2004

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THE ROLE OF IMAGINATIVE LITERATURE IN FIRST YEAR COMPOSITION

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Randee Teresa Cowles

September 2004
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23 August 2004
ABSTRACT

This study steps into a long running discussion of the place of imaginative literature in First Year Composition (FYC) courses. Chapter one surveys the scholarship, including the work of Erika Lindemann and Gary Tate, two compositionists whose debate has been at the center of this discussion, and three scholars' responses to the issues their debate raises. Chapter two reports my study of the ways imaginative literature is being used in four courses at Crafton Hills College: two FYC courses, a history course, and a reading course. Chapter three reports the study data, which suggests that "how" texts are used in FYC may be more critical than the texts themselves. Thus, instructors might be able to include imaginative literature in FYC courses if they use the literature to support the courses' rhetorical goals rather than to "teach the literature" itself.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my readers--Carol Peterson-Haviland, Mary Boland, and Margaret Doane--for all of their help. I could not have completed this thesis without their guidance and encouragement. I would also like to thank the instructors and students at Crafton Hills College who assisted me in my study.
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CHAPTER ONE

SURVEY OF SCHOLARLY LITERATURE

Introduction

Towards the end of every semester, I ask my First Year Composition (FYC) students to write down their thoughts concerning their textbooks. I ask them to review the textbook readings and indicate which they liked or disliked and which they benefited the most from. I often ask my students these questions in order to help me decide whether I should continue using the same textbook or choose a new one for the upcoming semester. When I used *Patterns for College Writing: A Rhetorical Reader and Guide*, the majority of students selected Shirley Jackson’s “The Lottery” and E.B. White’s “Once More to the Lake” as their favorite readings. The following year I used *Successful College Writing*; this group of students selected Kate Chopin’s “The Story of an Hour” as their favorite reading. To my surprise, once again, my students had chosen a short story. As a result, I became curious about why they consistently selected short stories as their favorite readings, so I asked them to explain why they had selected “The Story of an Hour.” One student immediately responded
with “because it has a beginning, middle, and an end.” Indeed, the majority of the students enrolled in that course and, in fact, the majority of my FYC courses responded similarly. They felt that most of the readings in their textbooks, except the short stories, were basically about “nothing.” Many students commented that the readings did not discuss any topic in detail, and once they were finally getting involved in the reading, it ended. Intrigued, I asked my students what they wanted to read: what excited them. Unexpectedly, I received an overwhelming response: a novel.

One young woman then raised her hand and asked me why we could not read a novel in class. Unsure how to respond, I told her we did not read novels in FYC courses because “they” did not like us to. The young woman responded by asking me who “they” were. At that moment, I realized that I did not know why I felt so sure that we could not read a novel in FYC. In fact, I too had no idea who “they” were or even whether “they” had really decreed this. I then decided to find out about the use of imaginative literature, particularly the novel, in FYC.

Little did I know that this topic has been generating debate for decades; in fact, articles and discussion on the
use of imaginative literature in FYC can be traced back to the 1950s and 1960s. In "Notes on the Dying of a Conversation," Gary Tate presents published reports on workshops that were held at annual Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) meetings during this period. These reports, according to Tate, contain

...summaries of discussions, supplemented by journal articles, [that] give us...a better sense of what a significant number of teachers were saying about using literature in the composition class... (304)

The claims in these reports indicate that the use of imaginative literature in FYC was under debate even then. For example, a report from a workshop states that literature should only be used in FYC if it can help students become better writers because the

...objective of the course as defined is to develop in the freshman the power of clearly communicating facts or ideas in writing to a specified reader or group of readers...[and that]... all other aspects of the course (such as skill in reading, the study of semantics, the enlargement of vocabulary, command of mechanics and grammar,
introduction to literature) should be considered subsidiary, to be introduced only to the degree that they can be demonstrated to serve the end of clear and effective writing. (qtd. in Tate 305)

This report does not specifically mention how to teach students to write clearly and effectively, but it does give an indication of the purpose of the course. A 1955 report takes an even stronger position on the purpose of the course; it concludes that the purpose of FYC is to “develop the students’ ability to write clear, logical expository prose, since that is the type of writing which he [or she] is most likely to be called upon to do in his [or her] subsequent career in school and out” (qtd. in Tate 305). This second report continues to name the purpose of FYC as teaching students to write clearly and effectively; however, it is more specific in its reasoning, claiming that the course should focus on writing students will employ throughout their lifetimes, which is expository prose.

Tate also presents reports from these workshops that assert that reading imaginative literature will stimulate students’ critical thinking skills, which will then lead to better writing skills (306); during one workshop, Louise
Rosenblatt discusses how "'imaginative literature [can be used] to stimulate students' thinking'" (qtd. in Tate 306). Similarly, Wayne Booth discusses how imaginative literature could act "'as a stimulus for thinking and writing'" (qtd. in Tate 306). None of these reports mentions preparing students for their other college courses. Hence, it seems that Rosenblatt and Booth have a different view on the purpose of FYC: to help students become all around better thinkers and writers. Therefore, it seems that a significant portion of the debate centers on one's interpretation of the purpose of FYC.

Surprisingly, decades later the content of the debate has hardly been modified because, according to Tate, advocates of using imaginative literature did not expand their reasons as to why it should be used in FYC (308), resulting in fewer and fewer discussions on the topic. Consequently, the debate was essentially put to rest until Erika Lindemann and Gary Tate, two compositionists, reignited it in a 1993 CCCC session and later in their articles, "Freshman Composition: No Place for Literature" and "A Place for Literature in Freshman Composition," in College English. These articles elicited numerous discussions on the role of imaginative literature in FYC.
Essentially, the division this debate creates in composition can be traced to the purpose of FYC. Lindemann and Tate both write that they have different pedagogical theories about the use of imaginative literature in FYC because they differ on the purpose of the course.

This thesis is designed to help me step into this discussion that is still alive in 2004--and to help me better respond to my FYC students' requests for reading that is interesting, reading that has a beginning, middle, and end such as a novel. Chapter one will examine the scholarly literature on the role of imaginative literature in FYC. I will begin by reviewing the Lindemann-Tate debate as well as the ways scholars have responded to the issues the debate raises. Chapter two will look at the ways novels are used in four community college courses: two FYC courses, a history of the United States course, and an advanced reading course. This chapter will include the results of a survey given to the instructors and students of these courses; I am particularly interested in how imaginative literature is used in these courses and if students make connections between the texts and their other courses. Using the results of my study, in chapter three, I will consider whether and under what conditions
imaginative literature may be used in FYC without altering the college’s course objectives.

Lindemann-Tate Debate

In “Freshman Composition: No Place for Literature,” Erika Lindemann claims that imaginative literature does not have a place in FYC because it does not fit into the framework of the course; it does not serve the purpose of FYC. According to Lindemann,

    Freshman English does what no high school writing course can do: provide [students the] opportunities to master the genres, styles, audiences, and purposes of college writing. Freshman English offers guided practice in reading and writing the discourses of the academy and the professions. (312)

She goes on to assert that FYC is not simply a service course where instructors teach remedial writers how to write so they can do college level writing in their other more important courses. Additionally, Lindemann states that FYC courses that focus on “grammar, or the essay, or great ideas”. (312) along “...with WAC courses that substitute ‘global warming’ or contemporary issues for the great ideas
listed in the thematic tables of contents of more traditional essay readers" (312) do not fit her definition of FYC because they focus more on the readings rather than student writing.

