of the language arts curriculum" (p. 23). When one looks, however, at the struggles educators endured in the early 19th century as they worked to gain a respectable place for English and literature in the school's curriculum, the value of this subject cannot be depreciated. Applebee (1974) traces the struggles that educators experienced in getting English, and particularly literature, to gain academic respect. They had to work hard to develop a methodology rigorous enough to earn for it a place among other school subjects. Especially was this so with imaginative literature, which posed a real threat to the moral well-being of its readers.

It was only after the National Council of Education of the National Education Association called for the appointment of a "Committee of Ten," according to Graff (1989), to consider the study of English and literature in secondary schools that literature gained a place of prominence. Applebee (1974) observes that the statements of purpose for the teaching of literature were twofold: (1). "To enable the student to understand the

expressed thoughts of others and to give expression to thoughts of his [her] own; (2). To cultivate a taste for reading, to give the pupil some acquaintance with good literature, and to furnish him [her] with the means of extending that acquaintance" (p. 33).

A re-examination of the subject of literature and its value and benefit to students caused the "Committee of Ten" in 1894 to recommend that English be considered a school subject that should be taught five periods a week for 4 years (Applebee, 1974). From that time onward, the study of English, inclusive of literature, became "the only subject that was recommended for definite inclusion in the high-school program of study for every student during each of the four high-school years" (Applebee, 1974, p. 33).

It must be noted, however, that not every source agrees with the outright benefit and value of literature as a subject for students. For example, Bogden (1986) and Thorpe (1980) show how a humanistic perspective to the study of literature can actually lead students off course, giving them false assumptions of life, thus preventing them from maintaining stable relationships with others. They prefer to look at this subject as a hypothesis about life rather than a reflection of it.

## Concluding Synthesis

Literature as an acceptable subject in the high school's curriculum has always been shrouded with an atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity by those concerned with moral and spiritual development. The history of its inclusion in the English curriculum attests to this (Applebee, 1974; Graff, 1989). Because of its power to affect readers negatively or positively through the values, morals, and ethical concerns conveyed through themes,

characters, points of view, settings, and plot actions in novels, short stories, narrative poetry, and drama, this subject has always been an object of suspicion for both Christian and non-Christian educators. However, Seventh-day Adventist as well as other Christian and non-Christian writers, over decades of time, have attested to the wholesomeness of this subject and its significant role and function in the lives of young students. According to a report on "The Aims and Teaching of Literature in Seventh-day Adventist Schools," the chief value of literary studies "lies in the way they lead constantly outside of themselves, to a deeper understanding of human nature, personality, and interrelationships" (Australasian Division Report, 1968, p. 8). This report goes on to suggest that "the proper approach to literature forces us to evaluate our own existence, and to make vital discriminations between the healthful and malignant in our culture, both in relation to God's purposes for man, and in comparison with the culture of other ages" (p. 8).

The people who make the difference in placing value on this subject are English teachers. Klecker and Loadman (1998) highlight the teacher's empowerment to do this as the cornerstone of most educational reform movements. They describe this empowerment of teachers in educational literature as a multidimensional construct that often is used to define new roles in education. Also, Butt and Towsend (1990) powerfully suggest that the core of the problem on educational reform rests with teachers who relate with reformers and others of their ilk. Since teachers are considered the greatest agents for effecting change in any educational system, whether directly or indirectly, their perceptions on any subject are valuable.

The three case studies have contributed significantly to this research. They have reinforced the centrality of literature as a part of the English curriculum. They were valuable in providing more in-depth insight and information on the chosen phenomenon. Hence, they added enlightened understanding and interpretations of the perceptions of English teachers about the teaching of literature in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in the selected Caribbean regions. According to Bringberg and McGrath (1985), validity in qualitative research depends on the relationship between the researcher's conclusions and the real world. It cannot be bought with a technique, they posit; it must be experienced. Because of the holistic experience that the case studies provided, it is difficult for the researcher's conclusions not to be deemed valid.

