Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL)

Toward Wider Use of Literature in ESL: Why and How

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Although literature occupies a place in some advanced ESL courses, literary texts, which could permit us to achieve many important goals for a wide range of mature ESL students, remain largely neglected. After suggesting the variety of purposes that the use of literature in ESL can achieve, this article examines literature in terms of current ESL theory (discourse analysis, context and contextualization, schema theory, cross-cultural awareness). This is done to explain not only *why* literature may be a more satisfying basis for ESL learning than more commonly used texts, but also what current theory suggests about *how* we should exploit this form in the classroom in order to encourage interactive, communicative classes for mature learners at a variety of levels of proficiency. The article then presents an orderly, four-step approach to any literary text, an approach that obliges students to take responsibility for building their own successively more complex schemata (i.e., levels of understanding), which allow them to explore a text on successively more demanding levels. The theoretical approach is illustrated with reference to Hemingway's short story "Soldier's Home."

Almost a decade after Canale and Swain's (1980) seminal article, the concept of communicative competence has found its expression in a wide variety of attitudes and concerns about the active role of the communicating learner in the second language classroom. Disappointingly (a few excellent articles notwithstanding—e.g., McConochie, 1985; Povey, 1979a; Spack, 1985; Widdowson, 1982), literary texts, which have the potential to provide the basis for intensely interactive, content-based ESL classes, have not enjoyed the general resurgence of attention that our commitment to communicative teaching might have predicted.

It has been my personal experience that many ESL teachers either consciously or unconsciously feel that "literature is too 'hard' for ESL students." Given the large number of language-teaching

problems that they have to face, many do not bother to ask themselves why they feel this way; there seem to be more practical things to worry about. Thus, not having examined the "problem," they fail to discover the exciting communicative potential that the solution to the problem—once articulated—could yield.

It is the purpose of this article to ask anew and in terms of current ESL theory just what literature *is* and then to demonstrate—in the light of these theoretical insights—how any ESL teacher of mature, intermediate as well as advanced learners can confidently prepare and teach a literary text to achieve more communicative, interactive, involving ESL classes. (For convenience, the term *ESL theory* is used to refer collectively to a number of areas of research and concern that bear on the teaching of ESL, including psycholinguistics and language acquisition, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis and theories of communicative competence, and ESL pedagogy, especially classroom interaction and theories of composition.)

Although in order to argue for the wider use of literature, this discussion sometimes distinguishes literature and expository prose, it is important to state at the outset that exposition and literature may be viewed more profitably as overlapping segments on a continuum. Indeed, the problems that literature poses for ESL students and the teaching solutions that I propose may equally apply to and facilitate more critical, interactive classroom work with expository texts as well. (The issue of what constitutes appropriate literary texts for ESL, so well considered by Arthur, 1970, and Povey, 1979b, is not further explored in this article. Here, *literature* is used to denote original—not adapted—fairly short, and fairly contemporary fiction, poetry, and drama of the target culture. The term is never meant to imply a historical survey of that body of literary work referred to, for example, by such terms as *American literature* or *English literature*.)

It is not necessary to reiterate the excellent traditional arguments for the use of literature in the ESL classroom (see Arthur, 1968; Povey, 1967; Widdowson, 1975, 1982). More recently, Spack (1985), after explaining the process by which literature and the teaching of language skills became increasingly separated disciplines, has demonstrated how writing and the study of literature can be mutually profitable. But her stimulating suggestions still proceed from a traditional view of what literature is, which, insofar as this view does not explicitly examine the nature of literature within the framework of ESL theory, exploits only a narrow segment of the wide potential that literary texts offer for more communicative, content-based language teaching.

In addition to serving as a stimulus for writing and composition (Spack, 1985), *exploration* of literature in the ESL classroom constitutes real content. It thus provides a manageable answer to the need for "content-based" classes (Shih, 1986) when interdepartmental scheduling is not feasible. Exploration of a literary text with readers from another culture *is* an exercise in cultural relativity, a response to the call for "cultural awareness" (McGroarty & Galvan, 1985) and "teaching culture" (McLeod, 1976) in ESL. In the classroom, literature "encourages talking" (Enright & McCloskey, 1985) and active problem solving; it generates purposeful, "referential questions" (Brock, 1986); and it provides the basis for highly motivated small-group work (see Long & Porter, 1985).

When we structure the prereading activities that are so important for encouraging intermediate-level students to "guess meanings from context" (Hosenfeld, 1977), we are teaching the more efficient word-attack strategy of "using the whole context to decode the meaning of unfamiliar words" (Cooper, 1984, p. 128). In the exploration of a literary text following prereading vocabulary work, new words are used and reused at increasingly demanding levels, thus encouraging the "extraordinary growth in vocabulary" noted by Spack (1985, p. 721). Additionally, the issues and situations that have been explored in a literary text provide the basis for *contextualized* teaching and practice of complex sentence grammar (see Gajdusek & van Dommelen, 1986, 1987).

LITERATURE EXAMINED IN TERMS OF ESL THEORY

Research in both discourse analysis (e.g., Hatch, 1978) and writing process (e.g., Flower & Hayes, 1981; Perl, 1979, 1980; Raimes, 1981, 1983; Taylor, 1981; Zamel, 1982, 1983) has increased our awareness of the effect on any text of both the audience and the purpose of the speaker/writer with respect to that audience. In terms of purpose, it is more emphatically true of literature than of other written texts that the primary purpose is not just to convey information, but to involve the reader in direct experience. Of course, the experience of the text will depend on the correct processing of the information that it does contain. This purpose (of involving the reader in direct experience) will affect the form of the text: It may be less explicitly contextualized, more consciously patterned, multileveled, and less linear than texts whose purpose is to convey information or even to use information to persuade. But in order to understand and systematically exploit the highly interactive approach that literature "demands," we must further clarify—in terms of ESL theory—the nature of the literary text. The

concepts of context, contextualization, and the schema theory of language processing will prove most useful.

The idea of context itself creates a problem, for it is used in both a literal and a metaphoric sense almost interchangeably. Literally, *context* refers to the physical situation or setting in which any text—spoken or written—occurs. When the majority of clues to meaning are physically present in the setting/situation, we say that the utterance or text is "heavily context embedded" (Cummins, 1981). For example, when my son was a newcomer in a French school, he could function successfully on the soccer field not only because he is a good athlete, but also because the verbal messages he received were heavily context embedded; clues to their meaning lay in the situation, even if he did not know the language. On the other hand, although he has outstanding language skills in English, what he had to read and the tasks he had to perform in his French class were impossible for him at first; there were no clues to meaning—not even an illustration in the antiquated French textbook—in the physical context. The language was "highly context reduced."

