JOURNEYS: A CATHOLIC LANGUAGE UNIT FOR GRADE EIGHT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to describe the necessary elements and process involved in the development of a Language Arts unit for Grade Eight students in Catholic Schools entitled "Journeys". The project focuses on the importance of Catholic education and curriculum, as well as on the developmental characteristics and educational needs of the students to which the unit is geared. The unit itself is based on the expectations as outlined in <u>The Ontario Curriculum</u> and on the principles of Curriculum development and Catholic Curriculum design and implementation. The completed "Journeys" unit, ready for teacher and student use, is the result of the information obtained and is included at the end of the project.

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INTRODUCTION

Deciding upon the topic for this project was certainly not easy. There are so many interesting issues, theories and educational practices that could be examined, evaluated, or put to the test. Yet, the unfortunate reality is that studies and reports are rarely given a second glance by full-time teachers, since they barely have enough time to successfully meet the demands placed on them. I wanted to create something practical that teachers could use. Teachers are always looking for user-friendly, adaptable units that cover the expectations found in the Ontario Curriculum. I contacted the Language Arts consultant for my board and asked her about any curriculum needs. Delighted at my offer to write a unit, she indicated a need at the grade eight level.

In the previous Intermediate Language Arts Framework for the Lincoln County Catholic School Board (now the Niagara Catholic District School Board), the Journey motif was mentioned as part of a "Thematic Concept-Organization of Language Arts" for the Transition Years (grades seven and eight). However, the framework did not provide any actual unit content or organization relating to this theme. It was meant only to provide a "unifying direction" and, therefore, contained only very general skills and concepts; all of these relating to the now-defunct Common Curriculum. The theme itself was not explored. I wanted to build on this concept and provide an actual unit, complete with lesson ideas related to the required expectations in the Ontario Curriculum.

It was my intention to write a unit that every grade eight Language Arts teacher in my board could use. However, although there are now efforts to make resources more

consistent throughout the board, there is no real required novel or short story anthology in every school, since each school spends its textbook budget according to its own individual needs. Therefore, in order for my unit to be truly useful, I have taken a generic approach, designing each of the activities so that they will be adaptable to any novel, short story, or article relating to the theme.

Being truly committed to Catholic Education, it is very important to me to incorporate the elements and principles of my faith into the curriculum unit. The recent massive restructuring of the educational system in Ontario, combined with the demise of Catholic education in Quebec and Newfoundland, and the increasing secularization of our society has prompted Catholic educators in Ontario to assert the identity and distinctiveness of Catholic schools now more than ever before. In order for Catholic Education to continue to succeed, the principles of the faith must be reflected in every subject. That is why the first chapter of the project deals with the fundamental elements of Catholic education and curriculum design. Although most of the material in this unit is still quite appropriate for public schools, it is geared more specifically towards students in Catholic schools.

All writers know that it is important to consider one's audience or readership. Being a teacher myself, I am obviously aware of the needs of educators. However, one must not forget the needs of the students themselves. Grade eight students are very unique individuals who are at a very important stage in their educational careers. The second chapter, then, examines the physical, social, intellectual and educational development

and needs of the grade eight student and provides teaching suggestions and strategies which take the above characteristics into account.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the <u>Ontario Curriculum</u> expectations in Language Arts for grade eight students. The layout, rationale, and roles of teachers, parents, and students are discussed. The specific expectations for the three strands of reading, writing, and oral and visual communication are also examined .

The fourth chapter provides the theoretical background and rationale for the development of the unit itself. It examines educational theories about curriculum design and development, especially as it relates to the teaching of English. An analysis of the importance of the journey motif in young adult literature is also included. The project concludes with the unit itself.

CHAPTER ONE

CATHOLIC EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

"Catholic Education Topples in Quebec and Newfoundland". This startling headline, published in the Civil Rights Bulletin in 1998, is all the more disconcerting for proponents of Catholic Education in Ontario, who, in this often volatile provincial political climate, fear that they may be the next to fall. The establishment of a Separate School system with the School Act of 1841 signaled the beginning of a proud, but humble, history and tradition of Catholic Education in this province, further boosted by the passage of Bill 30 in 1986, which finally gave Catholic schools the full funding they needed to fully emerge from the previous system of often primitive resources, services, and facilities. It is this new, publicly-funded system that is in danger of collapsing, and joining its Quebec and Newfoundland counterparts. Many social and political factors contribute to the instability of Catholic Education in Ontario, only some of which include Bill 160, the recent U.N proclamation of discriminatory educational funding practices in Ontario, the increasing secularization of all facets of society, an all-time low in church attendance, the weakening of a once strong moral fabric in families and institutions, and new economically-driven educational trends which value competition and pragmatism rather than personal achievement and faith. It is for precisely these reasons that it is essential, now more that ever, that Catholic educators in Ontario assert the uniqueness

and importance of Catholic Education. In the words of the Ontario Conference of

Catholic Bishops (1989):

> We need to develop further and to articulate a Catholic philosophy of education for our times so that our distinctive vision of education will permeate every aspect of our curriculum and all dimensions of the learning process.

What is Catholic Education?

Defining what is meant by the term "Catholic Education" is no easy task, since it

encompasses many different facets of religious faith and pedagogy. Someone unfamiliar

with the Catholic Education system in Ontario may say that it is the obligatory daily

religious instruction, the celebration of mass, the crucifixes in every classroom, or

perhaps the wearing of uniforms among high school students or recitation of prayers

within the school which set Catholic schools apart from public schools. Yet, the root of

Catholic education is much deeper and much more complex than the more visible

symbols of Catholic schools mentioned above. The fundamental difference lies in the

affect, rather than the visible *effects* mentioned above. Many organizations and groups

have worked hard to create a defining basis or philosophy of Catholic education,

including the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE), the Catholic Curriculum

Cooperatives, the Ontario Council of Catholic Trustees, and various board-initiated

councils, just to name a few. Their examination of the definition of Catholic Education

contains the following commonalties:

1. Christ-centeredness

The most obvious defining factor in Catholic Education is that its learners and staff share a faith in God and Jesus Christ. Students in a Catholic system are not only learners, but believers, who look to the life and message of Jesus Christ as the ultimate influence in their daily endeavours. "This personal invitation to follow Christ is the mainstay of our religious tradition" (Institute for Catholic Education 1996, 21).Catholic Education fosters the development of the awareness of the presence of God in every living thing, in every word and in every action.

2. The Importance of Church and Community

The Catholic Education system itself is modeled on and influenced by the Church. Catholic Education is "communal in nature" (Trafford 1998) in that the home-school-parish connection is reinforced whenever possible. Students, staff, and clergy often come together as a community of learners to celebrate the Eucharist, to pray, and to read the word of God. This emphasis on community encourages the fundamental Christian belief that people are created to care for others and to live in unity with all those around them.

3. Social Responsibility

This element is closely tied with the above emphasis on community. Learners in a Catholic School community are encouraged to contribute to and to search for a larger common good:

> The Catholic School educates its students in a social responsibility that is counter to the mores of individualism and social indifference that permeate much of our culture. (Institute for Catholic Education 1996)

Students are taught to live a life in service to the well-being of others, as Jesus preached in His Gospel message. This concept of Christian citizenship is seen through the incorporation of volunteer service into course requirements long before the present government's initiatives, as well as through such activities as food drives, charity sponsorships and the many extra-curricular clubs dedicated to peace and social justice. Catholic Education also promotes the development of critical thinking skills which help the students to address such important social issues as abortion and euthanasia within a Catholic perspective. However, it is important to note that students are not taught that the Catholic way is the only way. Rather, "being Catholic entails an abiding love for all people ... it welcomes human diversity and is open to learn from other traditions" (Groome 1980, 413). A vital element in the development of social responsibility is the respect and care for all others, as Jesus taught.

4. Moral and Spiritual Development

The Catholic Education system also promotes the development of moral and spiritual values based on the Gospel. Values such as faith, hope, love for oneself and others, forgiveness, honesty, and courage are present not only within the curriculum, but also in the very fabric of the education system. Students are encouraged to pursue a way of living based on the teachings of Jesus, and in this way, education becomes a vocation.

5. History and Tradition

Another defining element of Catholic Education is its endeavour to preserve a rich tradition of faith. The history of Catholicism is not limited to that of the Gospels; in fact , it extends as far back as the Old Testament since the history of the Israelites is also part of the history of present-day Catholics. Catholic learners and educators are encouraged to share and renew stories as a community through the Scriptures so that the tradition of faith can be passed from previous generations to those of the present and future. Tradition is "a reliable source of wisdom, but far from stymieing reason, invites it; far from asking blind obedience, requires critical appropriation..." (Groome 1980, 244). In this way, one can present the past in such a way as to enrich the present.

In essence, the main distinction between Catholic and public education is that Catholic schools are committed not only to educating the mind, but also to educating the soul. Although both systems are equally committed to learning excellence and providing the best possible education for today's students, Catholic education is more holistic. It does not subscribe to the merely functional purpose of education which entails preparing students solely for the world of work. Rather, it is intent upon developing the whole person - mind, body, and soul. The Ontario Council of Catholic Bishops (1989) encapsulates this idea best :

> Thus, although Catholic Education must prepare students to live in this culture and to embrace all that is good in it, this effort should not be reduced simply to learning how to adapt to the world.

The Catholic Worldview and its Relevance to Catholic Curriculum

Just as Catholic Education is distinct, so is Catholic Curriculum. Of course,

Catholic Curriculum contains the same basic guidelines, resources, expectations and tools

as its public counterpart. However, Catholic curriculum must reflect the distinct nature of

Catholic education, and cannot limit itself to the scant Ministry definition of Curriculum

as "a plan for student learning which is implemented in schools" (1998). To compensate

for this lack of definition, Larry Trafford developed the term "worldview" when referring

to Catholic Curriculum.:

> ...Curriculum is best described, in its broadest sense, as a worldview shaped
> by Catholic conversation about life's meaning and purpose...Reference to a
> distinctive worldview suggests that those who are Roman Catholic see the
> world in a unique way. (Trafford 1998, 12)

The five concepts in the worldview outlined below each contain a connection to

curriculum which should be clearly evident in any courses/units written for use in

Catholic schools.