Therefore, Lindemann believes that FYC courses should teach students to engage in and create conversations in the academy; these courses should have students

...read and write [about] a variety of texts found in the humanities, sciences, and social sciences. Such courses should have an immediate connection to the assignments students confront in college. They are not mere skills courses or training for the professions students may enter five years later; they raise questions of audience, purpose, and form that rhetorical training has always prepared students to address. (312-313)

However, Lindemann does not mention why or how to prevent the readings from courses such as these from becoming the focus of the course. Though, she does go on to elaborate her claim with five supplementary reasons on why imaginative literature should not be used in FYC.

In her first point, she writes that "...literature-based courses, even most essay-based courses, focus on consuming
texts, not producing them” (313). Lindemann believes that teachers spend most of their class time talking about literature instead of focusing on student writing. She goes on to say that the writing students do in a FYC course that uses imaginative literature

...has little relation to the intellectual demands or assignments in a political science or chemistry class. A pedagogy derived from teaching literature looks and sounds different from one that encourages students to produce texts. (313)

In her next point, Lindemann addresses the following question: “why not teach just one novel or poem, something that will restore the humanistic content to the curriculum?” (312). She claims that students will experience the humanities in other courses and that most literature courses are “not humanistic. They present the teacher’s or the critic’s truths about the poetry, fiction, and drama being studied. They rarely connect literature with life” (313-314). She goes on to say that students’ voices are silenced when writing about imaginative literature because they must focus on the ideas of others instead of their own.
In her third point, Lindemann addresses the belief held by some instructors that studying imaginative literature can teach students to develop their writing style. She says that in the majority of FYC courses students do not write imaginative literature they "write about it or respond to it" (313). Lindemann goes on to say that "...a better way to teach style is by asking students to examine the texts they encounter in the academy, texts that define a much larger repertoire of rhetorical options than literary language customarily allows" (313).

In Lindemann’s fourth point, she addresses the claim that new studies in critical theory such as reader response criticism helps instructors better understand how readers engage texts. She claims that these new theories may help instructors understand how students engage texts but that these texts do not have to be imaginative literature. Lindemann believes that FYC students should be able to experience and engage with non literary texts since these texts will be the ones they are using in their other courses (314).

Lindemann’s fifth and final point addresses the claim that imaginative literature in FYC would "...enrich our training programs for graduate students. They could learn
to teach literature as well as writing..." (315). As Lindemann points out, departments need to give their teachers full training in composition or literature. She writes that a few courses or workshops in composition or literature are not enough preparation for instructors.

Thus, according to Lindemann, if the purpose of FYC is to prepare students for the reading, writing, and thinking they will experience during their college and professional careers, the reading matter should, in fact, be material that they will encounter throughout these careers. I understand Lindemann’s point when she says, “When freshmen read and write about imaginative literature alone, they remain poorly prepared for writing required of them in courses outside the English department” (311). However, I question her reasoning when she states that she wants FYC students to read a “variety of texts,” except for imaginative literature, because they will assist students in their college careers; it seems rather contradictory to exclude a text on the sole basis of its genre. How does one know which texts will prepare students for their future courses? How does Lindemann know that an expository essay on science will help students become better writers? I also wonder why only imaginative literature silences
students' voices. Can't any reading material take over the course? Isn't it the teachers who are in control of the material and not the other way around?

Thus, I will now look to Gary Tate's 1993 essay: "A Place for Literature in Freshman Composition" for his theories on imaginative literature in FYC. In contrast, he claims that imaginative literature plays a minor role in FYC for three reasons: "the pedagogical sins of teachers in the past, the revival of rhetoric, and changing attitudes about the purposes and goals of freshman composition" (317). According to Tate, these reasons have "...denied students who are seeking to improve their writing the benefits of reading an entire body of excellent work" (317). Throughout his essay, Tate details why imaginative literature has been removed from many FYC courses.

In his first reason, Tate asserts that in the past, teachers did not know how to teach imaginative literature, resulting in its removal from many FYC classrooms; thus, creating an opening for rhetoric. In his second reason, he takes a rather negative tone towards supporters of rhetoric, referring to them as the "rhetoric police." According to Tate, the "rhetoric police" drove imaginative literature out of FYC classrooms without a debate; he
claims that it was even difficult for him to find current articles on the topic. In addition, he believes many important concepts like "imagination" and "style" were replaced with "inventive procedures" and "surface features" when imaginative literature was replaced with rhetoric in FYC (318). Furthermore, he asserts "...we have lost most of the texts that body forth that imagination and that style whose passing I mourn" (318). However, Tate seems to be assuming that these concepts have to be separated. Doesn't an expository essay have style? Or when writing imaginative literature, doesn't one use any inventive procedures?

Like Lindemann, Tate asserts, in his final reason, that the role of imaginative literature in FYC is directly related to the purpose of the course. He claims that instructors

...now believe--or, more accurately, have been led to believe--that the freshman course is a place to teach students to write academic discourse so that they might 'succeed as writers in the academy' or in order that they might 'join the conversations that education enables...'. (319)

He goes on to say that he is worried that FYC will become "the ultimate 'service course' for all the other
disciplines in the academy" (319). Similar to Lindemann, he does not believe that FYC can or should be a service course that solely prepares students for other courses. However, unlike Lindemann, Tate does believe that it would be extremely difficult to teach a wide variety of students with differing majors how to write for their specific disciplines (319). As he points out, how can an instructor teach students to write for a specific discipline when their majors range from French to psychology? It would be almost impossible (319).

Furthermore, he also asserts that "to attempt to deal with academic discourse generally" (319), essentially teaching students how to write for all discourses, would be unfeasible and too difficult for freshmen to handle (320). Thus, Tate offers his own ideas on what the purpose of FYC should be; he does not want to focus his course on teaching students how to write papers for specific disciplines. Furthermore, he says that

The 'conversations' I want to help my students join are not the conversations going on in the academy. These are too often restricted, artificial, irrelevant, and--let's be frank--boring. I refuse to look at my students as
primarily history majors, accounting majors, [and] nursing majors. I much prefer to think of them and treat them as people whose most important conversations will take place outside the academy, as they struggle to figure out how to live their lives—that is, how to vote and love and survive, how to respond to change and diversity and death and oppression and freedom. (320)

Essentially, Tate wants to know about the lives of his students and have them discuss issues that pertain to their lives in his classroom. He goes on to say that

If I want my students to think and talk and write about human lives outside the academy—'Writing Beyond the Disciplines'—then I certainly do not want to deny them the resources found elsewhere. I do not advocate having students read only literary works. But they should not be denied that privilege altogether. They should be denied no resource that can help them. (321)

Hence, the purpose of Tate's FYC course would be to discuss humanist issues, and if imaginative literature can help him achieve the objectives he has for his FYC course, then he
wants the option to use it in the classroom. In summary, Tate suggests that composition instructors implement a more “...generous vision of our discipline and its scope, a vision that excludes no texts,” so then “...we [can] end the self-imposed censorship that for more than two decades has denied us the use of literature in our writing classes” (321).

After reading Tate’s claim, I do agree with his point that limiting texts because of their genre is rather severe. However, I do not know if solely writing about “human lives outside the academy” (321) is as beneficial for students as writing about issues in the academy. It does seem like Lindemann’s and Tate’s claims are both a bit rigid. Thus, I will be examining three responses to their claims in order to help me determine the role imaginative literature should play in FYC.

Three Responses

After the Lindemann and Tate debate appeared in College English in 1993, several composition and imaginative literature instructors vehemently responded over the years. College English even held a symposium in its March 1995 issue. Surprisingly, the majority of responses are in agreement with Tate’s claim, though they
vary in details and extremity. Nonetheless, I will discuss three responses to the Lindemann-Tate debate, noting how the choice of reading material is relevant to the instructor’s understanding of the purpose of FYC.