The case studies also established generalizability for the study, so teachers of English in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in any other geographic location could benefit. Generalizability in qualitative research, according to Patton (1980) and Merriam (1988), has to do with the creation of an image that could become a prototype of the real world, and these sources agree that the case study is the most powerful way of creating this image. In spite of the delimitations of geographic convenience that limited the selection of cases to the island of Trinidad, it is difficult for English teachers in any other location not to be persuaded by the richness of the information derived from these three case studies. Furthermore, the variety in ages, years of teaching experience, and educational backgrounds allows teachers across a wide spectrum to identify with the findings. These case studies provided an holistic discovery that was particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive.

One of the defining attributes of qualitative research is its emergent nature as it describes and analyzes "people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions," according to McMillan and Schumacher (1997). Unlike quantitative research that begins with hypothesis testing and controls to deal with threats, qualitative research allows for the emergence of themes, patterns, and new ideas as the study progresses (Patton, 1980; Merriam, 1988; Patton, Eisner, 1991). Some of the themes that have emerged from this study are as follows: (1) The teaching of the Bible as literature. The majority of teachers surveyed favor this type of literature above other types, but no one teaches it. (2) Teachers' unfamiliarity with the pamphlet "Guide to the Teaching of Literature in Seventh-day Adventist Schools." This is a short document published by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists as a guide to all teachers of literature, but very few of the teachers surveyed are acquainted with it. (3) The impact on the curriculum of students who enter SDA high schools in the Caribbean without the required entrance qualifying examination. Students in this category generally operate at low performance levels in terms of critical and interpretive thinking. This could be a possible cause for the discouragement of some high- school teachers to teach literature–a subject that requires higher level thinking skills--hence the absence of this subject from the curriculum. (4) The small percentage of male teachers who teach English. Of the 19 teachers who teach literature in the selected Caribbean regions, only 1 is male. These emergent themes are worthy to be investigated further in relationship to the teaching of literature.

The perceptions of the 34 English teachers in this study, and the relationship of their perceptions to the published literature on the importance of teaching this subject,

could create positive waves of change in the way this subject is examined and re-assessed by other Christian English educators both locally and internationally. When literature as a language arts subject is excluded from the English curriculum, Sauls (1978) concludes that teachers are "throwing out the best models of effective use of language, and one of the most effective means of helping students develop creativity and the ability to discriminate" (p. 33).

Teachers' approach, methodology, and personal philosophy can make this subject one that endures for the student beyond the classroom of time, for as Hyde (1920) poignantly remarked as she was faced with the co-relationship that exists between literature and life: "I can bring no more appropriate generalization than the oft repeated one that literature is an interpretation of life. . . .The books that pupils read are their short-cuts to an experience in worthy living" (p. 401). It is not surprising that the great apostle Paul, in the greatest of all literature–the Bible–in his letter to Timothy, admonished: "Till I come, give attention to reading" (1 Tim 4:11, NKJV). And John, the revelator, in the last book of this literary masterpiece, re-echoes this theme as he writes to the seven churches in Asia, "Blessed is he [she] who reads" (Rev 1: 3, NKJV).

## Recommendations for Further Research and Study

On the basis of the review of literature and the findings of this research as well as the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are presented for discussion and possible adoption and further research:

1. Research might be conducted to study the extent to which the pamphlet "Guide

to the Teaching of Literature in Seventh-day Adventist Schools," published by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists" (n.d.), is useful to Seventh-day Adventist literature teachers in other regions outside of the Caribbean, in helping them select and teach appropriate literature.

2. Teachers of literature should be encouraged to use the short stories of the Bible; portions of the wisdom literature in Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes; sections from the book of Psalms; and parables from the New Testament as sources for literary studies. These works are replete with literary allusions, figures of speech, and literary artistry and style that reflect conscious craftsmanship on the part of their writers.

3. A longitudinal study could be done as a follow-up to this research to determine, in a given number of high-school graduation classes how students who loved literature and did well in it at school and at the CXC or GCE examinations coped successfully with situations in their lives as compared with those who loved the natural sciences and did well in that discipline.

4. One year after the publication of this dissertation, a follow-up survey in the form of a questionnaire could be carried out on all the teachers who do not currently teach literature and school principals whose schools do not advocate the teaching of literature to determine if there is any significant change in attitude toward the teaching of literature inclusive of imaginative works.

5. Further research to test the students' system of values might compare a class of seniors studying fiction in a Seventh-day Adventist high school with a similar senior class in a public high school taught by Seventh-day Adventist literature teachers. The results of

such a research could provide insight into the impact of the literature teacher's personal Christian philosophy on students.