However, the concept of context is often used metaphorically to indicate background information or clues to the relationship between ideas supplied by the text itself. Expository prose, which is highly context reduced in the literal sense, is characterized by the presence of many contextualizing devices, such as introductions, transition words and sentences, even complex sentence grammar, that function to make up for the information that has been lost in the no longer relevant physical context. In terms of this framework of physical context and *metaphoric* contextualization, we see that although the same distance exists between writer and audience in literature as in expository writing (i.e., both are heavily context reduced), the techniques for contextualization, for explicitly providing background and signaling relationships—clues to meaning—are different; in literature they are more consistently implicit than explicit. It is this double absence, first of relevant physical context and second of explicit contextualization, that we must bear in mind as we prepare a literary text for classroom work.

Widdowson (1982), long a proponent of the use of literature in the ESL classroom, explains the unique *advantage* of literature's greater lack of context and explicit contextualization: In reading literature we assume, since there is no access to the physical world outside the text, that each line is meant to interrelate with the others to create an internally coherent meaning. Therefore, we are immediately obliged to engage in procedures of *interpretation*; we negotiate meaning and set about making sense of expressions by referring them to other parts of the text (discourse) in which they occur. That

is why literature makes such a highly interactive "demand" upon the reader.

Conscious patterning, another characteristic of the literary text, also derives from literature's characteristic lack of contextualization. Widdowson (1975) explains that because the literary work is a "separate, self-contained whole" (p. 36), the language of the literary work is "fashioned into [significant] patterns over and above those required by the actual language system" (p. 47). These may be "patterns of recurring sounds, structures and meanings" (p. 36), thematic, metaphoric.

Bateson (1967) carries the notion of literary patterns or connections even further, from the realm of language to experience. He suggests that a literary work is of special value to a culture precisely because it draws upon and thus makes connections between many kinds of experience: It is simultaneously intellectual, emotional, even physical. In experiencing literature we discover these connections, explore and come to appreciate the meaningful interaction of the embedded patterns. *Exploration* and *discovery* are the key terms—terms that return us to the *interactive process* that reading literature is.

The decontextualization and heavy patterning of a literary text become especially significant in terms of schema theory. Earlier theoretical work by Goodman (1967) and the more recent articulation of the schema theory of language processing (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983) make us aware of how actively the reader is involved in the deceptively "passive" task of reading any text.

Reading is an active, two-way process of matching incoming data with our existing knowledge, not only of the language system, but of the world. We organize this knowledge into conceptually coherent systems called schemata and interpret or understand incoming language signals by matching them to these existing schemata. Additionally and simultaneously, we use the meaning thus produced and the schemata activated by the incoming data to predict and interpret subsequent incoming signals. Thus, comprehension never occurs in a vacuum, and the reader's prior knowledge, experience, and even emotional state are an important part of the process by which meaning is actively created.

This unconscious, two-way process characterizes all reading, regardless of its purpose. But because literature is less explicitly contextualized and less linear than other written texts, the demand on the reader is even greater, and important implications for necessary prereading work and orderly exploration of the text emerge: We must help ESL readers establish frameworks (schemata) of the more factual information assumed by the writer

or conveyed by the piece, which they can then use to experience the work at progressively deeper levels.

That a piece of literature is a highly charged cultural artifact additionally complicates the process: Writers assume that their readers share with them similar cultural experience, similar cultural knowledge and assumptions. As readers try to interpret received linguistic clues, they will naturally draw upon information gained from their own experience and background. This information is part of the schemata—existing knowledge about the world—that they bring to bear in the reading process.

As we all share many basic human experiences, much of this information may work satisfactorily. But we are also increasingly aware of the cultural relativity of many of our perceptions. Thus, the teacher of literature in the ESL classroom must be alert to the possibility of cultural interference, of misinterpretation that occurs when the reader and writer do not share the same cultural assumptions.

Of course, the solution to this potential problem corresponds to one of the important values of teaching literature in the ESL classroom: It provides the occasion for genuine exploration of the cultural assumptions of the target culture. This does not mean that the text itself should be examined for evidence of cultural patterns (Povey, 1979a), but rather that the classroom exploration of the text must address these issues. Cultural assumptions also change across time and are influenced by social as well as national identity, so this is not exclusively an ESL problem; nor should the problem be ignored in reading expository texts. Certainly, however, the problem looms larger for mature students reading literature from cultures other than their own.

We must finally consider what the concept of literature implies for the reader—the expectations, attitudes, and techniques that the reader brings to the reading task. As we mature and become literate within a culture, we identify different types of reading tasks. Just as we differentiate and choose among a variety of linguistic registers or styles (see Tarone, 1983), we similarly develop more or less conscious attitudes or approaches that correspond to different types of reading, depending largely on their perceived purpose, what Royer, Bates, and Konold (1984) call the "reader's intent."

ESL practice provides an excellent example: Having recognized the particular and culture-bound demand of academic reading, we have responded with courses to teach students *how* to approach academic texts (e.g., Long et al., 1980; O'Neill & Qazi, 1981)—to recognize markers for main topics, supporting material, transitions; to scan; to predict; to prune—in short, how to read for information.

But reading for information, as crucial as it may be to academic survival, is only one among several ways to approach a text. We also want to teach our students habits of inquiry and speculation, critical reasoning, and the conscious testing of inferences or hypotheses. The question is how to motivate the necessary patience and active involvement with the text that this more active, involved reading demands.

One solution is to exploit the sense shared by many cultures that because literature is somehow special or unique, it demands greater effort on the part of the reader. Ironically, we know that this attitude exists because of the way it intimidates or discourages some readers and even many teachers. But if we introduce the task of reading a literary text with enthusiasm and with interactive materials that will reward reader effort with new levels of understanding and experience, we can exploit this reader attitude (this combination of intimidation mixed with willingness to work a little harder) to teach techniques of personal exploration and involvement with the text. These techniques can then be transferred to enrich the reading of expository texts as well, and they will encourage dialogue, self-expression, and problem-solving—in short, highly communicative ESL classes.

CLASSROOM TECHNIQUE

When we consider the significant textual features of the literary work (i.e., it is heavily context reduced, culture-specific, highly patterned) in terms of schema theory, an orderly, four-level sequence for in-class work with any literary text emerges:

1. Prereading activities: *essential* background information and vocabulary
2. Factual in-class work: who, where, when, and what (happens)
3. Analysis: aspects of structure, theme, and style
4. Extending activities: in-class activities that *extend* the ideas or situations encountered in the text; written response

The following discussion systematically develops this four-level sequence of work, reviewing the basic steps of literary analysis that we might take for granted and thus fail to clarify with our students. However, this is not to imply that any one piece can or should be worked so exhaustively with any one class. Our specific purpose in teaching a given piece, the point in a given semester, the goals of the course, and the proficiency of the students will suggest which level of exploration need receive the greatest emphasis.