The sole response from the 1995 symposium that completely favors Lindemann’s claims basically follows the theories she mentions in her original text; In “Imaginative Literature in Composition Classrooms?” Erwin R. Steinberg claims that imaginative literature is a distraction in a FYC classroom because students need to learn composition essentials before they can focus on the particulars of a piece of imaginative literature; therefore, expository texts are the most appropriate texts to use in FYC (278).

In his argument, Steinberg does not offer any new theories on the debate; rather, he reviews some of the workshop reports Tate does in “Notes on the Dying of a Conversation,” though, in contrast with Tate, he concludes that lack of interest is what drove imaginative literature out of FYC and not the “rhetoric police” (271). Steinberg then asserts that the purpose of FYC is to “teach clear, cohesive, and appropriately emphatic prose first..., [which] takes at least a full semester” (278) and that “experience has shown not only that expository examples are apt, but
generally that imaginative literature is not only unnecessary but, in fact, distracting—even seducingly distracting” (278). Thus, like Lindemann, Steinberg believes that imaginative literature is essentially an obstacle that gets in the way of the purpose of FYC.

In contrast, responses from Leon Knight and Gregory S. Jay take the lead from Tate and make some rather rigid claims about using imaginative literature in FYC and the purpose of FYC; for example, in “Four Comments on ‘Two Views on the Use of Literature in Composition,’” Gregory S. Jay strongly disagrees with Lindemann’s theories because he claims that since FYC is a part of the English department, it should include imaginative literature. He says that since FYC

...is an English course, it ought to accommodate the mission and interest of the department, which includes a substantial attention to the history of imaginative writing and its contribution to the language. (674)

Jay also claims that if FYC does not include imaginative literature then it should not be a part of the English department (675). He goes on to suggest that departments “reexamine the purpose” of FYC (674). He says, “I suggest
that we question the presumption that this should be a writing course of the type that Lindemann describes. Couldn't it be an English course instead, in which writing is an important but not exclusive concern?" (674). Thus, Jay's views on the purpose of FYC are sharply different from those of Lindemann and her supporters. Overall, Jay's views seem rather severe and negate most compositionists' definition of FYC.

However, some compositionists like Elizabeth Latossi-Sawin, Jeanie C. Crain, and Michael Gamer had more moderate responses to the debate. I found Michael Gamer's "Fictionalizing the Disciplines: Literature and the Boundaries of Knowledge" to be particularly interesting because he integrates elements of Lindemann's and Tate's claims into his own claims on this already dense debate. Gamer claims that students need to learn to think "across the disciplines" if they are going to succeed in today's world (286). Thus, he would like his students to know that "disciplines overlap and that disciplinary boundaries are human constructs that change constantly and even arbitrarily" (285). Furthermore, he suggests that "rather than acting as 'service courses for other disciplines,' [FYC] might be more useful to our students if they treat
the disciplines themselves as constructs worthy of analysis and questioning." (285). Hence, Gamer claims that the purpose of FYC is to teach students to "question the boundaries and contours of the disciplines into which they will enter" (285).

In order to accomplish his purpose of FYC, Gamer argues that the properly chosen novel "can help students to make connections between the bewildering array of courses across [the] many disciplines that they have to take while in college" (285); for example, he suggests that a novel like Frankenstein that is accompanied with other reading material that focuses on the same topic can help students "to move from analysis of a particular incident to construction of a general concept more easily than they would be able to do otherwise" (285). He says that Frankenstein

is a text that, in the process of relating the adventures of a particular scientist and his creation, constructs general theories about how young children learn, about the origin of prejudice and bigotry, about the relation between public and private spheres, and about blindnesses built into the system of trial by jury—as well as
constructing an articulate critique of the sexuality of science and of the general violence that accompanies scientific discovery. (285)

Thus, according to Gamer, a novel combined with other nonfiction reading material can help students build connections between their courses, the disciplines they encounter at college, and their lives outside of the academy. He goes on to say that this reading combination can

...not only provide students with a pleasurable way to interact with other ways of seeing, but also enrich student writing by showing them that they can make arguments by telling stories and that their own experiences are not merely personal and entirely subjective. (283)

However, Gamer asserts that designing a course around a piece of imaginative literature where the text is "put on a pedestal" is damaging to both FYC and other disciplines (281).

This review of the literature clarifies the issues, but it does not adequately answer my question about whether to use imaginative literature in my FYC courses. I do know that I want to use some form of reading material because
the acts of reading and writing seem to complement each other. For example, Robert J. Tierney and P. David Pearson claim in "Toward a Composing Model of Reading" that developing one's reading skills may, in fact, help develop one's writing skills because reading and writing are both "acts of composing" (271) and have "similar processes of meaning construction" (261). Furthermore, in "Reading and Writing a Text: Correlations between Reading and Writing Patterns" Mariolina Salvatori claims that

...by enabling students to tolerate and confront ambiguities and uncertainties in the reading process, we can help them eventually learn to deal with the uncertainties and ambiguities that they themselves generate in the process of writing in their own texts. (180)

As a result, I do want my students to spend time reading and analyzing texts, although I have yet to decide on the type of text. I have also reviewed some interesting claims on the purpose of FYC; however, I need to think further about the relationship between the purposes of FYC and the texts used in the course.
CHAPTER TWO

A STUDY OF FOUR CLASSROOMS

Introduction

After reviewing several theories on the use of imaginative literature in FYC and the purpose of the course, I felt as confused as ever. Thus, I realized that I needed to learn more about students' thoughts on reading, and the type of texts that were being used in FYC classrooms and in other disciplines. Were students being subjected to analyzing symbols as Lindemann has suggested, or was imaginative literature being used to help students relate to topics "outside of the academy" as Tate has suggested? Or was a little bit of both taking place in classrooms? By conducting a CSUSB IRB approved study at Crafton Hills College during the 2002 Fall and 2003 Spring semesters, I hoped to find out the answer to these questions.

In chapter two, I will look at the ways the novel is used in four community college courses: two FYC courses, History of the United States (History 101) and Advanced Reading (Reading 078X2). This chapter will include the methodology of my study, the results of a survey given to
the instructors of these four courses, and the results of two surveys given to the students enrolled in these courses before and after they read the assigned novel.

The Subjects

The subjects of my study were instructors and students at Crafton Hills College in Yucaipa, California. The instructors and students at Crafton Hills College fall along a wide spectrum; they range in age, race, and educational background. Most of the students are high school graduates, but some are still enrolled in high school. The majority of instructors have at least a master's degree in their area of study.

Preliminary Instructor Survey

In order to determine if and how imaginative literature was being used in classrooms at Crafton Hills College, I put a survey in approximately one hundred and forty six instructor mail boxes--essentially, all of the instructor mailboxes that I could locate at Crafton Hills College; however, I may have missed a few because some are located in outlying locations upon the instructor's request. When placing the surveys in the mail boxes, I was unaware of the courses the instructors were teaching. I distributed the surveys in this manner in order to contact
instructors in most disciplines being taught, avoiding any bias I may have had towards certain disciplines.

The preliminary instructor survey was designed to help me determine which instructors were using novels in their courses and which instructors would allow me to survey them and their students. This survey consisted of the following four questions:

1. Do you require a novel in any of your courses?
2. If you are using a novel in one of your courses, please state the course(s) and novel(s).
3. Will you be willing to be interviewed on the ways you use the novel(s) in your course(s)?
4. Will you be willing to let me distribute a survey to your students?

Out of the approximately one hundred and forty six surveys I distributed at Crafton Hills College, only eight instructors responded. I have no explanation for the low response rate. I know that more than eight instructors were using imaginative literature in their courses because I saw the texts in the book store. Nevertheless, two of the eight instructors that responded indicated that they did not use imaginative literature in their courses; three FYC instructors indicated that they were using imaginative
literature in their courses; and a History of the United States (History 101) instructor and an Advanced Reading (Reading 078X2) instructor both indicated that they were using a novel in their classrooms.