6. A comparative study could be conducted to investigate students' experience with the study of fictional short stories and their experience as they study biblical short stories in terms of themes, characterization, points of view, language, style, and content. This could reveal whether there is a difference in the interpretive and vicarious power of stories in relationship to meaning and value for the student.

7. Through the use of a survey questionnaire, a comparative study could be done using two methodologies of teaching literature–an inductive and a deductive. An experimental class could be taught in such a manner that students are allowed to *discover* the meaning and value in literary works. The control class could be conducted in a didactic manner, that is, students are *taught* the value or moral in the work. Results could reveal the advantage of one approach over the other in relation to the extent of higher-level thinking on the part of students.

8. A longitudinal study could be conducted over a 10-year period with a given senior, graduating high-school class to determine how many students became writers of any sort as a result of their study of literature as compared with others in the same class.

# APPENDIX A

# QUESTIONNAIRE

# CARIBBEAN UNION CONFERENCE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

*Directions: This is a research project intended to explore the perceptions of English teachers in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools within the Caribbean Union. Your honest answers to the items in this questionnaire will contribute to this inquiry. Your responses will be kept confidential. Carefully read and follow the instructions given for each question.*

1. Age Range: (Please tick appropriate space)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| (1) 20-25 [ ] | (2) 26-30 [ ] | (3) 31-35 [ ] | (4) 36-40 [ ] |
| (5) 41-45 [ ] | (6) 46-50 [ ] | (7) 51-55 [ ] | (8) 56+ [ ] |

2. Kindly place a check [/] on a line that reflects your highest level of education completed:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| (1) CXC/GCE "O" Level Certificate | ___ | (5) Bachelor's Degree | ___ |
| (2) CXC/GCE "A" Level Certificate | ___ | (6) Master's Degree | ___ |
| (3) Associate Degree or 2 years of College | ___ | (7) Ph.D. Degree | ___ |
| (4) Teachers' Training College Certificate | ___ | (8) Other: Specify | ___ |

3. Where did you receive the greater portion of your academic preparation? Indicate by placing a check mark [ /] at each educational level listed below:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| a. Primary School | [ ] SDA | [ ] Government | [ ] Other Private |
| b. Secondary School | [ ] SDA | [ ] Government | [ ] Other Private |
| c. Teachers' Training College | [ ] SDA | [ ] Government | [ ] Other Private |
| d. Bachelor's Degree | [ ] SDA | [ ] Government | [ ] Other Private |
| e. Graduate Degree | [ ] SDA | [ ] Government | [ ] Other Private |

4. Before this current year, how many years had you taught in SDA schools? ____
   Before this current year, how many years had you taught in other schools? ____

5. Before this year, how many years had you taught *English* in SDA schools? ____
   Before this year, how many years had you taught *English* in other schools? ____

6. Do you teach English full time? _____ YES _____ NO

7. Rank in 1, 2, 3, order, the relative importance you place upon each of the following:
   - _____ Composition
   - _____ Drama
   - _____ Grammar
   - _____ Literature
   - _____ Public Speaking/Journalism

8. Do you teach literature? _____ YES _____ NO

If YES, rank in 1, 2, 3, order, the relative importance you place upon each of the following:

- _____ Biography
- _____ Drama
- _____ Fiction/Imaginative/literature
- _____ Non-fiction
- _____ Poetry

Comment Further if Necessary: _____

_____

_____

9. If YES to question 8, rank in 1, 2, 3, order, the relative importance you place upon each of the following:

- _____ Biblical
- _____ Caribbean
- _____ Classical
- _____ Contemporary
- _____ Women and/or Minority

10. Which factors below influence what literature you select for your classes? Rank in 1, 2, 3, order, the relative importance you place on each of the following in determining your literature selections:

- _____ My own personal beliefs and preference
- _____ My school or administration
- _____ My local conference/union education department
- _____ The Ministry of Education (Government)
- _____ Parents and the community
- _____ The local church, pastor

Comment Further if Necessary: _____

_____

_____

11. Which of the factors below do you feel have exerted the greatest influence on your **own personal beliefs and preferences** regarding the selection of literature? Rank in 1, 2, 3, order, the relative importance you place upon each of the following:

____ Childhood /family experiences
____ School/college English classes
____ Biblical/philosophic perspective
____ E. G. White's writings
____ Book reviews and catalogs
____ Recommendations from other teachers
____ Other (specify) _____

12. Explain your answer above in some detail. Write in the space provided.

13. How do you deal with the following?

A. A good book except for a few expletives and/or sexual references. (Place an X in the appropriate parenthesis.)

[ ] include the section without calling attention to the expletives/references
[ ] delete the section with the "problem" and use the remainder of the work
[ ] do not use the work at all
[ ] choose a desirable alternative

B. A fictional work that gives a true representation and philosophy of life

[ ] use the work in such a way as to allow students to discover the value for themselves
[ ] use the work and teach the value
[ ] discard the work because it is non-factual
[ ] other: specify

14. List the titles of literary works you plan to include this year in your English classes. Give as many actual titles as possible. (Add more lines if needed.)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

15 Below are some concepts for which your response is requested in analyzing your perception of literature. Numbers run along a continuum of 1-10, with 1 & 10 being closest to the given semantic labels below each line. Kindly circle a number that falls closest to **your** opinion of each of the given labels attached to these concepts. Feel free to comment further in the provided space.

(1). Literature as a component of a high school's English curriculum

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Indispensable) (Dispensable)

Comment: _____

_____

_____

(2). Imaginative works as a vehicle for insight and understanding of human life

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Important) (Unimportant)

Comment: _____

_____

_____

(3). Use of "Guidelines" published by the General Conference Department of Education in determining which literary works to use

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Essential) (Unessential)

Comment: _____

_____

_____

16. **The following are statements relating to your perception of the teaching of literature. Kindly indicate your agreement with each statement by circling a category of response. Use the given guide sheet.**

| | | SA - Strongly Agree | A - Agree | D - Disagree | SD - Strongly Disagree | NC - Not Certain |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Factual accounts **only** should be used for classroom study in literature. | SA | A | D | SD | NC |
| 2. | Works of **fiction** reflect true-to-life experiences. | SA | A | D | SD | NC |
| 3. | There is a body of literature, though fictional, that is **true** to the highest principles of living. | SA | A | D | SD | NC |
| 4. | Moral value in a story is **more** than a didactic ending. | SA | A | D | SD | NC |
| 5. | Study of literature makes **better** writers. | SA | A | D | SD | NC |
| 6. | Study of literature makes **better** thinkers. | SA | A | D | SD | NC |
| 7. | The Bible should be the **main** source for literary studies. | SA | A | D | SD | NC |

**Additional Commentary on above Statements. Comment Further if Needed:**

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

**Additional Commentary on above Statements. Comment Further if Needed:**

4. _____

_____

5. _____

_____

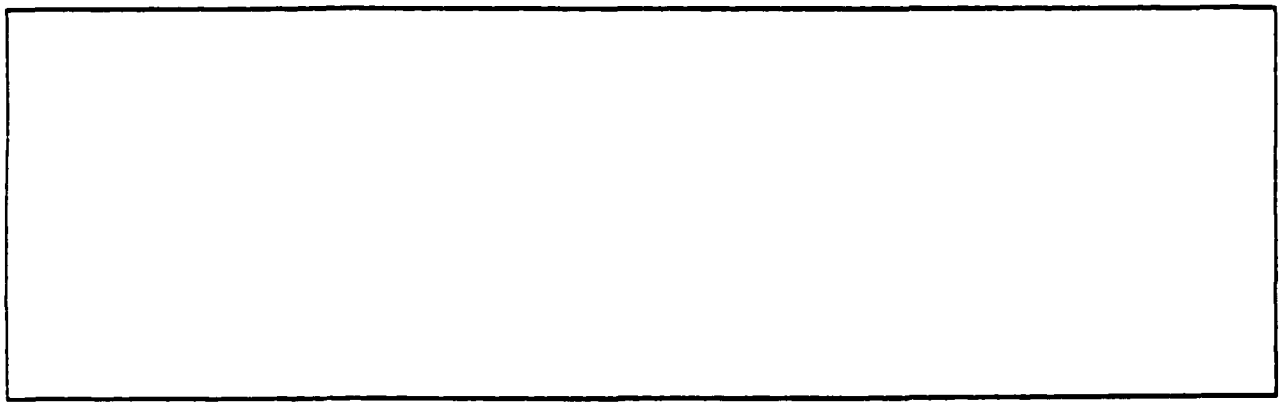
6. _____

_____

7. _____

_____.

16. **Do you have a question or concern on the teaching of literature that was not addressed in this questionnaire? If you do, please describe it below:**