In order to clarify and provide specific examples of classroom activities, the following discussion focuses primarily on the contemporary short story and refers to Ernest Hemingway's "Soldier's Home" (1925). Although the Hemingway references are merely illustrative, Hemingway is an especially interesting writer to work with in ESL because his deceptively "simple" prose style makes especially strong demands on the reader to read carefully and validate inferences. The same four-level sequence is equally suited to poetry or drama, which, in their greater compression, make these same demands even more emphatically.

The nine-page story "Soldier's Home" describes the alienation of a soldier, Krebs, upon his return to his hometown after World War I. There is little "action." Rather, the narrator presents Krebs's thoughts and reactions to things around him until the last half of the story—a dramatic confrontation between Krebs and his well-meaning mother about what Krebs is finally going to *do* with his life. In fact, Krebs's alienation results from the disparity between his values and those of his family and society, and the major focus of the story is the price Krebs pays as he is obliged to make small compromises—to lie—so as to accommodate. In working with this story, my specific goal is to bring students to the point where they can see this conflict for themselves.

LEVEL 1: PREREADING ACTIVITIES

Both the culture-bound quality of literature and the implications of schema theory suggest the need to provide some background information to help students approach the text successfully and avoid misunderstandings or more overt, frustrating breakdowns in comprehension. Indeed, carefully planned prereading activities that anticipate cultural and linguistic problems will permit the pleasure of genuine involvement with a literary text to even intermediate-level students. If these prereading activities are formulated to anticipate problems, not prescribe reactions, even extensive prereading work need not diminish the pleasure of reading and experiencing the text.

If our primary goal is to foster a maximally involving, communicative setting in which to teach greater linguistic and communicative competence (not a formal appreciation of literature per se), then we can comfortably spend sufficient classroom time preparing less proficient students to read a text, for the prereading activities in and of themselves accomplish important language-learning goals: They stimulate valuable classroom interaction (as students engage in the interpretive process, creating meaning in

terms of context), promote more efficient word-attack skills, and encourage meaningful vocabulary growth. The proficiency or needs of the class will dictate how extensive the preparatory work need be. But here a word of caution is also in order. In our enthusiasm to provide facilitating background, we may run the risk of doing too much, of simply *telling* the students what is there instead of allowing them the excitement and pleasure of discovery.

The delicate issue of deciding what constitutes necessary and appropriate prereading material rests on a comparison of our ESL readers with the native speakers whom the writer assumes he or she is addressing. Native speakers will indeed have broader experience of the target culture and a wider vocabulary. However, they will probably not know the topic or theme of a story before reading it, and often their vocabulary will not perfectly match every word they encounter in a given story.

Thus, although reading theory encourages us to provide background information to help orient ESL readers, it does not suggest that we should supply a summary of the action or a statement of the theme. That is for the students to discover, to experience in reading the text or through the process of exploration in classroom activities. In fact, we have not the right to diminish the pleasure of personal discovery by disembodying such information from the experience of the literature that contains it. However, in analyzing the piece as we prepare it for classroom exploration, we may indeed identify key words, concepts, and background information that the native reader will be assumed to have and that prereading can elicit, provide, or bring into focus for the ESL reader.

Prereading Vocabulary Work

One of the most efficient ways to supply necessary information without *telling* too much proceeds from vocabulary. Obviously, unfamiliar vocabulary will interfere with comprehension, but prereading vocabulary items may also be chosen to introduce necessary cultural, background, and even thematic information. In fact, we must really distinguish three kinds of vocabulary items: (a) words whose meaning can (and should) be derived from context, (b) words (probably easy for native speakers) that contain vital clues to the cultural and emotional context of the story, and (c) words that proficient readers merely categorize.

Meanings to be derived from context. If, instead of merely glossing those words whose meaning can be derived from context, we

present them in a brief cloze-type exercise, we can teach more efficient word-attack strategies and encourage students to guess meanings from context (see Gajdusek & vanDommelen, 1986, 1987). With this in mind, I choose sentences from the story that contain selected problem words and present them with a blank in place of the word in question. The subsequent in-class comparison of different answers and the original word is a highly communicative activity (as students present and explain their answers) and results in a stronger sense of the denotation as well as the connotation of the words in question. By choosing with care the words that receive such analysis, I also anticipate significant issues or problems of the story without reductively telling the students what the story is about.

For example, in anticipation of the theme of lying in "Soldier's Home," I include the short, but low-frequency word *pose* in the prereading work: "he fell into the easy _____ of the old soldier among other old soldiers: that he had been badly, sickeningly frightened all the time" (p. 91). Our discussion necessarily involves the collocation *fell into the (easy) pose of*; in addition, the important idea of small social lies begins to emerge, which can be referred to later. This discussion, preceding the reading, prepares the students to notice other examples of "white lies" that abound in the piece.

There are, of course, words or phrases whose meaning cannot be inferred from context. These constitute the second and third categories mentioned above.

Words containing vital cultural or emotional clues. Sometimes fairly ordinary words contain vital clues to the cultural or emotional background of the story. These words need to be singled out and discussed when the culture-bound information they contain bears upon a correct (i.e., in keeping with the author's intent) reading of the story.

For example, we learn in the first line of "Soldier's Home" (p. 89) that Krebs went to war from a Methodist college. Many native speakers may recognize *Methodist* as the name of a Protestant denomination. But Hemingway's decision to describe the college in terms of its religious affiliation also conveys a sense of the strong religious attitudes one would encounter there. The reference helps to prepare us for Krebs's mother's moralizing later in the story and is an important clue to the social milieu that Krebs comes from. Thus, the teacher has to explain that *Methodist* names an American Protestant religion and further suggest the significance that "Methodist college" carries—all this without succumbing to the temptation to provide "A Brief History of Methodism in the U.S."

Similarly, although it is not difficult to learn that denotatively *Mummy* (p. 100) means "mother," the significant information is that only a child (or a man reduced psychologically to the role of a child) would so address his mother.

Because this area of vocabulary work involves specific information that we assume the students may lack, the teacher here is obliged to act as informant rather than facilitator. But interactive, values clarification-type activities can follow to establish the significance of the raw information. For example, we might ask students to compare the attitudes toward country, sex, work, family, and so on that they would expect to find at a Methodist college and at a small liberal arts college or to compare those attitudes with their own. The key is to limit and focus the activity so that the primary purpose—preparing students to read with greater comprehension—is not lost.