Concept One -- The Presence of God

Since God is the Creator and is forever present, Curriculum should promote a

spiritual growth in all learners so that they may live a virtuous life in accordance with the

message of God given to human beings in the person of Jesus. The skills and attitudes

presented in Catholic Curriculum should help learners attain this spiritual discernment.

Concept Two -- The Dignity of the Human Person

God is present within each person, thus every human being deserves to be treated

with dignity and respect. Catholic curriculum must be humane in nature, and encourage

all learners to develop their individual talents and gifts by exposing them to different

forms of knowledge found in the humanities, arts, and sciences.

Concept Three -- The Call to Life in Community

God did not create people to be alone, rather, human existence depends on one's

relationship with God and with others. Therefore, curriculum must promote cooperation

among groups and the need to promote the common good through social service and

responsibility.

Concept Four -- Reverence and Stewardship of the Planet

Since God created the world, human beings have a responsibility to live in harmony

with nature and to work to protect it. Catholic curriculum should emphasize the

interrlelatedness of all living things and the call to work as agents of social change . In

this way, learning becomes transformative.

Concept Five -- The Call to a Specific History

Knowledge of both secular and theological history help people shape the future.

Catholic learners should be exposed to global and cultural issues as well as to the history

of the Catholic tradition. The skills and material taught should give students the ability to

apply and transfer knowledge, to recognize commonalties in world events, and to distinguish between local and global affairs, as well as between personal and political issues. The ultimate goal is the learner's awareness of the connection between gospel values and those of the society in which they live.

Writing Catholic Curriculum

The actual process of writing curriculum for Catholic schools is not unlike that of public schools. Ministry documents must be consulted, knowledge, skills, and affect must be taken into consideration, expectations must be outlined, resources must be gathered, evaluation methods must be delineated -- it is a process which requires much time and organization. However, Catholic educators need to ensure that all the elements of the philosophy of Catholic Education and the Catholic worldview, as mentioned previously, are incorporated into any curriculum written. According to the "Catholic Curriculum" document prepared by the Ontario English Catholic Teacher's Association (OECTA), curriculum "reflects and gives shape to the worldview that the learning community offers as a response to the abiding human quest as to life's purpose and meaning". Catholic educators and curriculum writers agree that religious and spiritual values should not be confined to the religion class alone (Mulligan 1999, 210).

The Institute for Catholic Education (ICE), is at the forefront of developing guidelines for writing Catholic Curriculum in Ontario. Its publications are widely used and implemented in many, if not all, Catholic school boards across the province. Its document "Curriculum Matters -- A Resource for Catholic Educators" (Institute for

Catholic Education 1996) outlines the initial step that should be taken when writing curriculum for Catholic schools.

This first such step is to "Establish the Catholic terms of reference of the curriculum task" (27). Here, the curriculum writers should set out the purpose or parameters of the course or unit to be designed, including the Catholic terms of reference which are to be included. The writers of the document argue that Catholic educators cannot assume that one could simply "plug in" key phrases about Catholicity once a unit is complete. To assume so would be to "undermine the very integrity of curriculum writing for Catholic schools" (28). The viability of Catholic curriculum must be preserved, therefore it is important to determine these terms of reference at the beginning of the process.

There are three possible terms of reference or types of curriculum outlined . The first possibility is termed "curriculum separation" (28) and refers to a program where the study of religions functions as a separate area of learning, such as in a Religion course for secondary school students. The second type of curriculum is referred to as "curriculum permeation", where the materials address the role of the culture of the Catholic school. Examples of this term of reference would be materials which examine the nature of liturgical celebrations within the school, a program to establish greater community contacts, or the faith development of staff members. Thirdly, there is "curriculum integration", which addresses the transformative or holistic features of curriculum, incorporating the faith in order to create connections between the subject matter and other wider issues or "life problems" (30). However, one must exercise caution when applying

curriculum integration, so as not to force ideas into subject matter for the sole purpose of

integration itself. The ICE gives an excellent example to illustrate this issue:

> To develop a unit theme based on "journeys" from the different program
> areas of Language, Self and Society, and Religion allows for an authentic
> curriculum fit. To state, explain and use the Pythagorean Theorem and then
> instruct teachers to tell their students that Pythagoras was religious does not.
> (Institute For Catholic Education 1996, 31)

In order to ensure authentic curriculum integration, the ICE suggests looking for

pathways to God in existing program areas. Curriculum writers can do so by considering

whether there is anything in the subject matter that "allows for the discovery of God as

part of the learning dynamic" (32). The Arts, Languages, and Self and Society are natural

outlets for this sort of integration.

Another way of ensuring proper integration is to incorporate the moral foundation

of the faith into the subject matter whenever possible (33). This can be done by

combining the church's moral teachings directly into the instructional material of certain

subject areas, especially in subjects or courses that involve discussions about such topics

as human rights, war, evolution, reproductive technology, current events, racism, and

politics, among others. This moral integration can also be achieved through the school's

co-curricular activities such as food drives and peer counseling and mentoring. Again, the

ultimate goal must be <u>authentic</u> integration.

Catholic Curriculum Specific to English and Language Arts

English and Language Arts are subject areas in which Gospel values and the

Catholic Worldview can be easily and naturally incorporated. All forms of literature can

easily serve as points of departure for meaningful dialogue about many different issues:

> Through poetry and narrative, drama and media, God's creative and liberating
> actions are revealed to each generation in both spoken and written forms.
> Language serves not only as the pathway of communication between people
> but as the primary form of encounter between God and humanity as well.
> (Institute for Catholic Education 1996, 33)

The Ontario Curriculum Cooperative, in cooperation with the Institute for Catholic

Education has developed "Blueprints for Catholic Course Profiles" (n.d).

The document is composed of profiles for specific subject areas and contains the overall

expectations which should be incorporated into curriculum and unit design, as well as

specific examples that can be integrated into classroom practice. The Foreword of this

document states that "these blueprints serve as a template from which units and courses

of study can be developed in various subject areas and in a way that enforces the

profound Catholic character of the discipline" . Although the blueprints are developed as

a resource tool for writing subject-specific curriculum in Catholic secondary schools, its

expectations and examples are certainly applicable to that of Catholic elementary schools,

especially at the Intermediate level (grades seven and eight).

According to the blueprints, there are three main expectations, under the heading

"Vision of the Learner", for the graduate of English in a Catholic school. The first

expectation requires the graduate to be an "effective communicator" who "collaborates

sensitively and respectfully" with others (Catholic Curriculum Cooperative n.d, 9). These expectations can be fulfilled through activities that involve group problem-solving, collaboration within the classroom and community, and creating presentations and written pieces based on the literature studied.

The second expectation focuses on critical thinking skills and the ability to use language to "examine, evaluate, and critique various texts and synthesize them with personal, world, and Christian experience" (10) . The emphasis here is on identifying and reflecting upon the values and themes which are presented in literature and on effectively recognizing the presence or absence of Gospel values in various works. Activities such as debating and analyzing certain social issues and injustices presented in literature figure prominently in the fulfillment of this expectation.

Through the study of English, the graduate, according to the third expectation or vision of the learner in the blueprint, "is expected to be a caring family member and responsible citizen who realizes the dignity of the human person, understanding that each is created in the image of God..." (10). This final vision is a culmination of the elements of Catholic education and the Catholic worldview. It involves the application of values presented in literature to the students' personal lives and experiences.

The above expectations for English reflect the transformative and holistic nature of the Catholic Educational Philosophy. Although the activities presented are all in keeping with the requirements laid out by the Ontario Ministry of Education, the fundamental purpose of English in Catholic schools is "to create literate, responsive, and responsible Christians" (Catholic Curriculum Cooperative n.d, 9).

Evaluating the Catholic Content of Curriculum Units

A necessary step in the curriculum writing process, whatever the discipline, involves looking back upon the completed material and critically analyzing and reflecting upon the effectiveness of its content before actual classroom implementation. The Institute for Catholic Education recognizes the importance of this task. Larry Trafford, of the Institute for Catholic Education, recognizes the importance of evaluation in the overall curriculum writing process. He states that validation checklists should be provided to anyone involved in curriculum design in order to "determine whether or not the Catholic character of the course is evident explicitly or implicitly" (Trafford 1998, 24) . He then provides examples of possible questions to be included in such a checklist, some of which include:

- Are major church documents available and utilized to ensure authenticity in course content where appropriate?

- Are current social issues (i.e. racism, abortion, violence against women) recognized and taught in the course from a Catholic moral and ethical perspective?

- Are the skills being taught in this course consistent with behaviors suitable to a Catholic worldview?

This checklist can be used to effectively evaluate and reflect upon the appropriateness of the curriculum content, all in keeping with the philosophies and principles of Catholic educational and curriculum.

Conclusion

It is imperative that Catholic schools continuously assert their uniqueness through

the constant practice and application of the elements of the Catholic worldview. These

elements of Catholic Educational Philosophy must not only be present in curriculum, but

also, they must manifest themselves within every facet of the system itself. There are

many ways in which the Catholic worldview can permeate the Catholic School

Community:

- Symbols of the Catholic faith (i.e. crucifixes, appropriate pictures and prayers) should be visible throughout all Catholic classrooms, schools, and school board buildings. Many boards have also developed special logos and mission statements which are displayed within schools and on any official school or board documents.

- The parish should continue to be the main community contact of each school, and communal unity and faith should be fostered by regular, relevant liturgical celebrations with the whole school community.

- Service within the community by students should be encouraged as often as possible, through fund-raisers, volunteering, social awareness events, food drives, and other charitable and benevolent acts to promote social responsibility among students and within the community itself.

- Parental support is vital. There should be a conscious, on-going effort to educate parents about the importance of Catholic Education and to get them involved within the schools as much as possible.

- Most importantly, all Catholic educators should themselves believe in the mission of Catholic Education. "Catholic Education works best in those schools staffed by teachers who consider teaching to be ministry and vocation just as much as profession or job" (Mulligan 1999, 65) Faith formation sessions should be encouraged as an integral part of professional development among staff. A consistent, positive commitment and attitude will most certainly influence the students themselves.