From the surveys I received, I chose to survey the two FYC classrooms that were using a novel because I am primarily interested in how it is being used in FYC. I also decided to survey the History 101 and Reading 078X2 courses because they were the only two responses I received from disciplines other than English.

Methodology

Instructor Survey

I began my study by surveying the instructors of these four courses on how they were using the novel in their classrooms. The survey consisted of the following eleven questions that addressed the role of the novel in these particular classrooms:

1. What texts are you using in your course?
2. Is the novel used as a primary or secondary text?
3. When do you use the novel during the 18-week semester?
4. Why did you choose this particular novel?
5. What is the purpose of teaching a novel in your course? Why did you choose a novel to accomplish this?

6. How do you utilize the novel in your classroom?

7. What type of assignments do your students do in response to the novel, and what are your goals for each of these assignments?

8. How much of their grade do these assignments make up?

9. How do your students typically respond to the novel? Why do you think they respond in this manner?

10. Do you think the novel improves student writing? Reading skills? Have you seen any notable improvements?

11. Is there any additional information you would like to add?

The first question of the survey was designed to determine the texts that were being used in these classrooms. The second and third questions were designed to help me understand the role the novel was playing in the classroom. The fourth question was designed so I could determine the instructors' reasoning behind selecting the novel. The fifth question was intended to determine the purpose of using the novel in the course and why a novel
was used to accomplish this goal. The sixth question was asked in order for me to discover how the novel was going to be used in the classroom; essentially, I wanted to understand the format that would be used during the class. I included the seventh question in order to discover the type of assignments the students would be doing in response to the novel. The eighth question was asked to determine the role and weight the novel would have in the students' overall grade. The ninth question was asked so I could determine how the instructors were gauging their students' responses toward the novel. The tenth question was asked in order to determine if the instructors thought the novel improved student writing or reading skills. The eleventh question was designed to offer instructors an opportunity to add any additional information.

**Student Surveys**

After I surveyed the instructors, I distributed a survey containing the following six questions to the students enrolled in two different FYC courses, a History of the United States course, and an Advanced Reading course in order to determine the students' thoughts and reactions to the novel:
1. Do you perform single or multiple readings of the assigned pages in the textbook?

2. Do you participate in classroom discussion or collaborative group work involving the textbook?

3. Do you write comments in the textbook?

4. Have you read an entire novel before?

5. Is your attitude toward reading the assigned novel positive or negative?

6. Do you plan on reading the novel?

Questions one through three were asked in this survey and in the second survey I distributed, so I could determine if student reading and participation habits changed according to the type of text they were reading. Questions four through six were designed to determine the students’ attitudes toward reading the novel.

After the students completed the novels, I returned to the four classrooms and asked the students to complete another survey. This survey consisted of the following eight questions:

1. Did you read the assigned novel?

2. Did you have a positive or negative reaction to the novel?
3. Which assigned text assisted you the most in this course?

4. Did you perform single or multiple readings of the assigned pages in the novel?

5. Did you participate in any classroom discussion or collaborative group work involving the novel?

6. Did you write comments in the novel?

7. Did the novel help you make any connections with your past or present courses?

8. Did reading the novel give you a greater understanding of the topics being discussed in this course?

Questions one and two were designed to determine how many students read the novel and their reactions to the novel. Questions three and four were designed to help me determine the students' attitudes toward the novel. Questions five and six were asked again on this survey, so I could determine if students' reading habits changed according to the text they were reading. Questions seven and eight were designed to determine if the students were making connections between the novel and their courses.
Results of a First Year Composition Course

As I mentioned earlier, I conducted my study at Crafton Hills College. All instructors at Crafton Hills College are encouraged to follow the English department’s FYC course outline; therefore, before I discuss the results of my study, I will give a brief explanation about the purpose of FYC at this college. According to the course outline, the purpose of FYC is to create a literate student body on our college campus. Following decades of tradition, this freshman composition course attempts to improve students’ ability to write intelligently, and to read, think, respond, and write reflectively about what they read. As one of the most important skill courses, English 101 aims to enable all students to write coherent, correctly punctuated and edited essays. (1)

Some reading material is offered as an example, but the course outline does not dictate a particular path to follow in order to achieve the objective of the course, leaving a lot of this outline open to interpretation.

I began my study of this FYC course by distributing the twelve question survey to the instructor; each
instructor who participated in my study was guaranteed anonymity. From the survey, I was able to conclude that this instructor believes that he can achieve the objective of FYC by using the following texts: X.J. Kennedy's *The Bedford Guide for College Readers*, Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*; the latter two are both novels that were used as secondary texts "three fourths of the way into the semester." The instructor did not indicate why the novel was used at that time during the semester; however, he did indicate that the novels were chosen for the following reasons: students usually respond "very well" to them; they "are post colonial discoveries [that] see culture freshly, [and] accessibly;" they help teach "genre, style, character study, assist in classroom discussion, [and because] students in this area respond more readily to fiction than to the essay." The novel was used in "lecture, discussion, and timed essays" and students were required to keep a "journal and write an essay exam." The goals for these assignments was to "enrich their [the students] vital lives and get them to manipulate ideas;" these assignments were worth "two tenths of their writing grade, plus discussion." Thus, this instructor wants his FYC students to be able to
relate the novel and its assignments to their lives outside of the academy, which is similar to Tate's theory. He also believes that by teaching literature concepts he is meeting the purpose of the course; for example, he theorizes that reading the novel helps to improve student writing because "they [students] will take chances regarding symbolism." Thus, this instructor is claiming that student writing will improve if certain literature concepts are taught; though nowhere in the course outline does it state that; it is the way this instructor interprets the course outline. Since a specific text is not designated on how to achieve the stated goal, it is open to interpretation; therefore, this instructor may attempt to achieve the objective to "improve students' ability to write intelligently, and to read, think, respond, and write reflectively about what they read" (1) with a novel while some may use expository essays; furthermore, nowhere in the course objective does it indicate if the above goal should be reached using literature concepts or composition concepts. Thus, it seems that this instructor based his course goals on the stated school objective, though these objectives may differ from Lindemann's and her supporters'.
I continued my study of this FYC course by distributing the eight question survey to the students before they began reading the novel; all of the student surveys in my study were also anonymous. The classroom consisted of twenty students. As shown in Table 1, eight students indicated that they did multiple readings of the assigned pages in the textbook, while ten indicated that they did single readings; two students did not answer the question. Seventeen students participated in classroom discussion or group work involving the textbook, while three students chose not to answer the question. Ten students had been writing comments in their textbook, while six indicated that they had not; four students chose to leave this question blank. Sixteen students had read a novel before, two had never read a novel, and two did not respond to the question. Twelve students had a positive attitude towards reading the novel, while eight students had a negative attitude. Sixteen students planned on reading the novel, one did not, and three did not know if they would read it.
Table 1. First Year Composition: Initial Student Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Responses to Survey Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you perform single or multiple readings of the textbook?</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you participate in classroom discussion or collaborative group work involving the textbook?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you write comments in the textbook?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you read an entire novel before?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your attitude toward reading the assigned novel positive or negative?</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you plan on reading the novel?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the students had completed reading the novel, I returned to the FYC classroom with another survey in order to determine the students’ attitudes towards the novel. Once again, twenty people completed the survey. As shown in Table 2, eighteen students read the assigned novel while two had not read it, which is more than planned to read it. Twelve students had a positive reaction to the novel, while four had a negative response; four students had neither reaction, so I designated that response as neutral. Ten students indicated that the novel assisted them the most in the course; one student indicated that the textbook assisted them the most, while nine students left this
question blank. Four students did multiple readings of the assigned pages in the novel, while five students did single readings of the text; eleven students left this question blank. Fourteen students participated in classroom discussion or group work dealing with the novel; five students did not participate in classroom discussion or group work; one student left this question blank. Ten students made written comments in the novel, while ten students left this question blank. Fifteen students indicated that the novel did not help them make connections between their past or present courses, while four students indicated that the novel did help them make connections with their past or present courses; one student left the question blank. Eleven students noted that the novel helped them have a greater understanding of the course; while seven students noted that it did not help them have a greater understanding of the course; two students left the question blank.
### Table 2. First Year Composition: Final Student Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Responses to Survey Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you read the assigned novel?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you have a positive or negative reaction to the novel?</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which assigned text assisted you the most in the course?</td>
<td>Textbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you perform single or multiple readings of the assigned pages in the novel?</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you participate in any classroom discussion or collaborative group work involving the novel?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you write comments in the novel?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the novel help you make any connections with your past or present courses?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did reading the novel give you a greater understanding of the topics being discussed in this course?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Results of a Second First Year Composition Course