Words that proficient readers merely categorize. There may also be vocabulary items not easily definable from context that even proficient readers will not know the precise meaning of but that they safely categorize and dismiss so that they can move on. For example, we learn that Krebs "had been at Belleau Wood, Soissons, the Champagne, St. Mihiel and . . . the Argonne" (p. 89). A proficient reader says—thinks—something like, "I guess these must be the names of places somewhere in France where Krebs fought," for the clues to the correct category are available in the text: "had been at" tells us that the following words will name a location or locations where someone—Krebs—had been. Here again it is important to resist the temptation to discuss such vocabulary exhaustively; rather, we must encourage students to do the same thing that proficient readers do—find the relevant category and move on.

Additional Prereading Activities

Depending upon time constraints and the goals of the course, any of the important thematic concerns of the story may be profitably explored in student logs or "write-before-you-read" (Spack, 1985, p. 710) activities. In the hope of averting the cultural interference that condemns Krebs for disobedience to his parents without understanding Hemingway's point, I might raise the issue and ask students to respond to the following prompt: "Is there a situation in which a child should *not* obey his or her parents?" or "Can a person love his or her parents and still disobey them?"

In all of the prereading work, the focus is on providing essential

information or on making explicit various assumptions and cultural attitudes that could result in misreading of the text, but the goals of "teaching culture," encouraging "guessing" (efficient word-attack skills), and vocabulary growth are accomplished at the same time.

LEVEL 2: FACTUAL IN-CLASS WORK

After carefully selected (and limited) prereading work, it is time to give students an opportunity to read and work with the text at home. In the case of a poem or *very* short story, the prereading activities might culminate in an introductory oral reading. Certainly many clues to meaning are conveyed by intonation and other expressive devices available in this situation. But due to time constraints, it is often better to allow students to begin work with the text at home—with strong encouragement to read the story at least twice: the first time to gain an overall sense of the piece and enjoy the story, a second time to look for answers to problems and questions prepared for them in anticipation of the factual and analytical work that is to follow. It really helps students assume responsibility for in-class work if they have been given some fairly factual questions to answer (on paper) during a second, at-home reading and *before* they come to class.

Another way to encourage responsible at-home preparation is to avoid the temptation to begin work on a given piece with a line-by-line exegesis. Not only might this encourage some students to ignore the at-home reading assignment, since they will assume that they can simply "read" the story while the class plods through it line by line, but such an approach is likely to result in an incoherent, random set of remarks by the teacher instead of interactive classroom work that explores and builds to a coherent experience of the piece. From the first moment of in-class work, I assume that everyone in the class has read the text and has an overall—if not precise—sense of the action, that every aspect of our discussion serves to clarify and expand their sense of what they have already read.

As noted above, the factual work with a piece will establish who, what (happens), where, and when. (The additional *wh*-question, *why*, involves interpretation and is addressed in the third-level "analytical" work.) In addition to eliciting the characters, the question *who* must also lead us to ask who is telling the story. In fact, because of its potential effect on subsequent information, this fact, the "point of view," must be established first. Thus, the factual level of work with a piece will include four steps: (a) point of view (*who* is telling the story), (b) character (*who* the story is about), (c)

setting (*when* and *where* the story takes place), and (d) action (*what* happens). In each case we can let these questions represent problems to be solved and take advantage of the need to establish the "facts" of the story to stimulate interactive, small-group work based on the text.

Point of View

Especially in working with the contemporary short story, we must begin by addressing the question of who is speaking (narrating) and in what ways the narrator's identity influences our reading of the story. Although this is never a trivial issue, either in the interpretation of literature or in the broader arena of life, the concept of literary point of view is never easy for students, perhaps because it relates to the act of communication rather than to the content being communicated.

The primary clue to the question, What is the point of view? (or, more simply put, Who is the narrator?) will be found in those pronouns that are not part of direct speech (i.e., not contained within quotes). Once we have explained how the pronoun clues work, we can call upon the class to locate the clues in the text, identify the point of view, and comment upon its relevance to the given story. There are basically three possibilities: (a) first person, (b) omniscient third person, or (c) limited third person narrator.

If we find *I* or sometimes *we*, we know that the storyteller is the *first person* narrator. He or she is also probably a character in the story and subject to the same limitations of knowledge and bias that we all experience, being human. The most significant fact is that what we read will be only the narrator's impression or opinion or, even worse, distortion of the event for his or her own reasons. Consequently, our understanding of the personality and motives of the first person narrator will constitute an important part of our experience of the story.

In rare situations we find *you* as the pronoun clue to point of view. This use of the second person pronoun implies a character, the one who says "you"; thus, this is really just another form of the limited first person narrator—a character whose limits and biases we must try to establish.

More often, the pronouns that supply the primary clue to point of view will be third person—the storyteller is not part of the world of the story and stands more or less objectively outside of it. But we must then ask, Is the point of view *omniscient third person* (telling the story with equal insight into all characters and events) or *limited third person* (telling the story from the vantage point of one

particular character)? For example, although the point of view in "Soldier's Home" is third person, the narrator really identifies with the protagonist, Krebs. We see the other characters as Krebs sees them, and the only character whose inner thoughts we have access to is Krebs. The more important fact is that, given a third person narrator, limited or omniscient, the reader can usually accept the narrator's statements as true. The narrator tells us that Krebs was a good soldier, and as readers, we can accept this as fact. If, on the other hand, Krebs were the first person narrator, we might ask if he was pretending to have been a good soldier in order to cover up something he did not want to face.

Occasionally, the third person narrator will use description to convey an impression or interior reality, not to make a "factual" statement. For example, the narrator tells us that people thought it was "ridiculous for Krebs to be getting back so late, *years after the war was over* [italics added]" (p. 89), not to confuse us (actually he returned 6 months "late"), but to let us see that the townspeople *felt* like it was years. A series of brief shifts from third to second person (p. 93) has a similar affective purpose, in this case making us identify with Krebs's thoughts and feelings—momentarily "think his thoughts with him" instead of reading about them. By the end of the passage, the point of view has returned to the more objective third person.

Especially in a class where the practice and development of writing skills is a priority, an activity that dramatically reveals the significance of point of view is to have students rewrite a scene from the point of view of other characters in the piece and to read and compare the results. Of course, this activity would not be appropriate until a sense of the other characters, their values and motivations, has been established.

Character

Having established the point of view, we are ready to move on to much easier factual matters. Since the first person narrator may be a character in the story, point of view often leads us directly into a discussion of character. As always, our major concern is to have the students interact to establish the facts. One way to do this is to ask each student to list and identify the main characters (as opposed to the minor and even less important background characters) before coming to class.