The application of the suggestions mentioned above, combined with the principles identified in this chapter, will help ensure the unique character of Catholic schools . The survival of the existing system depends upon it. In the words of father James Mulligan, noted Catholic educator and proponent of Catholic education: "The Future is Now".

CHAPTER TWO

PROFILE OF AN EARLY ADOLESCENT LEARNER

In educational circles, grade seven and eight students have many monikers.

They are called "emerging adolescents", "transescents", "young adolescents",

"middlescents", "preadolescents", "early adolescents", even "'tweenagers". Their

educational level is referred to as the "middle school years", the "intermediate

level" , and more recently, the "transition years". It is actually quite fitting that

these special students have so many different names, especially when one considers

their multi-faceted personalities and seemingly forever-fluctuating moods. One day,

they may be demanding independence, yet the next day, they may be seeking adult

guidance and protection. One moment, they may be bustling with energy, the next,

they may be lethargic and sleepy. A topic that may motivate them one day may be

considered boring the next. A good-natured disposition could easily give way to

irritability. One could go on and on citing the dichotomies which characterize the

grade seven and eight student. The Illinois Junior High Principals' Association

gives a truly accurate and all-encompassing description of the emerging adolescent:

> Confused by self-doubt, plagued with forgetfulness, addicted to extreme fads,
> preoccupied with peer status, disturbed about physical development, aroused
> by psychological impulses, stimulated by mass media communication,
> comforted by daydreams, chafed by restrictions, loaded with purposeless
> energy, bored by routine, irked by social amenities, veneered with "wise
> cracks", insulated from responsibility, labelled with delinquency, obsessed
> with personal autonomy, but destined to years of economic dependency, early

adolescents undergo a critical and frequently stormy period in their lives. (in Oppenheimer 1990, 22)

This socially complex group of individuals is in a sort of educational limbo in that they are too old to be grouped with primary and junior -level children, and too young to be considered on the same intellectual platform as secondary school students. They truly are "education's stepchildren" (Klingele 1979, 18) in that there is not a lot of educational emphasis placed on them in terms of research, despite the emphasis on middle schools in the late 1970's and early 1980's, and despite the fact that many teachers would be quick to name grades seven and eight as among the most challenging levels to teach. Jo Oppenheimer's examination of the needs of the emerging adolescent for the Federation of Women Teachers of Ontario (1990) confirms the lack of knowledge and resources for this age group. Therefore, it is vital that teachers understand the physical, emotional and cognitive changes occurring within the emerging adolescent in order to develop effective teaching practices and to assume an appropriate teacher role for this unique group of young people. This chapter will outline these developmental changes and discuss the implications of these changes for Intermediate level teachers.

Physical Development

From a period of relative stability in the middle childhood years, the young adolescent rather suddenly begins to experience major physical changes and rapid growth which occurs as a result of the onset of puberty. Most boys reach the stage

of puberty by the age of fourteen or fourteen and a half, while girls reach that point

somewhat earlier, at an average age of about twelve and a half or thirteen (Kindred

et al. 1981, 25). Puberty results in the onset of what is known as the adolescent

growth spurt. Major organs and muscles are growing so quickly, that physical

tension and exhaustion are often the result. During this time, the following

physical and hormonal changes occur in both boys and girls (Toronto Observation

Project 1994, quoted in Oppenheimer 1990, 23):

- development of longer arms and legs, resulting in awkwardness

- weight gain (girls gain an average of thirty pounds while boys gain an average of forty)

- increased strength due to the increased density in the wrists, ankles, ribs, shoulders, and pelvic bones

- increased heart size and lung capacity

- changes in facial features

- increased appetite, especially for improper foods

- fluctuations in basal metabolism resulting in varying periods of restlessness and lethargy

- glandular imbalances which may lead to acne, allergies, dental and eye defects

- temporary chemical imbalance which may lead to extreme changes in mood

- the appearance of body and facial hair

- the onset in menstruation, development of breasts and wider hips in girls

- increased muscle tone, deepened voice, and broader shoulders in boys

Intellectual and Cognitive Development

Just as the physical development of the young adolescent occurs at different rates, so too does intellectual development . These cognitive changes are best described using the extensive and well-known theories of Jean Piaget. According to Piaget, cognitive development occurs in four stages: the sensori-motor stage (from 0 - 2 years of age), the pre-operational stage (from 2 - 7 years of age), the concrete operational stage (from 7 - 11 years of age, and the formal operational stage (from 11- 15 years of age). When children are able to learn a unique set of thought patterns and behavior (referred to as *schemata)* through a process of organization, adaptation, assimilation and accommodation, they can progress to the next stage . This progression is invariable, and all children pass through each of the four stages in precisely the same order, regardless of their level of intelligence or their rate of learning (Borich and Tombari 1997, 43). Also, there is no implication by Piaget that children *should* pass through a particular stage at a given age. The ages mentioned indicate the times at which children normally experience the stages, according to the results of his observations (Curtis and Bidwell 1977, 63).

Most young adolescents are in the latter two stages of cognitive development: the **concrete operational stage** (usually occurring from seven to eleven years of age), and the **formal operational stage** (from twelve to fifteen years of age). During the stage of concrete operations, children acquire the schemata to perform concrete mathematical processes such as ordering, classifying , reversibility, and thinking in symbols. They can

solve problems only in concrete situations, using items they can see or touch. In the

formal operational stage, students can logically solve problems containing abstract ideas.

At this stage, the child has achieved "maximal qualitative cognitive ability" (Curtis and

Bidwell 1977, 63). The emerging adolescent can now see alternate possibilities and

values, and predict the possible implications to actions and ideas. Students at this age

and stage of development exhibit the following characteristics (Oppenheimer 1990, 24):

an intense curiosity

- the emerging ability to think in symbolic terms

- the emerging ability to make judgments and hypothesize

- the emerging ability to participate in philosophical discussion

- the emerging ability to draw upon past experience and history in order to plan
  for the future

- an increasing interest in social issues

- the emerging ability to look at and combine reactions in a situation on order to
  make a decision

Social and Emotional Development

Pre-adolescents are socially complex individuals who exhibit a wide range of

emotional and social characteristics which constantly fluctuate as they endeavour to

establish their true identities, gain independence from adult authority, and conform to

perceived social norms. Curtis and Bidwell (1977) quote Margaret Mead as saying,

"junior high school students are more unlike each other than they have ever been before

or ever will be again in the course of their lives"(34). Their emotional instability stems not only from hormonal fluctuations, but also from the tension and anxiety that they experience as they try to establish a place for themselves in the adult world.

One of the main sources of pre-adolescent anxiety is the quest for independence in an environment where adults are still very much in control. Young adults want to be able to make their own decisions, even in situations for which they are not quite ready. As a result, conflicts with authority figures such as parents and teachers are likely to occur. "Transescents become increasingly able to assume responsibility but tend to desire the security of not having to accept consequences of mistakes" (Klingele 1979, 22).

As their parental dependence begins to wane, the most secure environment for young adults is with their peers. It is at this stage that peers become more influential than adult figures, and as a result, peer pressure may lead young adults into actions with which they may not be quite comfortable. The peer group establishes its own values and interests that can be influenced by outside factors such as school and home. "Young adolescent morality is based on what they have absorbed from the society around them rather than from their own thoughts" (Toronto Observation Project 1984 quoted in Oppenheimer 1990, 24). However, when pressure by peers conflicts with the desire to please adults, additional tension may result (Klingele 1979, 23).

The transescent's need for belonging and conformity can often be at odds with their desire for individuality. Often, those who do not conform are criticized and ridiculed, and even those who belong to a group often fear rejection (Oppenheimer 1990, 23). These young people are often highly competitive, whether it be in the areas of academics, sports,

popularity, or regarding members of the opposite sex. Although being a part of a peer

group is of utmost importance, so too is the need for recognition as distinct individuals.

Curtis and Bidwell (1977, 33) have summarized the socio-emotional characteristics

of young adults as follows:

1.Tension due to developmental differences

2. Ambivalence

3. Sex-role conflicts

4. Restlessness

5. Introspection

6. Idealism

7. Enthusiasm

8. Negative attitudes

Implications for Teachers

The vast changes occurring in the young adult as a result of physical, intellectual

and social development carry many implications and challenges for teachers of this age

group. Teachers must remember that they are one of the most important adult role models

in the young adult's life, and must therefore conduct themselves accordingly, since

students who respect their teachers often try to emulate their behaviour and habits. The

teacher's role must be one of a supportive, understanding surrogate parent who provides

a structured, non-threatening learning environment and who imposes appropriate limits

and consequences. Every effort should be made to get to know students on a personal

level, so that any at-risk students can be identified promptly. The teacher should also be approachable so that the students will feel comfortable speaking to him or her about social and personal issues in addition to academic matters. Many sources also cite the importance of a sense of humour when dealing with emerging adolescents. Most importantly, the teacher should act as a "*facilitator* (emphasis mine) of behavioural change" (Kindred et al 1981, 55), knowledge, and curricula rather than as a traditional inaccessible *transmitter* of facts.

In addition to the obvious effects that the emerging adolescent's physical development will have on physical education classes and extra-curricular activities such as sports and dances, there are also implications for the regular classroom. Because of the physical weariness that may occur due to hormonal changes associated with the adolescent growth spurt, teachers should observe students for signs of strain, which often manifest themselves through hyperactivity and restlessness rather than through obvious weariness (Curtis and Bidwell 1977, 30). In-class activities should be structured in such as way as to allow for physical movement . Rather than having students sit silently for most of the day, a variety of different activities would be beneficial. When long lessons are unavoidable, providing for a stretch break can help refocus attention.