***THANK YOU***

*Thank you very much for your time. Your response to these questions is greatly appreciated. Please place the completed questionnaire along with your consent form in the attached envelope and give to your school principal on or before September 30, 1999.*

# APPENDIX B

# CONSENT FORM

Andrews University

TEACHERS QUES Andrews University IR

**Research Title: Differential Perceptions of Teachers of English toward the Teaching of Literature in Seventh-day Adventist Secondary Schools in Selected Regions of the Caribbean.**

I have read and understood the description given to me about the research project, and I have been fully informed about the nature and purpose of the project, and my rights as a research subject. I understand that:

- this project, which involves a questionnaire and interviewing of teachers of English is part of the requirements for the completion of a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction at Andrews University;
- the purpose of this project includes providing English teachers the opportunity of reflecting on their own perceptions, beliefs, and practices relative to the teaching of literature with the hope that a renewed or heightened value for the subject will be established;
- the information obtained will provide educators, and especially secondary school English teachers, with greater insights into the importance of literature at the secondary level, as well as help them to better understand its intrinsic value within the parameters of the SDA Church;
- the questionnaire and interviews will be done during the months of September through December, 1999;
- the information collected from me is confidential, and at no time will my name be used in the written report;
- there are no hazards or risks associated with the questionnaire and interviews, and my consent is voluntary. Even if I consent, I will have the option to withdraw from participating in the interview at any time, without prejudice.

I, _____, hereby consent to participate in this research. I have had all my questions satisfactorily answered, and I have received a copy of this consent form. If I have any further questions, I can call Shirley McGarrell at (868) 663-8503. Her mailing address is Caribbean Union College, P. O. Box 175, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, W.I. I can also call Dr. Paul Brantley at (616) 471-3416, or Dr. Douglas Jones at (616) 471-3345. I understand that if I have any further questions about my rights as a research subject, I can contact Andrews University Human Subjects Review Board at (616) 471-6088.

_____ / ___ / ___
(Name) (Date)

_____ / ___ / ___
(Witness) (Date)

_____ / ___ / ___
(Investigator) (Date)

Thank you for your kind cooperation.

# APPENDIX C

# CORRESPONDENCE

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Caribbean Union Conference
of Seventh-day Adventists

7 Rookery Nook, Maraval
Trinidad W I

P O Box 221, Port of Spain
Trinidad W I

Telephone (868) 622-2514 / 2543 / 2509 / 7934
Fax (868) 622-8463
CUCON@tstt.net.tt

September 15, 1999

Principals
English Teachers
Secondary Schools
Caribbean Union Conference of S.D.A.

Dear Colleagues:

Sis. Shirley A. McGarrell is presently pursuing her Ph.D. degree at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A. She has started her dissertation research and would like the assistance of English teachers of our secondary schools. I believe that her research would benefit the English departments of the schools in this Union.

I am therefore soliciting your full cooperation in assisting her wherever possible.

Thank you and may God continue to bless you.

Sincerely,

Hilmary Bowman
Director of Education

HB/

Caribbean Union College
P. O. Box 175
Port-of-Spain, Trinidad

September 17, 1999

To All Our School Principals
Caribbean Union Conference of SDA

Dear Principal:

Greetings. I am pleased to write you in the interest of an on-going research I am conducting among English teachers. I am currently completing a doctoral program at Andrews University in the area of Curriculum and Instruction with an advanced cognate in English. The teaching of literature in our SDA secondary schools has always interested me, and I have chosen to research the different perceptions of fellow English teachers in this regard. My dissertation topic is: "*Differential Perceptions of Teachers of English toward the Teaching of Literature in SDA Secondary Schools within Selected Regions of the Caribbean.*"