Even this straightforward task can lead to intense classroom interaction because not everyone will have included the same characters on his or her list. So if we begin the discussion by asking

(and tabulating responses on the board), "How many people found one main character? . . . two? . . . three?" and so on (and if we insist that *every* student respond before we move on), the ground is laid for lively interaction to reconcile conflicting opinions and decide how many major characters there are. Even the less self-confident members of the group will immediately see that they have support, and so even they may feel encouraged to participate and explain/defend their choice. Of course, there is no one "right" answer. What is important is the way students must refer to one aspect of the story or another to support their position.

In "Soldier's Home," there is fairly general agreement that Krebs and his mother are main characters, but Krebs's younger sister also appears, and his father is mentioned (although, significantly, he does not appear). One or both of these characters are usually included on some students' lists of major characters, and thus there is the basis for discussion. In this case, point of view and the major confrontation of the story provide the strongest evidence that the sister and father are minor (but not background) characters. A more interesting response is that there is only one main character, Krebs, and a strong argument can be made to support this position. Throughout, the important role of the teacher/facilitator is to help students determine the validity or weakness of each argument by encouraging (or, as necessary, asking) questions that refer the discussion back to the text.

Later activities will involve deeper analysis of the main characters, their relationships, conflicts, and motivations. At this point, we are merely trying to ensure that each student in the class understands who the story is about and to accomplish this goal through a maximally communicative activity.

Setting

Next, we must establish the when and where of the piece and notice how these simple facts influence action and values in the story. The concept of markedness (rather freely borrowed from linguistics) is useful in this context. Writers do not usually mark (provide explicit details about) those facts of a story that do not differ from the cultural milieu out of which they write. Contemporary writers need not mention that a story takes place now, but they will generally give us a clue—mark the fact—if they are writing a period piece (a date or a significant historical detail that will allow us to recognize the particular historical context). This is not to say that writers are ever constrained to write about their own period or social or ethnic group, merely that they will always provide clues in

the text when the facts differ from those of the milieu that they take for granted and out of which they write. This may suggest that briefly presenting some background information about the author during prereading work would help students more accurately interpret facts in the text, especially in ESL classes where the cultural background and assumptions of the writer and readers may not match.

To establish the setting, we have to deal with time and place, each in a general and specific sense. The four categories thus generated lend themselves to effective group work: We may ask different groups to report on each of these aspects of setting, with reference to relevant lines in the text.

Time—general. To place the story in time, we begin with the more general question, In what historical period does the story take place? Does the story mention a date? If not, what clues do we find when we look at details?

We are conveniently told that "Soldier's Home" takes place "in the summer of 1919" (p. 89), which is about 6 months after the end of World War I. But how many students will know when World War I ended, or what that war stood for in the popular mind? This provides an excellent occasion for genuinely communicative class discussion to elicit and, when possible, affirm the students' expertise. When necessary, the teacher may need to step in as cultural informant and provide a very *brief* comment. (Perhaps this may be included in the prereading work.) The limiting factor is always what the reader must know about the values and issues of the time to interpret correctly the "clues" of the story. In this case we must convey a sense of the naive popular enthusiasm for a war that was seen as "making the world safe for democracy," for the story assumes and makes sense in terms of this significant cultural fact.

Time—specific. Specifically how much time passes in this story? a few hours? days? months? Again, the significant matter is textual support. Sometimes a word or phrase answers the question explicitly; sometimes students must simply add up the action and figure out how much time it would have taken. In "Soldier's Home" we find the clue in the line "in the morning after he had been home *about a month* [italics added]" (p. 95), which introduces the final scene of the story that has begun with Krebs's return home. This question will be more fully resolved in the subsequent discussion of action. Here, we are just establishing a guiding framework.

Place—general. The question of place is similarly double. In a

general sense, where does the story take place? What are the clues to national, regional, or local identity or to the social milieu (middle class, rural, urban), and how will this setting affect the situation or a character's response to it?

In "Soldier's Home," the narrator tells us that Krebs "returned to his home town in Oklahoma" (p. 89), so we have no trouble establishing a fairly precise geographical location—it never hurts to bring a map to class if one is readily available. But it is significant that the hometown is never named. Do we learn anything from this apparent lack of information? In its generality *hometown* suggests the archetypical American small town. So we might ask the class how *they* conceive of an American small town, how they think it differs from the city or the suburbs. (A brief exercise to distinguish these terms could be included in the prereading work.) What needs to emerge from the discussion is the relevant sense of a town as a small, tightly knit community where people's opinion counts a lot. (We may later return to this insight to provide a smooth transition to a discussion of conflict and plot.)

Place—specific. Finally we come to the details of the particular scenes of the story. One of the easiest ways for students to deal with this issue is to ask them how many different sets or scenes they would need, if they were to film the story, and to describe each one. (The fact that a film of the story may already exist in no way compromises this activity.) The old game of "How many _____ did you find?" may be used to motivate student involvement. After tabulating on the board the *number* of scenes identified by each class member, we can identify (also on the board) the different scenes as students name and describe them.

There may be some disagreement about which items to count. For example, what shall we do with flashbacks? In a flashback, a past event (i.e., past with respect to the main action of the story) is not only recalled but portrayed. It is more concrete, usually more fully elaborated, than a merely remembered or reported fact. Thus, a flashback constitutes a scene and should be counted in our list, whereas something that is merely remembered or mentioned by a character probably should not.

As we identify the scenes of "Soldier's Home," it becomes clear that although this is a story about a soldier, there are no scenes of war or combat *in* the story. This simple exercise prepares us to recognize that this is a story not about war but about the effects of war. More surprising, we discover that there are only three scenes, all in the last half of the story: a short description of Krebs reading on the front porch, a brief scene between Krebs and his mother

upstairs, and a longer breakfast scene downstairs. In fact, the difference between the first half of the story, which "tells," and the second half, which "shows," is an important matter for further analytical work and emerges naturally as part of our attempt to be precise about the factual matter of setting.

Action

The activities to establish details of setting—particularly the listing of scenes—lead directly into a recapitulation of what happens. As the students try to account for the precise scenes, they must review the sequence of action. This is also a good time to check that everyone in the class shares the same impression about what the facts of the story really are. Thus, at this point I might move quickly through the text, encouraging questions and checking for comprehension of significant points or difficult sentences.

An excellent activity to clarify the action of a story is to have small groups construct time lines (a device already familiar to many ESL students who have worked on tense that way). Students place the significant events in chronological sequence on the line (and cite line references from the text). (Alternatively, we may assign portions of the text, each containing one or two significant events, to different groups so that the whole class collaborates on one time line.) The finished product helps the class *see* the relationship of various facts and events (both what we have been told and what we have been shown), the way flashbacks fit in, and cause and effect. Having students draw cause-effect arrows between events on the line further clarifies what happened and helps make the transition to the analytical question of *why*.