It is important that teachers remember that all young people are different and attain the formal operational stage at varying times. Therefore, it is vital that teachers take into account cognitive differences among individual students. It would be futile to incorporate abstract concepts into lessons if many students have not yet attained this level of thinking. Early in the year, the teacher should emphasize the concrete and slowly introduce more

abstract ideas and logic as the year progresses, in keeping with the process of cognitive

growth itself. Since intellectual growth occurs when students build upon previous

personal experience by assimilating and accommodating new schemata, "school

experiences must be rooted in the child's past experiences, whether these are from school,

the environment, or both" (Kindred et al. 1981, 52). Teachers should also include a wide

variety of tasks in the curriculum and emphasize problem solving, not only in the

traditional area of mathematics, but also in all subject areas .

Because of the social complexities and conflicting values and emotions that are a

major part of the young adult experience, it is vital that the teachers provide a secure,

stable classroom and school environment for students. In such an environment, young

adults can flourish because they feel comfortable taking risks and making decisions

without fear of reprisal or rejection. In order to ensure this comfort and security, there

must be an insistence on respect for others coupled with consistent praise and recognition

for positive efforts. Joan Lipsitz contends that the following characteristics should also be

promoted to encourage and aid in social development among students:

> self -discipline, industriousness, respect for authority, perseverance, patience,
> honesty, the ability to work towards goals, a sense of respect for self and others,
> assertiveness, enthusiasm and interest in learning, communication skills, generosity
> towards others, empathy, flexibility, trust, the ability to work with others and alone,
> an awareness about and concern for larger social issues, the ability to define one's
> sex role and racial role, the ability to derive strength from oneself, others, the arts,
> sports, knowledge, beautiful things... (Lipsitz 1984 in Oppenheimer 1990, 37)

Many of the above goals can be achieved by allowing for interaction among students

through cooperative learning activities, class discussions, supervised social extra-

curricular activities, and student involvement in school affairs and decisions.

Self-esteem plays a pivotal role in the socio-emotional development of young

adults. A student with a positive self-concept is:

- more willing to take risks

- more responsible

- more confident with decision-making

- more likely to treat others with respect

- able to work harmoniously with others (Kindred et al. 1981, 20)

- more accepting of others' differences

Students who suffer from a low self-concept are more likely to be withdrawn,

socially isolated, ridiculed by peers, apathetic, and prone to mental-health problems and

acts of violence. It is very important that these students are identified early so the proper

measures may be taken to help improve their self-esteem. These measures may be as

simple as giving extra praise and opportunities for success, or they may involve the

contacting of youth workers, chaplains, or guidance counselors. The significance of self-

esteem is conveyed very effectively through the following questions by Arthur W.

Combs:

> How can a person feel liked unless somebody likes him?
> How can a person feel wanted unless somebody wants him?
> How can a person feel acceptable unless somebody accepts him?
> How can a person feel able unless somewhere he has some success?
> How can a person feel important unless he is important to someone?
> (in Kindred et al 1981, 20)

The questions mentioned above go hand in hand with Maslow's hierarchy of basic

needs (1954, 1970 in Borich and Tombari 1997, 214). Maslow asserts that in order to

reach one's highest potential (self-actualization), one's basic needs must first be satisfied. These lower-order basic needs are arranged in the following hierarchical order:

- physiological needs (such as food and drink)

- the need for safety and security

- the need for belongingness, acceptance and affiliation

- the need for self-esteem through recognition, approval, and competence

Interestingly enough, the needs mentioned by Maslow correspond to many of the elements which contribute to the positive environment necessary for maximum learning and growth among young adults.

Another important factor which can ensure a successful learning environment is teacher self-assessment. With the current academic and extra-curricular demands placed on educators, it is especially important that teachers remember to take an honest look at their practice, and make any necessary changes. Judy Reinhartz and Don Beach (1983 in Oppenheimer 1990, 41) have developed a set of questions to assist teachers in assessing their responses to the needs of middle school students. Some of the questions include:

- Do I understand the physical and emotional changes that occur in the preadolescent?

- Do I provide opportunities within my classroom for independence and responsibility for each student?

- Do I provide opportunities for students to feel a sense of belonging to the class or peer group?

- Do I help students overcome self-consciousness about physical changes, awkwardness, and restlessness?

- Do I help my students through my actions and assignments to be lifelong learners?

- Do I provide opportunities for students to make decisions based on a value system?

These questions take into account the physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional needs of the students and assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of the teacher's actions and assignments. Self-evaluation using tools and questions such as the ones mentioned above is certainly a valuable practice for all educators.

Conclusion

There is much more to teaching than simply delivering curriculum material to a group of students. Truly effective teachers realize that the main goal of the profession involves the education of the **whole person.** The word "educate" comes from the Latin word "educare", which means "to rear". In essence, that is exactly what teachers are doing; acting *in loco parentis* in order to impart knowledge and values onto the young people under their care. One cannot perform this important task unless he or she is truly aware of the student's physical, emotional, social, and intellectual needs. It is only when these needs are taken into consideration that appropriate programs and curriculum can be developed and delivered.

CHAPTER THREE

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ONTARIO CURRICULUM FOR GRADE EIGHT LANGUAGE ARTS

In 1997, the Ontario Ministry of Education, in keeping with the provincial

government's plan for educational reform, developed curriculum documents for each of

the subjects taught in Ontario elementary schools. The new curricula replaced the

previous <u>Common Curriculum</u> documents which were developed by the governing New

Democrats in 1995. The Ontario Curriculum document for Language (1997) is a fifty-two

page booklet containing the specific expectations for Language Arts from grades one to

eight. A separate document has since been developed for use in secondary schools for

grades nine and ten. Although the introduction and initial implementation of the new

Ontario Curriculum was not without controversy, the documents are now an integral tool

in educational planning and assessment throughout the province.

Layout of the Language Curriculum Document

The curriculum was not developed solely for use by teachers. Rather, it is intended

for use by educators, administrators, parents and the general public. It is easily accessible

at any school or through the Ministry web site. Copies are usually available at provincial

constituency offices as well. The format and organization of the document is designed to

be user-friendly, partly due to the recent emphasis on community and parental

involvement in education and, perhaps, in response to concerns about the previous

Common Curriculum stating that it was obscured by educational lingo that prevented the general public from understanding its contents. This is certainly not the case with the Ontario Curriculum. The document begins with an Introduction that defines the purpose, importance and features of the language curriculum. Also, it outlines the role of parents, students and teachers, discusses the new achievement levels used to evaluate progress, and includes brief sections on providing for students with special needs. The curriculum expectations are divided into the three learning areas (or "strands") of Reading, Writing, and Oral and Visual Communication, and contain a page of expectations for each grade level in each strand. The document concludes with a section entitled "Explanatory Notes" which contains definitions and examples in order to provide further assistance and clarification for readers.

Rationale and Features

According to the Curriculum's Introduction, the document was developed in order to provide students with a more rigorous and challenging Language program which sets high standards for each grade. Skills are introduced earlier than they were in the previous Common Curriculum, and there is a new focus on grammar, spelling, punctuation, and phonics, showing that the previous trends towards whole language programming are no longer supported. Accountability and consistency are key, since expectations are now the same for each student throughout Ontario and parents will know exactly what their children are expected to learn in each grade. This consistency also facilitates standardized

testing and allows for easier adaptation of students who change schools or relocate to different regions in the province.

Employability, also, seems to be a priority according to the Ontario Curriculum. Rather than focusing on the more holistic benefits of language learning, the government is taking a more pragmatic approach to education. The very first lines of the Language document state that students:

> ...require knowledge and skills that will help them compete in a global economy and allow them to lead lives of integrity and satisfaction, both as citizens and as individuals. (Ontario Ministry of Education 1997, 3)

The document also mentions that "teachers will pay particular attention to skills needed in the workplace" (6), that "teachers will help students... understand that language skills are employability skills that are important in many careers" (7), and that "through language learning, students acquire skills that are essential in the workplace..." (7).

Although language skills are described as being the gateway to the world of work according to the curriculum, the importance of self-expression and literary appreciation is also mentioned. The expectations for each grade often make mention of using language "for a variety of purposes" and of being exposed to the many different forms and genres of language and literature. The Ministry of Education recognizes that students should :

> ...experience the expressive and communicative power of language and come to appreciate language as both a source of pleasure and an important medium for recording and communicating ideas and information. (5)

The Role of Parents, Teachers, and Students

The Language document's introduction has a specific section outlining the role of parents in their children's education. It rightly mentions the results of numerous studies which show that a student's academic performance is directly related to the amount of parental involvement in his or her education (4). Parents are encouraged to take an active role in their children's education by becoming aware of the expectations and curriculum, by providing support and encouragement at home, by attending parent-teacher conferences, and by working on the school council. It is strongly recommended that parents read through all the expectations for each grade, in order to familiarize themselves with the language learning process as a whole (4).

The responsibilities of teachers and students are also outlined in the curriculum's introduction. While teachers are responsible for "developing a range of instructional strategies based on sound learning theory" (4) while providing for individual differences and special needs within the classroom, students also have expectations that complement those of the teacher. According to the document,

> Good students have learned that attention and a willingness to work hard will enable them to develop the skills, knowledge, creativity, and personal qualities that good programs can foster . (4)

Students are expected to take responsibility for their own academic progress, regardless of their age and situation.

Expectations in Writing for Grade Eight

In the Ontario Curriculum's approach to writing, the following skills are emphasized for all grades:

- conventions such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation

- the conventions of style, form, and presentation

- expressing ideas clearly and creatively

- critical thinking skills

- the importance of the stages of the writing process (brainstorming, planning, writing drafts, revising, editing, and using various publishing methods)

Expectations for each grade are divided into sections outlining the overall expectations for the grade and the expectations in more specific areas such as grammar and punctuation.