I would have liked to communicate with each English teacher personally from the onset, but since I don't know how many teachers teach English at your school, neither do I have their names, I am kindly asking you to do a few things: First, kindly place a number at the bottom right hand corner of the last page of each questionnaire enclosed, e.g., if you have three teachers, place the numbers 1, 2, 3, on the code line at the bottom right hand corner; if there are are only two teachers, write 1, 2, on that line. Then kindly send me a list of these teachers' names with corresponding numbers, e.g., "1. Elsie Alves; 2. Abraham Huggins." Include next to each name a telephone number by which the teacher could be reached. Give a packet to each of these teachers. Each packet is comprised of two letters of introduction--one from me and another from Mr. Hilary Bowman, a questionnaire, and two consent forms--one to be returned to me and the other to be kept by the teacher. I have asked them to return the questionnaire and consent form to you in sealed envelopes on or before September 30, and I am kindly requesting that you mail these to me at Caribbean Union College as soon as possible thereafter. Since I don't know the cost of postage from your area, please mail to me in a brown manilla or other large envelope, and I will return the cost of the postage to you as soon as possible.

Teachers' responses will be confidential but not anonymous. Given their responses, I may need to follow up with additional interviews and/or visits. Thank you very much for your kind assistance in this project, which I hope can be of great benefit to all educators, but more specifically, to teachers in the field of English. May God continue to bless your leadership.

Cordially,

Shirley A. McGarrell

Shirley A. McGarrell

/sm

Andrews University

September 18, 1999

Dear Fellow Teacher:

I am pleased to invite you to participate in a research project that can be of value to English teachers in our Union territory. I am presently completing doctoral studies at Andrews University in the field of education with an advanced cognate in English. This project is part of the requirements for the completion of this degree in Curriculum and Instruction. The purpose of this research is to gain better insights into the differential perceptions of teachers of English toward the teaching of literature in Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in selected regions of the Caribbean Union.

This study can be significant for teachers of English in several ways. These will include the opportunity for teachers to discuss their own beliefs, perceptions, and practices, as well as note those currently advocated in the most professional literature and research done by both secular and denominational writers. Furthermore, this study will help teachers of English to better understand the intrinsic value of literature within the setting of SDA secondary schools.

The research project will include a survey questionnaire, which will be followed up by telephone and/or face-to-face interviews. These will all be done during the months of September through December, 1999. There are no hazards or risks associated with this research. At no time will your name be used in the written report. Your consent is voluntary. Also, even if you give consent, you may withdraw from participating in the interview at any time, without prejudice.

If you have any questions concerning this project, please feel free to contact me at Caribbean Union College any time between 9:00 A.M. and 9:00 P.M., Monday through Thursday and any time on Sunday. My telephone number is: (868) 663-8503. If I'm not at home, you can leave a message on my answering service and I will return your call. You may also contact Dr. Paul Brantley at (616) 471-3416 or Dr. Douglas Jones at (616) 471-3345. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, please contact Andrews University's Human Subjects Review Board at (616) 471-6088.

Kindly fill out the questionnaire, place in enclosed envelope along with your signed consent form, seal, and turn in to your school principal, on or before September 30, 1999. I will send a token of appreciation to all who turn in this questionnaire by the above date. Thank you for your time, and may God continue to richly bless you as you work toward restoring the image of God in the young people under your care

Shirley McGarrell
Doctoral Candidate

Paul S. Brantley
Paul Brantley, Ph.D.
Dissertation Committee Chair &
Coordinator of Graduate Programs
School of Education

/dc ✓

# APPENDIX D

# INTERVIEWS PROTOCOL

## Interviews Protocol

The following questions were used as a guide in asking questions of the respondents. These interviews were not conducted in a sequential order; neither were the questions predetermined but were used as a follow-up to returned questionnaires. These were asked of several teachers who taught literature and all of the 15 teachers who did not teach literature as a separate subject. Other questions asked were in relationship to ambiguities and inconsistencies that were evident in responses given on the questionnaire as well as blank spaces where answers were required but were not filled by the respondent. The interview protocol surrounded most of the questions listed below.

## Telephone Interview Questions

1. What is your personal view of literature as part of the English curriculum in Seventh-day Adventist high-schools?

2. Do you see literature as a necessity in your school?

3. How does your church constituency look at this?

4. What is your view of fiction as part of the English curriculum?

5. Why do you **not** teach literature (for those who did not)?

6. Does your school send students to write literature at the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) or General Certificate of Education (GCE) exams?

7. What do you think students **lose** when literature is not part of their English curriculum?

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