Depending on the difficulty of the selection and the proficiency or the familiarity of the class with the process of reading literature, the in-class work to establish the facts of a piece may in fact take less time than it has here taken to describe, but the important thing is that it gives each student a chance to test out and (as necessary) revise assumptions and impressions about the piece during an in-class process of exploration and interaction. The slower students are indirectly given the support they need and thus are neither singled out nor excluded from participation. When the piece is not hard, the class has the pleasure of taking the responsibility for rapidly establishing the facts of the story and the additional pleasure of "being right."

For these reasons, I cannot think of a situation in which I would bypass these levels of introductory work with any story. However, the emphasis of subsequent work will depend on the nature of each

given piece, the teacher's purpose in teaching it, course goals, and the proficiency of the students.

LEVEL 3: ANALYSIS

At this point, we have accomplished some important language-teaching goals: Students have interacted communicatively with one another and a text to delineate a situation that has its own reality, values, complications. But if our commitment is to communicative use of language to *formulate* as well as express ideas, we have only succeeded in creating the perfect opportunity—the context against which to accomplish a variety of even more important goals, both linguistic and communicative.

Having established the facts, students can now begin to ask *why* and to develop their own attitudes toward the characters, values, and situations of the story, in short, to move beyond information to involvement and experience. Journal writing is an excellent way to encourage individual exploration of the text as we work our way into a piece in the classroom. (I always provide a variety of prompts for students who have trouble getting started in journal writing— questions that target any one of the following issues.)

Up to this point, we have been interacting with the text as data, a situation to be defined and understood, without specifically acknowledging its special "literary quality." Although we could profitably continue our exploration of the situation, asking questions about motivation and deeper meaning(s), this might now be the time to approach the text as literature: to investigate (a) structure or significant patterns in the work, (b) theme(s), and (c) style—ways in which the writer uses and organizes language to communicate with the reader.

As we examine these more "literary" issues, we will necessarily confront questions of motivation and meaning, but perhaps in a way that can lead response to the surface situation toward an awareness of deeper issues and values, perhaps even to an appreciation of the special quality of the work as literature. Inevitably these three approaches will not only relate but overlap, for each represents one more way to get into the single, central story. But this very overlap will be an advantage as the teacher chooses to work with the one or ones that seem most likely to produce a coherent, progressively deeper experience of each story.

Structure—Plot, Conflict, and Climax

Working at the factual level of action, we began to lay the basis

for more analytical exploration. In establishing the action, we were concerned with "what happened," whereas the closely related concept of *plot* shifts our concern from content to structure—the way pattern makes action more significant.

One way of analyzing the plot—the structure of the action—is in terms of the climax, the turning point (usually the moment of greatest emotional intensity). Since the climax usually leads to the resolution of the main conflict, the ideas of climax and conflict are closely related and help define one another. The class will first have to figure out who or what is in conflict. We should note that in defining a significant conflict, we are effectively beginning to analyze motivation (to ask why) and to articulate theme. This conflict may be between two characters or between values that struggle within one character. Of course, a conflict between characters often reflects a value conflict. As long as the conflict is growing or getting worse, the climax has not yet been reached. After the climax, the conflict is (usually) somehow resolved (although the problem may not have been solved). Against this framework the class has much to do, not only in describing the conflict but in the exciting "game" of pinpointing the climax.

The classroom interaction is liveliest if we ask each student to choose, before coming to class, the line from the text in which he or she believes the climax occurs. A listing of the chosen lines on the board will include an interesting variety. Valuable work ensues as members of the class defend their choices with reference to the text and concrete details of the building conflict. Here again, it is not the "right" answer but rather the reasons for each choice that should dominate the discussion. Of course, the discussion may refer to any one of several elements, not only conflict, but theme, involvement of major as opposed to minor characters, and so on.

One reading of "Soldier's Home" might lead us to decide that the conflict is between Krebs and the hometown where he no longer "fits," or more precisely between Krebs's values and the values of his hometown. If this is true, then we can argue that the climax occurs when he decides "he [will] go to Kansas City" (p. 101), thus resolving the conflict by withdrawing from it. However, if the real issue of the story is the personal cost of the lies Krebs feels obliged to tell, we will probably reconsider our choice and select Krebs's more emotional, monosyllabic "No" (p. 99), spoken in response to his mother's query, "Don't you love your mother, dear boy?" Here is the most emotional moment in the piece: Krebs attempts to speak the truth, and the results are disastrous. The decision to go to Kansas City really follows *from* this emotional, climactic moment, which, one might add, also involves the two main characters of the piece.

Theme

The work to articulate a story's theme(s) simultaneously serves as a check on comprehension and pushes comprehension to a new level. It turns our attention to the underlying act of communication between the writer and reader as we try to clarify the idea(s) that the writer has expressed through the story. One should not take this to mean that there is a didactic message underlying the action. Rather, theme expresses a significant relationship demonstrated by the elements of the story, and in the well-crafted story we will probably find that the same relationship holds on several levels.

As we work toward a statement of a story's theme(s), we remind our students that one word names only a topic, whereas a theme is an idea and as such will probably relate at least two significant elements of the story. For example, one of the dominant *topics* of "Soldier's Home" is lies or lying, but to define the theme that grows out of this topic, we must address either the cause(s) and/or result(s) of those lies *as demonstrated by the story*. In "Soldier's Home" we see how social pressure, especially from his mother, to conform and be "settling down" (p. 96) leads Krebs to lie, with the result that "he lost everything" (p. 91). But there is still one additional consideration. A theme usually expresses an idea that is somehow universally true. Put another way, the theme states something we "recognize," something that is true not only in this story, but in other contexts as well. Therefore, it is appropriate to state the theme in more general terms than those that name particular characters or situations in the story.

One in-class activity to define the theme begins by first eliciting from the class topics that the story touches upon. Here, one might refer back to the discussion of conflict or even let this activity grow directly from it. Then groups or pairs of students meet to develop a statement about the story, with the stipulation that it incorporate at least two of the elicited topics. Finally, each group reads its statement to the class for discussion and evaluation in terms of textual support.

Alternatively, the uniquely expository nature of the first half of "Soldier's Home" (the first half of the story tells, and only the last half shows) provides an excellent opportunity to relate articulation of theme to techniques of expository writing that will be useful to our students in their own writing: We can have the class discover thematic topics through an examination of the focus in the first 16 paragraphs of "Soldier's Home."

The technical term *paragraph focus* is used by writing analysts (see Robinson, 1983) to evaluate a paragraph in terms of the

grammatical subjects of its sentences. In a paragraph with good focus, the sentence subjects are concrete nouns (or pronouns that stand for those nouns), whereas nonreferential pronouns (*it, there is/are*) and abstract nouns dominate paragraphs with poor focus.