Summary of Overall Expectations by the End of Grade Eight

Students will:

- communicate for a wide range of purposes, in a variety of contexts, and for different audiences

- produce different types of writing , sentence structures, and media texts

- use the writing process to revise and edit their work, focusing on the correct use of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and vocabulary

Summary of Specific Skills in Writing

- Grammar -- correct use of pronouns and complex sentence structures

- Punctuation -- correct use of periods, commas, quotation marks, ellipsis, and dashes

- Spelling -- use of generalizations about spelling to form unfamiliar and technical words

- Word Use and Vocabulary Building -- appropriate and creative use of "words with increasing sophistication and effectiveness" (26)

- Visual Presentation -- correct use of italics, underlining, bold type, spreadsheets, and other computer-generated formats

(based on pages 25 and 26 of the <u>Ontario Curriculum Grades 1-8: Language</u>, 1997)

Expectations in Reading for Grade Eight

In the reading strand of the language curriculum, the emphasis is on effective

reading skills not only for academic and career purposes, but for personal pleasure as

well. It is important that students read a wide range of different materials so that they can

develop the "skills needed to process, analyze, and absorb information, and to think

clearly, creatively, and critically" (27). The importance of a "well-balanced" reading

program and the development of a life-long love of reading is also emphasized. The

essential skills outlined for all grades in the reading process involve the ability to read for

particular purposes, the use of pre-reading strategies, the use of appropriate techniques to

analyze and interpret the content of a written work, and the ability to critically examine

ideas (28).

The reading section of the curriculum document also offers guidelines to assist in selecting appropriate reading materials for students. Pupils should be exposed to a variety of "high quality" fiction, non-fiction, and Canadian texts (28) . The reading materials recommended for grade seven and eight students according to the curriculum include:

- poetry

- myths and legends

- narrative forms such as novels, short stories, and historical fiction

- classics

- non-fiction such as biographies and auto-biographies, reports, short essays , articles, editorials, advertising copy

- plays and scripts for television and radio

(Ontario Ministry of Education 1997, 28)

As with the writing strand, the expectations for grade eight are divided into overall expectations and specific expectations.

Summary of Overall Expectations by the End of Grade Eight

Students will:

- read a variety of fiction and non-fiction materials independently and aloud, for different purposes

- select appropriate materials for a specific purpose

- explain their interpretation of a written text using textual evidence and personal experience

- understand appropriate vocabulary and use techniques to aid in comprehension

Summary of Specific Skills for Reading

- Reasoning and Critical Thinking -- identifying main ideas and supporting details in order to make judgments about the material, using appropriate reading strategies, examining the ideas of others, and conducting a research project

- Understanding of Form and Style -- identifying various forms and stylistic devices

- Knowledge of Language Structures -- using knowledge of grammar to aid in comprehension

- Vocabulary Building -- using a thesaurus and a variety of other strategies to determine meaning of unfamiliar terms

- Use of Conventions

(based on page 38 of The Ontario Curriculum Grades 1-8: Language, 1997)

Expectations for Oral and Visual Communication in Grade Eight

Oral and Visual Communication is the term used to refer to the skills of listening, speaking, and viewing, which, under the Common Curriculum, existed as separate strands in the Language Arts program. Once again, there is an emphasis on the presentation of a wide variety of situations in which students can develop their oral communication skills. The language program should include many "opportunities to engage in oral activities such as brainstorming, discussing strategies for problem-solving, debating issues, presenting and defending ideas, and offering critiques of the ideas of others" (Ontario Ministry of Education 1997, 39). Media communication skills are also given particular

attention, since an understanding of media "can greatly expand students' sources of

information, expressive and communicative capabilities, and career opportunities" (39).

Summary of Overall Expectations for Oral and Visual Communication in Grade Eight

Students will:

- listen attentively to instructions and various oral texts in order to organize or explain information

- clearly and concisely express ideas independently and in group situations

- identify, analyze, and create media works

- appropriately and effectively use the conventions of oral language as well as various media

Summary of Specific Skills for Oral and Visual Communication

- Use of Words and Oral Language Structures -- identifying and using types of speech, and specialized vocabulary

- Non-verbal communication skills -- using tone of voice, body language, and visual aids to accentuate an oral presentation or conversation

- Group skills -- using problem-solving skills, questioning techniques and cooperative learning skills when collaborating with others

- Media Communication Skills -- analyzing ,describing, creating and evaluating the various components of a media work and the necessary steps involved in its production

(based on page 47 of The Ontario Curriculum Grades 1-8: Language, 1997)

Conclusion

The Ontario Curriculum documents have generally been received favorably by parents, teachers and the general public because of its clear, specific expectations for each grade level. To aid in assessment and evaluation, the Ontario Ministry of Education has developed two further documents called "Exemplars" (2000). These documents, one for the Reading strand and one for Writing, provide samples of actual student work in each of the four achievement levels used to evaluate student progress. Teachers can use these samples as a benchmark when assessing their own students' work. On-going training and support from the Ministry of Education and through the school boards themselves has helped ensure that, for the first time in Ontario, there is consistency in student learning.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEVELOPING THE "JOURNEYS" UNIT: FOUNDATIONS AND RATIONALE

Curriculum development is no easy task; there are numerous factors that must be taken into account before the actual unit and lesson ideas can be created. Besides the more obvious considerations such as government expectations, student needs, and learning strategies lies a more fundamental question that must be resolved before any other planning can take place, that is, "To what specific curriculum orientation does the educator and the educational institution subscribe?" The challenge here is not only to define the particular orientation and beliefs regarding the essence of curriculum, but also to successfully amalgamate the philosophies of both the educator and the educational institution into a mutually acceptable curriculum unit that will result in an optimal learning situation and in the fulfillment of the expectations for the students involved. Once this has been accomplished, other factors such as objectives, format, and content can be considered, organized, and eventually implemented. This chapter outlines the process and theory involved in planning the grade eight "Journeys" unit.

There are many different views as to the definition of curriculum, each stemming from a particular educational philosophy. Of course, the definitions vary depending on the different educational perspective of its source. The word itself stems from the Latin "currere", meaning "to run". However, most believe that curriculum is far more than simply "running" a course of study. Doll (1993) sees curriculum as a "process of development, dialogue, inquiry, transformation" (13). Saylor and Alexander (1974)

define curriculum as "a plan for providing sets of learning opportunities to achieve broad goals and related specific objectives for an identifiable population served by a single school center" (in Miller and Seller 1990). Like Saylor and Alexander, the Ontario Ministry of Education also sees curriculum in terms of a plan, more specifically, "a plan for student learning which is implemented in schools" (1998). Miller and Seller (1990) as well as McNeil (1985) recognize that one's definition of curriculum is quite personal and have thus developed different definitions, each based on particular beliefs. The three orientations as outlined by Miller and Seller (1990) will be the basis of any further discussion about curriculum perspectives presented in this chapter.

Choosing a Curriculum Orientation

Miller and Seller identify three different curriculum orientations: transmission, transaction, and transformation. Each perspective is rooted in its own theory and educational practice. The following is an analysis of each of the positions and a consideration of their relevance to the "Journeys" unit.

Transmission Orientation

According to the transmission position, education involves the transmitting of skills, facts, and values to students. In this orientation, "the teacher is the active determiner of the learning environment and the student is the passive receptor" (Miller and Seller 1990, 23). The mind is seen as a tabula rasa, or "blank slate" which must be fed with information in a logical manner in order to achieve understanding. Its teaching strategies

involve traditional mastery learning and the use of the textbook as the main teaching tool. Many of the proponents and theorists behind this orientation such as Thorndike (1913), Friedman (1962), Skinner (1968) and Morrison (1940) propose that learning should be achieved if material is presented in a logical, sequential format, gradually increasing in difficulty. Mastery is achieved through constant reinforcement and repetition. A subject orientation, as opposed to an integrated curriculum, is the favored method of content organization for this orientation.

Franklin Bobbit's ideas in support of the transmission position are interesting in that they reflect the ideology of the current Ministry of Education (see Chapter Three). Bobbit contends that the purpose of education is to prepare students for the activities and experiences they will encounter in their adult lives (Miller and Seller 1990, 39) and likens the educational process to a manufacturing industry in which the focus is on the creation of a product formed according to strict standards. He argues that curriculum should consist of activities that are easily quantifiable and of skills that can be easily identified and compared to a standard. The standards themselves should be developed in collaboration with the business and manufacturing industries (in Miller and Seller 1990, 39). This emphasis on "the world of work", on standards, and on consistent evaluation procedures is precisely that of the current Ontario Curriculum. Miller and Seller's "Transmission Position Preamble" sounds eerily similar to the buzzwords and ideas being reiterated by the Ministry of Education:

> Our schools should prepare students for their proper role in society. Schools can accomplish this through an emphasis on basic literacy and computational skills and by inculcating in students values that bind our society together. In

our elementary schools, the basics should be taught ...Although other subjects such as art and music are important, the main emphasis in these formative years should be on mastery of the essential skills...(1990, 178)

Transaction Orientation

The transaction position is characterized by an emphasis on inquiry and problem-solving skills, and on the application of these skills to social contexts. Unlike in the transmission orientation, the student is seen as a rational individual capable of critical thinking while the teacher is seen as a facilitator in a democratic process of learning. Education is seen as an active process in which students readily participate. One of the pioneers of this type of orientation was John Dewey, who emphasized the scientific method as a means to analyzing and evaluating situations in order to make more informed and moral decisions. In his "Pedagogic Creed" (1897), Dewey stated that progress is measured not in the succession of new areas of study, but in "the development of new attitudes towards, and new interests in, experience" (in Miller and Seller 1990, 67).

One of the main characteristics of the transaction orientation is its intrinsically social quality. According to Dewey, by using the scientific method, education can "help direct the course of social change in a positive direction" (Miller and Seller 1990, 63). Through an active and democratic process, problem-solving strategies allow the student to analyze cases and situations with sensitivity, to discuss and defend his or her position in an "open and rational manner", and to demonstrate the ability to change his or her position after dialogue with others (103). Tyler (1949) also recognizes the importance of "learning by doing" and states that "learning takes place through the active behavior of

the student; it is what he does that he learns, not what the teacher does" (63). One must

see the school as a "form of community life", and by mirroring life in a more simplified

format, the student's sense of values can be developed.

The transaction orientation is also linked to the theories of developmental

psychology, which view life and cognitive growth as a series of developmental stages.

Teachers must be aware of the developmental differences among students and present

tasks accordingly. Questions and activities should be structured in such a way as to

stimulate moral and cognitive growth.