The second FYC instructor I surveyed used Rise B. Axelrod and Charles R. Cooper's *St. Martin's Guide to Writing* as the primary text and T. Coraghessan Boyle's *The Tortilla Curtain*, a novel, as a secondary text. The novel was used "half way through the semester," but the instructor did not indicate why it was used at this time.
The instructor used *The Tortilla Curtain* because it "complements the class theme of America." Throughout the course, the instructor discussed a "theme" in order to help students "really think about an issue." Thus, the novel was used to "assist in class discussion of Americanism." In this classroom, the purpose of FYC was to help students become better thinkers and writers. This instructor stressed dialogue and collaboration between her students, even assigning them a group paper; however, she chose to leave the question ascertaining the percentage the group paper and other assignments relating to the novel, the goals for each assignment, how students respond to the novel, and how the novel affects student performance in reading and writing blank. However, from the answers this instructor provided, it seems that she used the novel to stress the critical thinking, writing, and reading aspects of the course outline.

I then surveyed fifteen students enrolled in this FYC course. As shown in Table 3, nine students indicated that they had been reading the assigned pages from the textbook only once while six students indicated that they had been doing multiple readings. Ten students participated in classroom discussion or collaborative group work that dealt
with the textbook; five students left this question blank. Five students had written comments in their textbook; five students had not, while another five left the question blank. Thirteen students had read a novel before, while two students had never read one before. Ten students had a positive attitude towards reading the assigned novel, while five students had a negative attitude. Eight students were planning on reading the novel, while seven were not planning on reading it.

Table 3. First Year Composition: Initial Student Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Responses to Survey Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you perform single or multiple readings of the textbook?</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you participate in classroom discussion or collaborative group work involving the textbook?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you write comments in the textbook?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you read an entire novel before?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your attitude toward reading the assigned novel positive or negative?</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you plan on reading the novel?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After the students finished the novel, I returned to the classroom and distributed another survey. Once again fifteen students completed the survey. Table 4 shows that fourteen students read the novel, while only one student did not, which is interesting because on the initial survey only eight students indicated that they planned on reading the novel. Three students had a positive reaction to the novel, while eleven had a negative reaction; one student left the question blank; it is worth noting that on the initial survey ten students had a positive attitude toward reading the novel, leading me to believe that some students did not like the novel. Nine students performed multiple readings of the novel, while three students performed one reading of the novel; three students left this question blank. All fifteen students participated in classroom discussion and group work that involved the novel. Ten students made written comments in the novel, while five students did not make any comments in the novel. Fourteen students indicated that the novel did not help them make connections with past or present courses, while one person left the question blank. Six students indicated that the novel did give them a better understanding of the course,
while eight indicated that it did not; one person left the question blank.

Table 4. First Year Composition: Final Student Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Responses to Survey Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you read the assigned novel?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you have a positive or negative reaction to the novel?</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which assigned text assisted you the most in the course?</td>
<td>Textbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you perform single or multiple readings of the assigned pages in the novel?</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you participate in any classroom discussion or collaborative group work involving the novel?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you write comments in the novel?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the novel help you make any connections with your past or present courses?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did reading the novel give you a greater understanding of the topics being discussed in this course?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of a History Course

According to the Crafton Hills College Class Schedule, the purpose of the History of the United States course, History 101, is to expose students to a "survey ... of
American History from 1865 to [the] present" (52). The department recommends that students pass FYC before they enroll in this course, though it is not an enforced prerequisite.

The third instructor I surveyed was teaching History 101 and used three texts in the course. The primary texts were Alan Brinkley's *American History-A Survey Volume Two*, James West Davidson's *After the Fact Volume Two*, and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, a novel, which was used as a secondary text. The instructor used *The Grapes of Wrath* towards the end of the semester when they started discussing The Great Depression. The instructor chose *The Grapes of Wrath* "for its realism and poignancy, [and because] it complements the text and a chapter from the reading book, *After the Fact.*" The instructor used the novel as "reading outside of class" and did not lecture or elicit much class discussion about the novel. The only assignments related to the novel were two essay quizzes that made up "half a test in value" and a quiz that was based on historical facts about The Great Depression; there were no questions about the novel on the quiz. The goals for each of these assignments were to help students reach a "better understanding of the human element in the Great
Depression." The instructor indicated that the students responded to the novel in "a very favorable manner. They derive great insight as to the human costs of the Great Depression." Essentially, the purpose of this course is more clear cut than FYC; it is to teach students the history of the U.S. from 1865 to the present; however, the instructor can choose what areas of this vast time period to stress. This instructor was stressing The Great Depression; the novel's purpose was to offer students a glimpse of life during this time period, essentially, he was using this novel as an extended example. Thus, in this course, it seems the novel was used to achieve the course objectives because it offered students a glimpse into that particular time period.

After surveying the instructor, I surveyed the seventeen students that were in the classroom. As shown in Table 5, four students indicated that they had been conducting multiple readings of their textbooks, while ten students indicated that they had been conducting single readings; three students left the question blank. Ten students had been participating in classroom discussion or collaborative group work that involved their textbooks; seven students left this question blank. Two students had
been writing comments in their textbooks, while ten students had not been writing comments in their textbooks; five students left this question blank. Thirteen students had read a novel before, while two students had never read one before; two students left the question blank. Fifteen students had a positive attitude about reading the novel, while two had a negative attitude. Fourteen students planned on reading the novel; three students left this question blank.