If we present the concept of focus and then ask groups of students to define the focus of the paragraphs of the first half of the story, "lies"/"lying" or "girls" turn out to be the focus of 9 out of 16 paragraphs. (Space does not permit us to develop the significance of the latter.) When we relate the focus of lying to what is at issue in the climax, a theme emerges: *The cost of lying to accommodate to social pressure is loss of integrity.* In this activity we have had our students look at the text to learn more about the story while examining and learning about effective paragraph focus—all this without simply putting literature at the service of language (e.g., "Read this passage and analyze it for focus").

Style

Exploration of style deepens our awareness of the act of communication—how the writer uses the medium of written language to create experience and convey meaning to the reader. It can lead us in two directions: Either we can pursue patterns that will enrich our experience of the work itself, that is, figurative language and structure that reveal new levels of meaning and reinforce what we have already discovered about the piece. Or we can focus on the writer solving problems of communication similar to those faced by our students themselves in their academic writing tasks. In the latter case, we can explicitly relate the exploration of literature to the expository writing needs of our students, but without abandoning the purpose of enriching student experience of the text as literature.

Style related to greater awareness of the text. Patterning and figurative language are a perfectly natural response to the problem of communicating in a heavily decontextualized medium. Instead of relying on physical context, expression, intonation, and body language, the writer takes advantage of the subtle, powerful devices available in the language itself. However, until we work our way into a specific story, we will not know *which* techniques the writer has used. We must therefore be alert to the possible importance of imagery and concrete or sensory detail, of metaphor, of patterns (of action, images, metaphors) as they relate to or reinforce something important in the story, or allow us by their presence to see the importance of something we may have overlooked. We do not look for images, symbols, or metaphors just because they seem

"literary." Rather, we wish to discover the way the writer has used the resources of language to convey meaning on yet another level.

"Soldier's Home" provides some excellent examples of figurative language establishing meaning or value. The concrete sensory detail of "nausea" appears twice, neither time related to food or eating: After lying about the war, Krebs feels the "*nausea* [italics added] . . . that is the result of untruth or exaggeration" (pp. 99-100). When his mother gushes, "I held you next to my heart when you were a baby," he feels "sick and vaguely *nauseated* [italics added]" (p. 100). The repetition of the word establishes the relationship between the two situations; the strong physical detail establishes the seriousness of Krebs's reaction. Against this developing pattern, the nauseating image of "bacon fat hardening on his plate" (p. 99) becomes more significant.

Similar attention to Hemingway's use of metaphor helps us understand Krebs's attitude toward women: In this story about a soldier returned from war, the only language of war—"alliances," "shifting feuds," "courage to break into it," "intrigue," and "politics" (pp. 92-93)—is an extended metaphor that describes not war but relationships with hometown girls. The metaphor tells us how threatening Krebs finds these relationships. But why? Here the evidence of a significantly repeated pattern may help: His sister playfully asks, "Do you love me?" (p. 97). The question is repeated in the next scene when his mother asks, "Don't you love your mother . . . ?" (p. 99). In both cases the proof of love is obedience to *their* wishes: "If you loved me you'd want to come over and watch me play" (p. 97); "you are going to have to settle down to work" (p. 99). Thus, in this example, through exploration of language—the significant relationship we discover between pattern and metaphor—we better understand character and motivation in the story.

A symbol, as opposed to an image, takes part of its meaning from outside the work, but that meaning must contribute to emerging patterns within the piece to be considered a significant literary symbol. For example, a critical look at television commercials will confirm that in our culture the car functions as a symbol of masculine power and control. It functions with the same significance in this story: Krebs's father always kept the car "at his command" (p. 91), and now it is used to manipulate Krebs. The implied message is that he may use the car *if* he will assume the traditional masculine role and "settle down to work" (p. 99).

These examples demonstrate possible exploration of deeper levels of the text as literature. Of course, our goal is to have the *students* discover these relationships, but often the teacher must be

the one to focus attention on significant images or suggest the pattern to be discovered so that the students have the pleasure of making new and exciting connections. We must remember, in planning this level of classroom work, that it is not easy, even for proficient readers, to scan a text quickly for a certain kind of detail. If this level of exploration is not to become frustrating, we must organize it so that preparatory searching of the text can occur before class. The following prompts might stimulate work with the examples discussed above:

1. Hemingway uses the words *nausea* (p. 90) and *nauseated* (p. 100). What do the words mean? Do they tell us more about Krebs's physical or psychological state? How are the two situations in which the words appear related? What other details in the story relate to the concept of nausea?

2. Read the passage on pp. 92-93, from "Nothing was changed" to "It wasn't worth it." What is the subject of this passage? Find all the words or phrases that relate in some way to war. Why does Hemingway use war words to describe this subject? In what other ways is the topic of war relevant to this story?

3. Compare "Do you love me?" (p. 97) and "Don't you love your mother?" (p. 99). Who is speaking? What is the mood or tone? How are the passages different? How are the passages similar?

4. What does a car "stand for" in American culture? Is this relevant to the story? Explain.

Style related to student writing. The point in the examples cited above is not that students should be encouraged to copy these techniques of figurative language in their own writing. In fact, I do not believe that they should. The effective use of metaphor and pattern that characterizes the literary work is the gift to us—to our language and culture—of the totally integrated sensibility of the artist. Most often in the academic setting, our goal is to enable our students to write effective purpose-directed prose, and the techniques of exposition are more suited to this purpose than the figurative use of language.

However, while we are attending to style as an aspect of the communication between the writer and the reader, there are many ways to address these expository techniques in relation to the literary work, ways that will simultaneously clarify our understanding of the work, provide insights into the problems and process of written communication, and convincingly demonstrate techniques that can improve the students' own writing. The work with focus described above is one example.

We may also relate analysis of the structure of a literary text to

problems of organization and paragraph structure in student writing. For example, I often ask the class to divide a work into sections and to give each section a name—a word or phrase that will reveal the writer's purpose in writing that section. Of course, I begin the following class meeting with the by now familiar game: "How many people found one section? two?" and so on. Once we have listed all the different responses on the board, we set out to resolve the differences. Usually (but not always), the divisions of those who found only two or three sections will match the more significant divisions of those who found five or six. But as we discuss the students' sense of what each section contributes to the story as a whole (in terms of the names they have been asked to provide), we become more involved with organizational problems that concern all writers.