As with the transmission position, the transaction orientation could also be quite

relevant to the grade eight "Journeys" unit. As discussed in Chapter Two, grade eight

students are extremely social beings who are emerging in their ability to hypothesize and

make judgments. They are exhibiting an increasing interest in social issues and value

fairness. Thus, the active and democratic learning process as defined by the transaction

orientation could surely benefit the emerging adolescent.

The transaction position's emphasis on inquiry and on community and social

responsibility also mirrors that of the proponents of Catholic education, as mentioned in

Chapter One. The Catholic church promotes the development of critical thinking skills

which will help students address important social and moral issues later in life. One of the

main elements of a Catholic education is the importance of community, a quality that is

also imparted by the transaction orientation. Since the "Journeys" unit is geared towards

emerging adolescents in Catholic schools, the transaction approach seems entirely

appropriate.

Transformation Orientation

The transformation orientation is a humanistic approach to curriculum which emphasizes the importance of the development of the *whole* person and supports Huxley's "perennial philosophy" which views all individuals and matter as interconnected (in Miller and Seller 1990, 118). This appreciation of interrelatedness can in turn foster social development and effect social change.

In the transformation orientation, "the curriculum and student are seen to interpenetrate each other in a holistic manner" (Miller and Seller 1990, 8). Material is presented in terms of integrated units of study which allow for much choice and which incorporate different traditional subjects under one main theme. The role of the teacher is to cater to the physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs of each child and to build and nurture the students' self-esteem. Since each child is unique and teachers show respect for students as unique individuals, self-directed learning is the main teaching strategy. There is little or no competition in a class governed by the transformational approach, since students are responsible for their own learning and behavior, with self-evaluation as the main means of assessment. The transformational teaching style is best described by Carl Rogers (1980) who states:

> individuals have within themselves vast resources for self-understanding and
> for altering their self-concepts, basic attitudes, and self-directed behavior;
> these resources can be tapped if a definable climate of facilitative
> psychological attitudes can be provided (in Miller and Seller 1990, 128)

Although once-favored transformational teaching strategies such as subject integration, self-directed learning and whole language are no longer congruent with the stipulations as specified by the Ontario Ministry of Education, there is still a place for this curriculum orientation in a grade eight Catholic unit of study. One of the functions of Catholic Education is to develop in students the attitudes necessary to effect social change and to act against injustice in the world, much like the social-change orientation embraced by proponents of transformational curriculum. The Catholic Worldview as developed by Larry Trafford (1998) supports humanistic curriculum since it allows students to develop their individual God-given talents. The Institute for Catholic Education also supports the idea of the interrlatedness of living things and encourages the integration of Catholicity into the very fabric of curriculum in order to provide a true Catholic learning environment (Institute for Catholic Education 1996, 32). Since the fundamental goal of Catholic Education itself is the education of the whole person; mind body and soul, the philosophies and ideas of transformation orientation should also play a role in the "Journeys" unit.

Reaching a Consensus

Tyler (1949) states that the first main step when developing curriculum is to establish objectives and to consider various needs in order to determine what the objectives should be. Although my main objective is to create a unit that will respond to a need for grade eight Language Arts material as identified by my school board, I also need to consider the expectations of the Ontario Curriculum, the physical, emotional, social,

and spiritual needs of the students, the importance of inculcating the principles of Catholic Education, and my own personal philosophy of education. There is no one curriculum orientation that supports all of these considerations. The expectations of the Ministry of Education reflect a Transmission approach, while the transaction orientation addresses the unique developmental situation of the students to which the unit is geared and emphasizes the critical thinking skills and social awareness that I should be promoting as a Catholic educator. The transformational perspective also supports the philosophies of Catholic education, as well as some of my own personal beliefs regarding the importance of self-esteem and the development of the whole person. Tyler himself discusses the importance of including skills, knowledge, affect; physical, psychological, social and emotional needs; and balancing social needs with educational requirements. All of these factors fall within the realm of all three curriculum perspectives. Thus, the appropriate approach is to incorporate all three orientations into the unit in order to create a well-balanced, effective unit that satisfies all the objectives mentioned.

Ontario Curriculum Considerations

Since all public educators in the province of Ontario have a responsibility to provide students with opportunities to fulfill all the expectations outlined by the Ministry of Education in the <u>Ontario Curriculum,</u> it is essential that the grade eight expectations for Language Arts play a large role in the development and organization of the unit. The unit is only one of several that will be studied throughout the year, so it is not necessary, nor practical, to include all the expectations. Rather, it is important that all three strands

(reading, writing, oral and visual communication) are represented and that a variety of different genres are used (see Chapter Three). In order to facilitate teacher planning, the Ontario Ministry of Education has developed an "Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner" which is a software tool designed to assist teachers in organizing units using the new curriculum. This organizational structure will be the format used for the Journeys unit.

Incorporation of Catholic Principles

Since this unit is being designed for use in Catholic schools, it is essential that the principles of Catholic education be included as part of the student expectations and general premise of the unit itself. The philosophies, ideas, and resources mentioned in Chapter One will be used in order to create the unit. Larry Trafford, in Educating the Soul (1998) also presents a list of questions from the framework published by the Institute for Catholic Education (1996) that could be used by curriculum writing teams in order to ensure that the "Catholic character of the course is evident explicitly or implicitly" (24). Some of these questions include:

- Are current social issues (i.e. racism, abortion, violence against women) recognized and taught in the course from a Catholic moral and ethical perspective?

- Will this course assist students to develop loving relationships with self, God, others and creation?

- Are the skills being taught in this course consistent with behavior suitable to a Catholic worldview?

- Does this course invite students to develop critical skills concerning a culture of secularism?

- Will views be expressed in this course about communities, the interrelation of peoples, nations and cultures of the world, the Church, other churches, faiths or religions?

- Will this course promote the values and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth in the lives of the students?

These questions reflect the transactional and transformational elements of Catholic curriculum and are useful not only in the pre-planning stages of the unit, but also in the evaluation stage once the unit has been written. The word "course" could easily be substituted with "unit" for my purposes.

Rationale For a Generic Unit

It is challenging to create a unit of study for a school board that is so diverse. The

Niagara Catholic District School Board extends from Grimsby to Fort Erie and includes

many schools with many different needs and characteristics. Each individual grade eight

class also has a distinct personality with its own needs and resources. If one of the main

aims of this unit is to provide grade eight teachers with a resource that they can each use,

then it must be flexible and more or less generic in nature and content. If this is so,

teachers may choose the materials and lessons on which they wish to focus, they may use

their own materials and resources (particularly where novels are concerned), and they

may choose their own timeline. Since the lessons will not be over specific, it will be

easier for teachers to make modifications to suit individual needs. A resource list will be

provided for teachers to assist them in choosing appropriate materials, media and web

sites for the lessons. This resource list will also assist teachers in choosing materials that

may be more interesting and relevant for both the teacher and class. Generic questions

and activities will be included, particularly for the novel study and journal component. However, the unit will not be entirely generic. A few specific short story, poetry, and newspaper selections with accompanying activities will be included as well.

Choosing a Theme

Simmons and Deluzain (1992) outline several different approaches to structuring the teaching of literature in the middle and secondary grades. One can teach units by genre, by author, by historical era, by chronological order, or by theme. The thematic approach seems most logical for this particular unit, not only because of its generic scope, but also because of the nature of the students to which the unit is geared. David Peck states:

> The best way to teach literature at the junior and senior level is by theme, by the ideas that students will find in these and related works, and by the bridging they can do through idea and character to their own lives and to other works. (1989, xxi)

By being able to see connections in different works of literature, they can also make comparisons to their own lives and "see literature as the embodiment of ideas and values" (Peck 1989, xxii). As previously stated in Chapter Two, it is extremely important that lessons and units be somewhat relevant and applicable to the lives of students, and a thematic approach allows for this.

The thematic approach is also useful for teachers. It allows teachers to easily choose works in order to reflect student interests. Teachers know what their students' tastes are in terms of content and thus can choose works that will maximize student participation

and motivation. Also, this approach allows for much flexibility and choice, in that

teachers can easily substitute works and offer many choices to encourage individual

reading and to accommodate students who are at different levels. It facilitates

individualized reading. While a few works can be the focus for the whole class, other

related works can be read by individual students for silent reading or for special

presentations or reports, thus enhancing understanding (Simmons and Deluzain 1992,

225).

Why "Journeys"?

The journey or quest motif has a long literary tradition and is a prevalent theme in

many works geared towards young adults. The physical and spiritual journeys undertaken

by the protagonists in these works often mirror the personal journeys that the emerging

adolescent students are experiencing themselves, thus making for a truly relevant topic

that allows for many connections and endless teaching possibilities. The personal quest is

a recurrent theme in the traditional romance genre and usually includes a young

protagonist (usually a knight) who sets out on an adventure in search of wisdom and

understanding, encountering many trials along the way.

The contemporary version of these heroic stories is the "Bildungsroman", a novel

of initiation and education "in which the central character learns about the world as

he/she grows into it" (Peck 1989, xi). The young heroes in these works come from

different historical backgrounds and all walks of life, yet they share many commonalties,

regardless of their personalities. In these novels of initiation, according to Simmons and

Deluzain (1992), the young protagonist embarks on adventures on the road to adulthood. Simmons and Deluzain also identify three distinct stages which the young character undergoes in the initiation process: a separation from childhood, a transition from childhood to adulthood, and finally, the reincorporation into society as an adult (245). The conflict is often one in which the character openly challenges nature, although many conflicts are social in nature and include the important and relevant examinations of friendships and family relationships. The young characters often face decisions "that will clarify the values or beliefs they live by. Heroes are often pushed to a physical or psychological precipice to establish their beliefs" (Donelson and Nilsen 1980, 293).