Table 5. History 101: Initial Student Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Responses to Survey Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you perform single or multiple readings of the textbook?</td>
<td>Single  Multiple  Other  Blank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10     4          3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you participate in classroom discussion or collaborative group work involving the textbook?</td>
<td>Yes  No  Other  Blank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10     7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you write comments in the textbook?</td>
<td>Yes  No  Other  Blank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2      10          5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you read an entire novel before?</td>
<td>Yes  No  Other  Blank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13     2           2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your attitude toward reading the assigned novel positive or negative?</td>
<td>Positive  Negative  Other  Blank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15     2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you plan on reading the novel?</td>
<td>Yes  No  Other  Blank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14     3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After the students completed *The Grapes of Wrath*, I returned to the classroom with the follow up survey. For this part of the survey there were sixteen participants. As shown in Table 6, all sixteen students noted that they had read the novel, which is very close in number to the fourteen students who indicated that they were going to read the novel. Fourteen of these students had a positive reaction to the novel, while two students left the question blank. Nine students indicated that the textbook assisted them the most in the course, while seven indicated that the novel assisted them the most. Nine students performed single readings of the assigned pages in the novel, while seven students performed multiple readings. Ten students did not participate in any classroom discussion or group work involving the novel, while six students indicated that they had. Fourteen students did not write comments in their book, while two students left this question blank. Two students indicated that reading the novel helped them make connections to past or present courses, while fourteen indicated that it did not help them make any connections. Thirteen students indicated that the novel helped them gain a better understanding of the course, while three indicated that it did not.
Table 6. History 101: Final Student Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Responses to Survey Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you read the assigned novel?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you have a positive or negative reaction to the novel?</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which assigned text assisted you the most in the course?</td>
<td>Textbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you perform single or multiple readings of the assigned pages in the novel?</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you participate in any classroom discussion or collaborative group work involving the novel?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you write comments in the novel?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the novel help you make any connections with your past or present courses?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did reading the novel give you a greater understanding of the topics being discussed in this course?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of a Reading Course

According to the Crafton Hills College Schedule, the purpose of the Advanced Reading course is to “enhance students’ reading skills” (63). The schedule also notes that “this course involves attending lectures and doing in-class assignments. Students must also complete individualized laboratory activities designed to increase
vocabulary and comprehension, based on assessed reading ability" (63). The prerequisite for this course is the appropriate score on the college placement exam or the Nelson-Denny Reading Test.

The final instructor I surveyed was teaching Reading 078X2, Advanced Reading. The instructor used Pearl S. Buck's The Good Earth and John Langan's 10 Steps to Improving College Reading in the course. Both of these texts were used as primary texts and were used throughout the semester. The instructor used The Good Earth for the following reasons: "it is easy to understand, it is useful in teaching students comprehension, students respond well to it, and it helps develop their reading skills." The novel was used in the classroom in lecture, seminar, and during collaborative group work. The students were required to look a word up in the dictionary for every chapter in the novel in order to develop their vocabulary. The instructor did not indicate what percentage of the student grade was related to assignments dealing with the novel. Thus, the purpose of this course is to help students improve their reading and comprehension abilities; the purpose of the novel was to give students the opportunity to read an entire novel with the guidance of an
instructor who could address their needs; essentially, this involved teaching students who need assistance with reading how to undertake a novel.

I then surveyed twenty three students enrolled in the course before they began reading the novel. As shown in Table 7, six students indicated that they performed multiple readings of the textbook, while eight performed one reading; nine students left the question blank. Ten students participated in classroom discussion or collaborative group work dealing with the textbook; thirteen students left this question blank. Five students had been writing comments in their textbook, while eighteen students had not. Fourteen students had read a novel before, while five had never read one before; four students left the question blank. Thirteen students had a positive attitude towards reading the novel, while five students had a negative attitude; five students left the question blank. Fifteen students planned on reading the novel, while three students did not; five students did not answer the question.
Table 7. Reading 078X2: Initial Student Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Responses to Survey Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you perform single or multiple readings of the textbook?</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you participate in classroom discussion or collaborative group work involving the textbook?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you write comments in the textbook?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you read an entire novel before?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is your attitude toward reading the assigned novel positive or negative?</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you plan on reading the novel?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once again I returned to the classroom when the students had finished reading the novel. Twenty three students were in the classroom for the follow up survey. As shown in Table 8, fourteen students indicated that they had read the novel, which is one less than the number of students who claimed they would read it; four students had not read it, and five left this question blank. Nine students had a positive reaction to the novel, while four had a negative reaction; ten students left the question blank. Three students indicated that the novel assisted them the most during the course, while five indicated that
the flash cards they were required to make for the novel assisted them the most; fifteen students left the question blank. Five students conducted multiple readings of the novel, while seven conducted single readings; eleven students left the question blank. Eight students did not participate in any classroom discussions or group work involving the novel, while four participated in classroom discussions or group work; eleven students left the question blank. Four students did write notes in the novel, while eleven students had not written any notes; eight students left the question blank. Three students indicated that they had not made any connections between the novel and their past or present courses, while six had made some connections between their past or present courses; fourteen students left the question blank. Six students noted that reading the novel did help them achieve a greater understanding of the course; four students noted that the novel did not help them achieve a greater understanding of the course; thirteen left the question blank.
Table 8. Reading 078X2: Final Student Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Responses to Survey</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you read the assigned novel?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you have a positive or negative reaction to the novel?</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which assigned text assisted you the most in the course?</td>
<td>Textbook</td>
<td>Novel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you perform single or multiple readings of the assigned pages in the novel?</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Multiple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you participate in any classroom discussion or collaborative group work involving the novel?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you write comments in the novel?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the novel help you make any connections with your past or present courses?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did reading the novel give you a greater understanding of the topics being discussed in this course?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After completing my surveys, I found the information I gathered to be rather interesting; however, now, months later, as I am writing about the data, I am encountering some problems since many students chose to leave one or more of the questions on the survey blank. Thus, I am hesitant to make any broad claims; however, in chapter three, I will focus on the results of the surveys I
conducted and relate these results to some of the theories I discussed in chapter one.
CHAPTER THREE

IMAGINATIVE LITERATURE: A PLACE IN FIRST YEAR COMPOSITION?

Introduction

In this chapter, I will examine how the theories on the use of imaginative literature relate to the research I conducted in the FYC, history, and reading courses. I will then consider whether and under what conditions imaginative literature may be used in FYC. Unfortunately, due to students leaving some of the questions on the surveys blank, my findings are not as concrete as I had hoped; however, my research did help me uncover some interesting and useful information that will help me think in more complex ways about imaginative literature in FYC.

Some of my research seems to support Lindemann's and her supporters' claims, particularly that when imaginative literature is used, class time that could be spent writing is spent discussing topics associated with the study of literature. For example, the first FYC instructor I surveyed claims that teaching literature concepts in the classroom will help students become better writers because they will understand how to use symbolism; thus, he uses
class time to teach literature concepts such as "genre, style, [and] character study." Furthermore, he goes on to say that the novel is used to "enrich their [the students] vital lives and get them to manipulate ideas." He does not mention preparing them for future classes as Lindemann does. In fact, this instructor's pedagogy sounds similar to Tate's claim that he wants his students to "think and talk and write about human lives outside of the academy" (321).

This FYC instructor's and Tate's pedagogies seem to be somewhat based in the humanist belief that under the guidance of the proper teachers, students will learn how to write by reading specific canonical texts that will cultivate their character and help them lead a better life (Crowley 86). Sharon Crowley discusses this in Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays. Like Lindemann, Crowley argues that humanism is often employed when imaginative literature is used in FYC, creating a classroom where literary interpretation and lecture are the focus, in turn neglecting the essentials of the composition course. However, in this FYC classroom, I have no way of knowing how much actual class time was spent discussing genre, style or, for that matter, writing, or if the amount of time the instructor spent lecturing changed with the
Nonetheless, it seems that in this case, imaginative literature was playing a major role in the course.

On the other hand, in the second FYC course I surveyed, the instructor did not use the novel to teach any literature or humanistic concepts. In fact, the novel was used to elicit discussion on a timely topic in today’s world: Americanism. This instructor used a novel to encourage dialogue, collaboration, and critical thinking among her students. This oral dialogue was then applied to a written dialogue. Thus, it seems that this instructor was able to use a novel and avoid Lindemann’s contention that when imaginative literature and the assignments associated with it are used, students are asked to “assume the disembodied voice of some obtuse journal as they analyze the ingrown motif in Beowulf” (314). In fact, the students in this FYC course were required to write a group paper about the novel, a paper designed to elicit discussion among the students on the theme of the course. Nowhere in this assignment were students asked to analyze a “motif.” Thus, the use of a novel does not have to connote lectures and the silencing of students’ voices. Hence, in this course, imaginative literature was used, but the essentials
of the course were not altered; the novel was not used to turn the course into a literature course, though it did enable students to make connections with their lives outside of the academy.