Thus, we are using the study of literature to convey important concepts about structure in all writing, their own included, while we further clarify the experience of the literature. After a class has analyzed the structure of one or two stories in terms of the name, or purpose, of each section, individual students ought to be able to analyze the development of their own essays in a similar fashion, explaining the function of each paragraph in relation to the whole (i.e., the student's purpose in writing the essay). Whenever students have trouble performing such an analysis, they may discover logical or developmental problems in their essays—and do so with increasing independence.

LEVEL 4: EXTENDING ACTIVITIES

Both kinds of extending activities (writing and in-class group work) carry interaction with a literary text beyond the text, asking for creative, relevant responses from the readers. Although grouped as a different level of activity (compared with the more explicitly text-bound Levels 2 and 3), they actually constitute another mode of manipulating and thus discovering more about the text, and the teacher may often introduce them as a part of the exploratory process. Certainly, as Spack (1985), Zamel (1982), and Taylor (1981) have affirmed, writing is itself a process of discovery. But even the seemingly more playful in-class activities can and should be structured with this hidden agenda in mind.

In-Class Activities

These activities are fun—the reward after the hard work of more traditional analysis—and so they provide a welcome change of

pace. But they are never trivial. Effective in-class extending activities must be structured so that they will succeed only if the students have understood (or are motivated by the activity to understand) the writer's assumptions about character, conflict, or values in the piece. Straightforward debate of issues raised in the text is exciting. But carefully structured role plays or dramatizations of key scenes are usually more fun and actually more demanding intellectually, as long as we avoid asking students to "do" a scene that the author has already "done."

For example, I would not ask students to dramatize the scene between Krebs and his mother; Hemingway has already done that for us. But I do ask small groups to dramatize (sketch out a script and perform) a few crucial scenes that we have been told about but have not "seen": the conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Krebs about letting their son use the family car, Krebs talking about the war with other soldiers "in the dressing room at a dance" (p. 90), Krebs and his mother talking about the war, Krebs telling his friends at the poolroom about the war.

The instructions are to interpret the scene freely but without contradicting anything we have learned or can infer from the text. Sometimes I also ask students for reference to the text that supports their interpretation. Krebs's mother *says* it was her husband's idea to let Krebs use the car, but is she just *saying* that? It is a fair question that raises the issue of Krebs's ambiguous relationship with his father, and the students must intellectually deal with it before they can create the scene. After each presentation, the class then discusses the assumptions that the group made about key issues in order to do the scene.

Even my most shy students have participated enthusiastically in these dramatizations, and the results have been insightful, sometimes hilarious, and always enjoyable. More important, student perception of the piece is heightened, not only by visualization of the content of the story in these presentations, but by the following discussion and evaluation of the assumptions that each group made in order to interpret and present its scene. Sometimes a group has made a wrong assumption, one that contradicts information given elsewhere in the text. In such cases, the facilitator must encourage appreciation of the performance while helping the class understand how it has *mis*interpreted the story.

A role play based on the story might suppose that the family had gone to seek the aid of a professional counselor. In fact, the choice of counselor (family minister or lay psychologist) will be significant—perhaps both should be included. Certainly many critical, relevant issues will be raised.

Student Writing

In many academic ESL courses, writing is an important component, and thus the culminating activity for work with a literary text often takes the form of a writing task. Indeed, the advantage of such a combined focus on literature and writing is that classroom discussion of literature raises genuine issues that can become topics for involved student writing, thus solving the problem that thwarts so many students in writing courses that have no other content, that of not having anything to say. If the analysis of the text has been successful, they *will* have attitudes, opinions, a lot to say.

Writing tasks may vary widely, from ongoing, informal journal exploration to the development of formal, critical essays. Spack (1985) has convincingly demonstrated the effective integration of process techniques and literary study, so I would rather close with an application of literary exploration to the needs of less advanced students. If, as is often the case at intermediate or lower intermediate levels, one of the goals of the class is to present and practice sentence-level grammar, the issues raised by intensive work with a literary text through Levels 1 and 2 will provide the perfect context. Perhaps students at this level are not proficient enough to explore subtleties of structure or figurative language, but they have worked through to a clear sense of the characters, situation, and issues in a piece. Thus, they will have something to say, and we will have a context against which to teach sentence-level grammar (particularly the complex sentence grammar needed in academic writing) with a maximum sense of its communicative function.

For example, having reviewed the rules for contrary-to-fact conditional tense shifts, we can then ask our students to respond in writing to the following prompt: "How would 'Soldier's Home' have been different if Krebs had *not* been a good soldier?" Students will have to use the targeted grammatical form in order to deal with the question—a very real question that raises important issues about the story and our sense of Krebs's integrity. If the written responses show that the class needs more practice in handling this difficult tense shift, sentences from actual student writing can be extracted for analysis or student correction. The context of the sentences will not be lost, even so extracted.

Similarly, after reviewing rules for reported speech (noun clauses), we can ask students to summarize the conversation between Krebs and his mother. Depending on the level of the class, this exercise may be best accomplished in two steps, first a more mechanical rewrite of the text as reported speech and then

(following discussion of how to paraphrase and select significant detail) a more effective summary. Again, needed additional practice or manipulation of the targeted forms can come from student writing in response to the assignment.

CONCLUSION: THE TEACHER'S ROLE

Unless we structure the classrom experience so as to make *the students* discover what is there, we are not really teaching literature—or anything—in ESL. It takes 30 seconds to state the theme of a story. It will probably take an entire class period to work through to the point where the students themselves can articulate it. But if our underlying goal is always to involve our students communicatively in the classroom, to enable them to discover what is significant there instead of just telling them what they would have seen, if only they were clever enough, then we must be willing to cover fewer points.

This means that before we decide to work with a piece we like, we must first explore it in depth so that we have a clear sense not only of potential problems, but, more important, of *why* we are teaching it and toward what experience we are trying to guide our students. This becomes the specific goal or purpose that guides us as we create, select, and structure an orderly sequence of activities for in-class work with a given piece.

In the classroom, the teacher increasingly becomes facilitator, introducing a carefully structured sequence of questions and issues, guiding the students as they draw inferences about the piece and examine (support or reject) those inferences by constant reference to the text—even in the early stages of establishing the facts. Regardless of the level of the students, the important thing is that we not disregard a basic, orderly approach and succumb to the temptation to begin our in-class work on a piece with a dazzling discourse on, say, the interlocking levels of conflict. At that point we would simply be *telling* the students what is there instead of allowing them the excitement and pleasure of discovery.

If we are willing to work with a literary text enthusiastically and systematically, the rewards of genuinely communicative classes and steadily increasing student involvement and growth will be ours. Because literature does not simplify the subtleties or complexities of life, it can engage the entire personality of mature students whose linguistic ability may not yet equal their broader experience or personal maturity. Indeed, their interaction with the text can bring *us* new insights, new levels of experience in the ESL classroom.

■

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