The journey motif can be appealing to young adults, especially when one considers their physical, developmental, and social characteristics. Most of the characters in young adult fiction are of the same age as its readers and like the characters themselves, they eagerly anticipate moving on in their lives. The journeys that the protagonists encounter often mirror those of the adolescent reader. "The teenager has to go outside mainstream society in order to achieve some individual identity before returning to that society as an adult human being" (Peck 1989, xix). Also, many of these works conclude with the character's acceptance of a "compromised dream" that is not quite as ideal as his or her original dream (Donelson and Nilsen 1980, 212). This can help ground the often idealistic aspirations of young adolescents, without stifling the importance of endeavoring to achieve one's hopes and dreams.

The "Journey" motif is not only relevant for teaching novels and short stories. Poetry, non-fiction, music and film can easily be added to the selection of works to be

covered under this theme. It would also be fitting for the students to experience the journeys of real individuals through biographies and newspaper articles and to examine and discover the journeys of people in their own families or communities. The addition of these other genres would actually enhance the depth and scope of the unit, making it more well-rounded and all the more relevant to grade eight students.

Teaching Strategies

There are many different strategies that can be employed by the teacher in order to help his or her students fulfill the expectations for Reading, Writing, and Oral and Visual Communication as outlined by the Ontario Curriculum. Since the cognitive abilities of grade eight students are growing and they may already be in or approaching the stage of formal operations, it is important to understand the work of a typical student in order to better plan suitable activities for this diverse group of young people. The written work of students in this age group is often characterized by a concern for emotion and for their audience (Wilkinson et al. 1982, 121). This emotion and concern often leads to a tendency to over-write when especially motivated or moved by a topic. Most have an ability to differentiate usage and can classify what is valuable in a text (Wilkinson et al. 1982, 120). However, many students may not yet be at the formal operational stage, especially at the beginning of the year, so it is essential that the teacher gradually progresses to more abstract ideas and writing assignments . Don Austin (1982) suggests that teachers begin with more personal experiences with which students can identify, and gradually move into more abstract ideas and topics (163). Where writing is concerned,

> by using a series of writing assignments that progressively take the students deeper into the ideas and techniques of a work, we can help students see literature through their own eyes, writing about it as something close to them as they possess. (Austin 1982, 163)

Like Austin, many other sources reiterate the importance of personal responses to literature, especially at the pre-adolescent level. This is precisely why a reader-response approach to teaching literature would be useful for this unit. Students would much rather express their own interpretations of a text (with a little guidance of course) than be given a fixed or "correct" interpretation. This philosophy then, is essentially more transaction-based than transmission oriented. A writing team for the Ottawa Board of Education (1992) rightly states that "a reading of any text results from an elusive process involving the interaction of the unique personality and cultural background of the reader with the image or text" (16).

A reader-response approach to teaching literature also enhances social, affective, and cognitive learning. Students learn about themselves and others as they make observations about characters and they "ultimately see that human behavior is usually the result of a myriad of motives and not of a single motive" (Simmons and Deluzain 1992, 141). Simmons and Deluzain also name five main cognitive benefits and habits that arise as a result of using a reader-response approach:

1. close reading

2. tolerance for ambiguity

3. development of intellectual honesty

4. scientific thinking (since responses are based on the examination of evidence and facts)

5. logical argumentation

Affective learning through the reader-response method is achieved as students develop insights about their own lives that may even influence their own decisions (147).

One of the best ways to explore a student's response to literature is through whole class and small-group discussion. Donelson and Nilson (1980) describe a process called "expatiation", meaning "enlargement through talk" (370). They state that "in a good discussion, new information will be taken in, measured, evaluated, and integrated into the tentative conclusions already reached", thus allowing for further growth and understanding. Since many grade eight students are self-conscious and highly critical of one another, a highly supportive and non-threatening classroom environment is necessary. A small-group setting can also be ideal. This "safe" area provides opportunities for the peer-conferencing, movement, and conversations that comprise an ideal environment for the special physical and social needs of the emerging adolescent.

Journals are also highly recommended as teaching tools for Language Arts. Although there was more of a stress on journalling when Whole Language was the preferred method of instruction, the journal still has a place in today's classroom. Discussions can be encouraged and enhanced if students are initially asked to write down their responses in a journal before sharing opinions orally. Teachers may also employ a "dialogue journal" in which two or more students write responses to each other as they would in an Internet chat room (Kirby et al 1988, 63). Journals are also an excellent way to encourage daily writing which is vital to the development and refinement of writing

skills. Responses to oral texts can be documented in journals, thus giving the teachers a concrete sample to assess the listening or viewing skills that encompass the Oral and Visual Communication strand of the Ontario Curriculum. The possibilities are endless.

One important activity that is often neglected at this age level is reading aloud to students. Students, regardless of their age, still enjoy being read to. I can still remember my own sense of surprise at the delightfully positive reaction of my students after I read Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" to them when I thought it would be too difficult for them to read on their own. Afterwards, these students often begged me to "read them a story", just as a group of Kindergarten students might. Reading aloud benefits students in many ways. It helps them develop good reading behaviors, leads to an increase in vocabulary base and overall knowledge, helps students develop a sense of story, and sharpens their listening skills (Bromley 1992). Grade eight students, and even high school students for that matter, should not be deprived of the wonderful experience of being read to.

Summative Checklist of Elements to be Included in the Unit

Based on the research conducted in this and the previous chapters, the following checklist has been compiled in order to ensure that all necessary elements are included in the "Journeys" unit.

The "Journeys" unit should contain:

- Ontario Curriculum expectations for Reading, Writing, and Oral and Visual Communication.

- the principles of Catholic Education as defined by the Catholic Worldview, by the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations, and by the framework developed by the Institute for Catholic Education.

- the incorporation of elements from each of the curriculum orientations (transmission, transaction, and transformation)

- a thematic structure organized according to the Ontario Curriculum Unit Planner

- generic questions and lessons which are easily adaptable to any Intermediate classroom, as well as actual short stories, poems, and articles with accompanying activities.

- a flexible timeline for teachers

- a list of resources which should include: novels, poetry anthologies, non-fiction selections and web sites (with a special focus on Canadian content).

- activities which involve the use of technology

- progressive activities which allow for cognitive/developmental differences

- opportunities for movement, social interaction, and choice, in keeping with the special needs of the emerging adolescent student.

- a reader-response approach to teaching literature

- the use of journals

- class-discussions and small-group activities to encourage and enhance responses

- reading aloud to students

Journeys: A Catholic Language Unit
For Grade Eight

By

Rose Di Giovanni
August, 2000

Introduction

Why "Journeys"?

The journey was chosen as a theme because of the relevance this motif has for grade eight students. These students are at a very pivotal time in their lives, facing a challenging time in which they are undergoing many social and physical changes as they search for their true identities as young adults. They are in their last year of elementary education, and are looking forward to moving on to the next stage of their academic lives. As Catholics, they are also at a special place in their faith journeys, as they become adults in the Christian community through the sacrament of Confirmation. The selections in this unit have been chosen to represent the many types of journeys to which the students can relate, such as physical journeys, journeys of self-discovery, journeys taken through the use of imagination, journeys of growth, and faith journeys, among others.

The Catholic Learner

This unit is designed for students of Catholic schools, therefore its content reflects the principles of Catholic Education and the expectations of the Catholic learner as outlined by the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations.

Generic Nature of Unit

Each school, and each class, for that matter, is unique. Every class has different

needs and different resources available for use. Therefore, this unit is structured in such a

way as to allow for maximum flexibility. Teachers can adapt and use the activities

presented in many different ways, using not only the resources made available in this unit,

but also the materials already at their disposition within the school, using a timeline

which suits their individual purposes.

How to Use this Unit

The unit is divided into eight different sections, which are as follows:

1. Introductory Activities

2. Quotations

3. Novel/Short Stories

4. Poetry

5. Non-Fiction Selections

6. Films

7. Support Materials

8. Resource List

Sections one to six contain a description of the section, expectations covered from

the Ontario Curriculum and from the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations, and

a list of activities. Each activity is followed by an indication in parentheses of the strand

covered by the activity. (R) represents Reading, (W) denotes Writing, and (OV) represents Oral and Visual Communication. Some activities cover more than one strand.

Various short stories, poems, quotations, and non-fiction works have been selected for teacher and student use. These references are included in the Support Materials section. Canadian content is included as often as possible. A selection of relevant films, novels, and web sites is also included. These title lists are suggestions only and teachers are responsible for previewing these works before including them as a part of their lessons for this unit.

Links to Prior Learning

Because of the thematic, multi-genre approach of this unit, it is expected that students possess prior knowledge of the following skills and concepts before beginning this unit:

- co-operative learning skills

- brainstorming skills

- stylistic and literary devices and terms such as metaphors, similes, personification, setting, tone, conflict, etc.

- use of the computer for word-processing and for Internet research

- stages of the writing process

Introductory Activities

The Catholic Learner thinks reflectively and creatively to evaluate situations and adopts a holistic approach to life by integrating learning from various subject areas and experience.

Description

This section offers various ways in which to introduce and/or end the unit. Cooperative activities and discussions can be conducted as a class, with a partner or with small groups.

Students will reflect upon the meaning of the word "journey" and on the various contexts to which the term can be applied in order to provide a basis for the unit of study which is to follow.

Expectations

Students will:

- listen attentively to organize and classify information and to clarify thinking.

- express and respond to a range of ideas and opinions concisely, clearly, and appropriately

- analyze and interpret media works

- contribute and work constructively in groups

Possible Activities

1. Write the word "journey" on the board. Have students brainstorm and write down a list of words which they can associate with this word. Then, have students work with a partner or small group to share and consolidate their lists and classify their words into appropriate categories. Each group can briefly present their lists, followed by a class discussion in which students can define what "journey" means and the different types of journeys that one can undertake. (W, OV)

2. Show a film or clip of a film involving a journey. As a class or in small groups, discuss the theme of the work. Clips from various television programs or songs can also be used in order to establish commonalties. A related film can be shown at the end of the unit and comparisons can be drawn. Students could also create their own media production or play related to the initial film at the end of the unit outlining the way they would direct the journey(s) depicted, or creating a fictional adventure or journey based on the film and involving the film's characters . (OV)

3. In their journals or notebooks, or silently, have students reflect on the following questions:

- Define the word "journey"
- Are there different types of journeys that one can take? List and explain.
- Think of someone (in your family, in the media or throughout history perhaps) who has taken a journey and describe their experiences.
- Think of a familiar story in which the main character takes a journey. Name the story and briefly summarize it in your own words.
- Describe some journeys you have taken in your life so far.
- What kind of journeys do you wish to take in the future?