After surveying these two FYC classrooms, I found conflicting data; a classroom where literature concepts were introduced and played a major role, and a classroom where they were not introduced and played no role at all. Thus, my research might support both Lindemann’s and Tate’s claims. However, in the other courses I surveyed, Lindemann’s and Tate’s theories do not seem to apply; for example, in the History of the United States course, the novel was used as an extended example of what life was like during The Great Depression and played a very minor role in the classroom; in fact, it was barely discussed in class. It was not used to teach any literature concepts, nor was it used to improve the lives of students.

Similarly, in the Advanced Reading course, the novel was used to teach students comprehension and to help them develop their vocabulary skills. Like the history course, the instructor did not spend any time teaching students about literature concepts. Nor did they spend class time reviewing details about the novel or relating it to their
lives outside of the academy. Essentially, it was used like any other textbook.

Thus, from my research, Lindemann's and her supporters' claims that courses that use novels become literature based are not necessarily true because three of the four courses I surveyed did not become literature based. Furthermore, I find it interesting that Lindemann claims that students enrolled in FYC should "should read and write [about] a variety of texts found in the humanities, sciences, and social sciences" (312), with the exception of imaginative literature, because from my research, I discovered a variety of courses that used some form of imaginative literature. I even discovered a mathematics course that required a math textbook and a novel, not to mention the history, religion, reading, and psychology courses I discovered that used imaginative literature as well. I am not suggesting that imaginative literature should be used in FYC because students may encounter it in future courses; however, I do think it is worth noting, once again, that imaginative literature, particularly the novel, is and can be used in a variety of ways.
Reader Response Theory

One particular way imaginative literature may be used in a FYC course is with reader response theory. Lindemann acknowledges that critical theories such as "reader response criticism, social constructionism, and feminist approaches" can "...offer new ways of interpreting texts..." (314); however, she believes these theories should be applied to all texts, not just imaginative literature; I wholeheartedly agree. Theories such as reader response criticism can be used towards the reading material that is used in FYC and in other disciplines. It can offer FYC instructors some valuable information on how to ensure that imaginative literature does not become the focus of the course when a novel is being used.

In reader response theory, the primary focus is on the reader and the process of reading instead of the text or the author's intentions. According to Stanley Fish in Is There A Text in This Class, there is no single correct interpretation of a text because the meaning of a text is subjective; it exists within the reader since readers are constructing meaning with the experiences they bring to their readings. However, students will read within a common interpretive community (the class), they will draw
on interpretive methods learned in the classroom, and the
instructor can monitor their interpretive ventures.
Therefore, even though students will spend time discussing
how they came to their interpretations, they will not spend
class time listening to lectures on a "correct"
interpretation. Their discussions of the interpretive
frames students used, however, will easily and profitably
translate to non-literary readings that they will encounter
in other classes.

Furthermore, in Teaching Composition: 12
Bibliographical Essays, Joseph J. Comprone points out that

...Fish provides those in composition with a
rationale for writing about literature that moves
away from the sense of interpretive authority
held by those New Critics who assume that a
special kind of interpretive process must be part
of our responses to literary discourse. All
language, Fish suggests, can be subjected to the
special kind of attention, we as members of a
literary community, give to literature, and it is
that special kind of attention that we impart
when we teach reading and writing as
interpretation. It is not a different kind of
language that teachers of writing through literature teach. (315)

Comprone also discusses the theories of Louise Rosenblatt, David Bleich, and Wolfgang Iser, who "focus their attention on readers and the process of reading" (315), not on determining the correct meaning of a text. Thus, theorists such as Fish offer sound explanations as to why class time should not be spent discussing the purported truth about a text because there is no truth to be found. There are only interpretations. Imaginative literature does not have to be treated any differently than any other text that is used in FYC. It only becomes untouchable if the instructor makes it untouchable.

In addition, it is also instructors who decide on the type of assignments that will be used in conjunction with novels. Instructors decide if the assignment deals with the study of style or if it is used to help students think critically about an issue such as culture or Americanism. Thus, Tate is correct when he claims that the "pedagogical sins of teachers in the past" (317) are to blame for the hesitation many compositionists have towards the use of imaginative literature in FYC. Tate makes a particularly strong point in his article when he argues for
compositionists to think about why imaginative literature is being ignored in most FYC classrooms (319). It seems wise that FYC instructors understand their motives and are explicit in their reasoning for selecting a specific text. If a form of imaginative literature can help an instructor achieve the goals of the course, then disallowing it because of its genre seems a bit ridiculous; however, if a text full of rhetorical essays will help the instructor fulfill the purpose of the course, then that text should not be discriminated against because of its genre. The same reasoning can be applied to all texts.

A Return to Gamer's Theory

Since I was particularly interested in Gamer's theories on the use of imaginative literature in FYC, I think it is worth reviewing the results of my student surveys in order to see if my results support his claim that the novel can help students make connections between their past and present courses. Since I am interested in the way students approach different texts, I will also note if students' study habits changed with the text they were using.

Overall, the students in the first FYC I surveyed had a positive reaction to the novel. Interestingly, the
majority of students claim that the novel assisted them the most in this course and gave them a greater understanding of the topics being discussed. However, the novel did not help the majority of these students make connections with their past or present courses. Since so many students left the questions blank on the second survey I distributed, I cannot make any strong claims about their study habits with the novel, but, overall, the way the students approached both texts in and out of class was not drastically different.

In contrast, the students in the second FYC course I surveyed had a negative reaction to the novel. The majority of students claim that the textbook assisted them the most in this course; they also claim that the novel did not give them a greater understanding of this course or any of their past or present courses. Interestingly, these students’ study habits changed when they began the novel. When reading the novel, more students started conducting multiple readings and making comments in their text. Furthermore, all of the students in this course participated in discussion and group work involving the novel, unlike the textbook, which may be related to the fact that they had to write a group paper.
In the History of the United States course I surveyed, the majority of students had a positive reaction to the novel. The students tied on which text assisted them the most, but the majority of students claim that the novel gave them a greater understanding of the course; however, they also indicated that the novel did not help them make connections to past or present courses. Student study habits did not really change from textbook to novel; there was a slight increase in the number of students who conducted multiple readings. There was also a slight increase in the number of students who claimed that they did not participate in class discussion or group work, but the instructor did not spend much class time discussing the novel.

In the Advanced Reading class I surveyed, the majority of students had a positive reaction to the novel; however, the majority of students claim that the textbook assisted them the most, and that the novel gave them a greater understanding of this course and their past or present courses. Student study and participation habits did not really change between the two texts.

After reviewing my research, I was surprised that Gamer's theories that the novel can help students make
connections with their other courses did not prove to be true in the research groups I surveyed. The students in the Advanced Reading course are the only ones who made any connections between the novel and their past or present courses. I do not know why they did or did not make these connections. It could have something to do with the instructor, the novel, the other reading material, class discussion, the way the novel was used in the course, or some other factor. It seems that Gamer's theories can be applied and succeed in FYC, though the instructor should probably have this goal in mind before the course begins. However, the majority of students did indicate that the novel gave them a greater understanding of the course they were enrolled in. Once these students entered other courses, they might make some connections, though I will never know if they do. Unfortunately, I did not ask my survey group if they had made any connections between any of the reading material and their lives outside of the academy. I now wish I had.

In addition, from my research, it seems that student study habits did not change with the text they were using. In three of the four classrooms I surveyed, the students' study habits did not change. The students in the second
FYC I surveyed are the only research group whose study habits changed, though it should be noted that none of my research shows a drastic change in any of the research groups’ study habits. Thus, it seems that the majority of students approached the different texts in basically the same manner.

An Example of Imaginative Literature in First Year Composition

In Resources for Teaching Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers, David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky detail a FYC course they designed where the purpose “...was to make students proficient users of the varieties of texts they would encounter in undergraduate education” (1); this includes expository essays and imaginative literature, particularly short stories. In this course, Bartholomae and Petrosky state that the purpose of their FYC course “...is about composing-reading and writing” (3). Bartholomae and Petrosky have a detailed pedagogy on how to approach FYC and the texts used in the course. They claim that

You [the instructor] stand for a method, a way of working with texts, and not for a set of
canonical interpretations, a series of approved statements used to represent an understanding of those texts.... The worst thing to do is to come to class ready to expound or defend a single reading, one that all your students are expected to speak back to you by the end of the day. (4) In fact, they claim that the best way to prepare for class discussion on the texts "is to imagine the varieties of ways these texts might be read" (4), so the instructor will be prepared to help students figure out how they are approaching the text (4). No matter the text, Bartholomae and Petrosky want their students to "...read the text as a text, to see it as representing a point of view, to argue with it, to take it as a prompting to respond in a voice of their own" (4). They want to teach their students how to "...read with or against the text-with it by participating in its form of instruction, against it by seeing its bias or limitations" (4). Thus, it seems that in this course the focus is on the students' interpretations of the reading material and how they came to that interpretation, even for the instructors; there is no right or wrong interpretation of any of the texts.
In their book, Bartholomae and Petrosky discuss four approaches to using imaginative literature (short stories) in FYC, without it becoming the focus of the course. In their first approach, they argue that

Students can work with stories just as they would work with any other texts. They can imagine, for example, that stories offer arguments, and they can read to write essays on what those arguments might be. (20)

They go on to claim that "...students can learn to refer to passages in the story, just as they would refer to passages in an essay, to demonstrate their positions on what a story's arguments might be" (20); for example, they ask their students to read Harold Brodkey's "A Story in an Almost Classical Mode;" they then ask their students to apply this method to the story, looking for the argument that is made in the text. Essentially, using imaginative literature as they would an expository essay, Bartholomae and Petrosky state that

They [students] identify passages in the story that they can work from, they interpret those passages for what they could be saying, and they cite them in some way in their essays. All of
this is rigorous academic work, and students can learn to carry it out with stories as well as with essays. (21)

The second approach they use when using imaginative literature is “we often ask students to treat stories as cases that can be used to test particular readings or as frames for other readings” (21); for example, they have students

...read the character Marya in Joyce Carol Oates’s story “Theft” as an example of a scholarship girl in light of Richard Rodriquez’s discussion of himself as a scholarship boy in his essay “The Achievement of Desire,” [they then ask] them to use Rodriquez’s ideas as a frame and the character Marya as a case to text that frame. (21)

They also have their students read imaginative literature as fiction and nonfiction, so their students can consider if and how their attitudes change when the genre of the reading material changes (21).

In the third approach, they “...ask students to respond to significant moments in stories and to go on to explain their responses” (21). They then have their students
discuss and "complete assignments that ask them to account for the differences and similarities in what various students noticed as significant" (21). Essentially, they want their students to think about how the text is affecting them and how they are affecting the text, teaching students about how texts and readers affect one another.

In their final approach, Bartholomae and Petrosky use imaginative literature as an opportunity for students to write short stories. They claim that writing stories can give students the

...opportunities to create characters, dialogues, gestures, and telling details, and landscapes or places. Story writing can also teach narrative, the making of ideas and statements through characters that seem believable, and students benefit, too, from thinking and writing about why particular stories (theirs and others) are worth telling.... (21)

They go on to say that writing short stories can also encourage students to read fiction outside of a school setting (21).
Concluding Remarks

Thus, Bartholomae and Petrosky offer four different approaches to using imaginative literature (short stories) in FYC. Each of these approaches could be applied or modified towards a novel. Furthermore, none of these approaches makes literary concepts the focus of the course; these approaches can also help students approach various texts from various courses. Thus, it is helping prepare students for their college careers, satisfying Lindemann's claim that FYC should provide "guided practice in reading and writing the discourses of the academy and the professions" (312) because they are using a variety of texts in the course. These approaches can also help students understand why they are reacting to a certain text in a certain manner; teachers can explore these issues in as much detail as they want, satisfying Tate's desires to have his students "write beyond the disciplines" (321).

Thus, after reviewing numerous compositionists' theories on the use of imaginative literature in FYC and conducting my own study, I have come to the conclusion that imaginative literature may have a place in FYC if instructors are explicit about their goals for using the novel in the classroom; essentially, my research has
revealed that instructors control how texts are used in the classroom. Texts do not decide how they should be used; instructors do. So instructors have to be aware of the purpose of FYC on their campuses and design courses in which they can fulfill this purpose. Furthermore, while designing their FYC courses, it seems that instructors should remember their own purpose: to teach their students the essentials of composition. Texts should be chosen with that in mind. If instructors use the novel, along with other reading material, to start an oral and written dialogue and not to lecture students on the correct interpretation of a text, then it may be have a place in FYC.

I realize that my research is limited so more research on this topic needs to be completed; I would be particularly interested in research on how the novel is used in the classroom at other schools. However, as I plan for this next year, I believe that I should not use a novel simply for the sake of using a novel or because my students say they want to read novels. However, given the goals of Crafton Hills College's FYC courses and my own beliefs about the subject of composition, it seems entirely possible to use a novel in support of these goals. Indeed,
including a novel might allow me to respond to my students’ reading interests and to expand their understandings of interpretive communities and the ways language constructs and is constructed within those communities as well as prepare them for the reading and writing they may expect to encounter beyond my classroom.
APPENDIX A

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTOR SURVEY
1. Do you require a novel in any of your courses?
2. If you are using a novel in one of your courses, please state the course(s) and novel(s).
3. Will you be willing to be interviewed on the ways you use the novel(s) in your course(s)?
4. Will you be willing to let me distribute a survey to your students?

Please Write Name Above

Extension Number/Email Address
APPENDIX B

PRIMARY INSTRUCTOR SURVEY
1. What texts are you using in your course?
2. Is the novel used as a primary or secondary text?
3. When do you use the novel during the 18-week semester?
4. Why did you choose this particular novel?
5. What is the purpose of teaching a novel in your classroom? Why did you choose a novel to accomplish this?
6. How do you utilize the novel in your classroom?
7. What type of assignments do your students do in response to the novel, and what are your goals for each of these assignments?
8. How much of their grade do these assignments make up?
9. How do your students typically respond to the novel? Why do you think they respond in this manner?
10. Do you think the novel improves student writing? Reading skills? Have you seen any noticeable improvements?
11. Is there any additional information you would like to add?
APPENDIX C

INITIAL STUDENT SURVEY
1. Do you perform single or multiple readings of the assigned pages in the textbook?

2. Do you participate in classroom discussion or collaborative group work involving the novel?

3. Do you write comments in the textbook?

4. Have you read an entire novel before?

5. Is your attitude toward reading the assigned novel positive or negative?

6. Do you plan on reading the novel?
APPENDIX D

FINAL STUDENT SURVEY
1. Did you read the assigned novel?

2. Did you have a positive or negative reaction to the novel?

3. Which assigned text assisted you the most in this course?

4. Did you perform single or multiple readings of the assigned pages in the novel?

5. Did you participate in any classroom discussion or group work involving the novel?

6. Did you write comments in the novel?

7. Did the novel help you make any connections with your past or present courses?

8. Did reading the novel give you a greater understanding of the topics being discussed in this course?
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