After sharing these answers with a small group or with a class, the students' responses can be saved until the end of the unit. At that time, the same questions can be given. After students have responded, the initial responses can be returned to students in order to make comparisons and see growth. (W, OV)

Quotations

The Catholic learner examines and reflects on one's personal values, abilities and aspirations influencing life's choices and opportunities.

Description

This section gives a list of activities relating to the list of quotations (found in the Support Materials section) from various sources which all relate to the unit's theme.

Students will reflect upon and interpret these quotations individually and in groups and relate them to their own experiences and to the theme itself.

Expectations

Students will:

- contribute collaboratively in group situations by asking questions and building on the ideas of others

- listen to and communicate connected ideas

- clarify and broaden their own points of view by examining the ideas of others

Possible Activities

1. A different quotation can be written on the board each day for the duration of the unit for silent reflection. (R)

2. Different quotations can be distributed to small groups or to individuals for examination and for a brief oral presentation of their interpretations. (R , OV)

3. The same quotation can be assigned to all individuals or groups to form the basis of a comparative discussion on personal interpretations. (R, OV)

4. The quotes can be used as a motivational "hook" to begin each lesson for the duration of the unit. (OV)

5. The quotations can be used as a springboard for discussion and debates (OV)

Novel Study/ Short Stories

The Catholic Learner is an effective communicator who presents information and ideas clearly and honestly and with sensitivity to others and who works effectively as an interdependent team member. He or she listens actively and critically to understand and learn in light of gospel values and writes and speaks fluently in one or both of Canada's official languages. He or she recognizes that sin, human weakness, conflict, and forgiveness are part of the human journey.

Description

This section provides generic activities for a study of novels and short stories. A list of some of the many novels relating to the theme is provided in the Support Materials section. Short story titles are also included in the Support Materials section. Please note: Since the activities are meant to be adaptable to almost any work, specific questions about plot and content are not included.

Students will examine various short stories and/or novels in relation to the journey motif. They will identify, summarize, discuss and describe various parts of the work such as setting, characterization, theme, symbolism, conflict, rising action, climax, and foreshadowing. Students will also express their own opinions regarding a work using supporting evidence from the work itself. Individually and in groups, they will create other media and literary works based on the ideas, characters, and themes in the novel and short stories studied.

Expectations

Students will:

- communicate ideas and information for a variety of purposes

- use writing for various purposes and in a range of contexts

- organize information and ideas creatively as well as logically

- produce pieces of writing using a variety of specific forms

- produce media texts using writing and materials from other media

- read a variety of fiction and non-fiction materials

- explain their interpretation of a written work, supporting it with evidence from the work and from their own knowledge and experience

- explain how the various elements in a story function in relation to each other

- clarify and broaden their own points of view by examining the ideas of others

- identify some stylistic devices used in literary works and explain their use

- express and respond to a range of ideas and opinions concisely, clearly, and appropriately

- create media works of some technical complexity

- contribute collaboratively in group situations by asking questions and building on the ideas of others

Possible Questions

1. Have students summarize the novel/story using the following categories (based on Mandler and Johnson's "Story Grammar" in Bromley 1992)

a. Setting - (time, place, and main character are introduced)
b. Beginning - (a precipitating event occurs)
c. Reaction - (a main character reacts and begins to form a goal)
d. Attempt - (a planned effort to achieve a goal)
e. Outcome - (the success or failure of the character's attempt)
f. Ending - (final response of the main character) (R, W)

2. Show how the introduction or beginning of the novel or story
a. captures the reader's interest
b. establishes setting
c. introduces characters
d. evokes the mood (R)

3. In the novel/story, find, identify and describe incidents of the following:
a. foreshadowing
b. rising action

c. climax

d. conflict

e. sub-plots (if any)

f. suspense

g. symbolism (if any) (R)

4. Setting

a. Select an effective passage which focuses on setting. Quote three specific details that make it vivid.

b. If a movie were being made of this story, where could it be filmed? Explain your choice.

c. When do you learn where and when the story takes place? Is there a specific reason why the author chooses to reveal the setting when he/she does? Be specific. (R, W)

5. Characterization

a. Write an analysis of the main character of the work (More choice can be given for novels). Consider physical, mental, and social traits, as well as the character's actions. Be sure to support your claims using evidence from the story/novel.

b. What type of journey(s) did the character take throughout the course of the short story/novel? Explain.

c. What did the characters learn as a result of their journeys?

d. Did the characters change as a result of their experiences?

e. Can you identify with any of the characters or situations in the story? Why or why not?

f. What would this story be like if the main character were of the opposite sex?

g. If you were filming a movie based on the novel/short story, who would you cast as the main character? Give reasons for your choice.

h. Select two minor characters in the work and explain how they are important to the plot. (R, W)

6. Questions for Reader-Response Journals and Discussion

a. What were your first impressions of the novel/short story? Did these impressions change as the work progressed?

b. In what ways could you relate to the characters and situations?

c. Compare yourself to the main character in the work. Describe any similarities or differences.

d. Select what you feel is the most important occurrence in the work and explain why.

e. Would you recommend this work to a friend? To an adult?

f. What message do you think the author is trying to get across to readers?

g. Why or why not would this story make a good t.v series?

h. If you were to film this story, would you eliminate or add any characters? Explain.

i. What does the title tell you about the work? Does it tell the truth?

j. Consider how the novel/story is written (its style). Does the language, structure or point of view affect your response to the work? (W, OV)

Other Activities

1. Have students prepare, write, and present a speech/monologue for the main character of the work, outlining his/her thoughts and opinions about today's world.   (W, OV)

2. Have students write a diary entry of one of the main characters. (W)

3. Divide the students into small groups and have them create a brief skit which depicts the group's interpretation of an incident in the novel/story. (W, OV)

4. Using real travel brochures as examples, have students write a travelogue to convince people to visit the setting of the work. (W, OV)

5. Read a few actual book reviews to the class, and discuss the style and elements of these reviews. Then have students write their own critical reviews of a work. (W)

6. For the novel study, have students create new titles for chapters in the book (R, W)

7. Have students write a poem which illustrates the theme and mood of the work. (W)

8. In partners, have students interview an author or character in the work. These interviews can be presented to the class, filmed, or recorded on an audio tape. (W, OV)

9. Choose another novel relating to journeys other than the one the class is studying and read an excerpt aloud daily. As an extension to this activity, students can keep a "listening log" in which they can record their thoughts about the passage that has just been read to them. (R, OV)

10. Read a descriptive passage from one of the short stories or novels. Have students draw their impression of what was read to them. (R, OV)

11. Using pictures, headlines, and words from magazines or newspapers, have students create a media collage illustrating the theme of the work. The collage can be named and a description can be written outlining the students' reasons for their choices. As an alternative idea, students could use video or musical clips to create their media collage. (OV, W)

12. Have students draw their impression of an important scene in the work. (OV, R)

13. Using long mural paper, the whole class can create a "journey mural" depicting the journeys of the characters throughout the course of a work. (This activity would be more suitable for a novel study). (R, OV)

14. Small groups can each be responsible for a different short story to be read, analyzed and presented to the class. The following aspects could be discussed: plot, setting, conflict, characterization, and relevance to the journey motif. (R, W, OV)

15. Have students write a newspaper article about an event in the work. (R, OV)

Poetry

The Catholic Learner reads, understands and uses written materials effectively. He or she creates, adapts, and evaluates new ideas in search of the common good.

Description

This section contains a variety of different poems which reflect different aspects of the theme. The selections (found in the Support Materials section) represent the journeys of new settlers in Canada, a Native Canadian journey through the wilderness, a journey of the imagination, journeys of self-discovery and growth, and faith-journeys.

By examining the themes, language, and poetic devices in the poems, students will compare and contrast different forms of poetic expression and relate these interpretations to the "journey" motif. Students will also create their own representations by illustrating, re-writing, presenting, and transforming the poems while retaining their fundamental themes and messages.

Expectations

Students will:

- read aloud, showing understanding of the material and awareness of the audience

- read independently, selecting appropriate reading strategies

- identify some stylistic devices used in literary works and explain their use

- make judgments and draw conclusions about ideas in written materials on the basis of evidence

- use the special terminology in a particular area of study, as necessary

- clarify and broaden their own points of view by examining the ideas of others

- use tone of voice and body language to clarify meaning during conversations and presentations

- contribute collaboratively in group situations by asking questions and building on the ideas of others

- produce pieces of writing using a variety of different forms

Possible Activities

1. Have students answer the following questions for each poem:

a. Summarize the poem in your own words
b. How is this poem related to the "journeys" theme?
c. How does the poem's language enhance the theme(s)?
d. Who is the speaker? Describe the speaker's personality and give evidence.
e. Describe the images used in the poem.
f. What poetic devices are used in the poem? (simile, metaphor, personification, etc.)
g. Do you like the poem? Why or why not?

2. Have students respond to each poem using the procedure below. (adapted from the Ottawa Board of Education, 1992)

Step One-- Receiving the Text
Read and re-read the poem silently and aloud. Examine the structure of the poem carefully. Note how it is arranged on the page. Write down any notes which focus on any original diction (word choice) employed by the poet. Consider how words are positioned and how they have been used to create images and sound effects.

Step Two -- Recording
Describe the poem in detail so that another person who has not read it might be able to picture it and identify it. Summarize the content of the poem and note at least four ways in which the poet uses words in an original way.

Step Three -- Response
Record in your notebook all of the responses or connections which come into your mind as you read the poem, especially as it relates to the "journey" theme. You might include visual images, memories, other poems, short stories, and films which you recall.

Step Four -- Integration
Talk about your responses with a partner or in a small group. You may re-read sections of the poem together to illustrate your discussion. Add any information which you discover together. (R, W, OV)

3. Assign a poem to a small groups or partners. Using the above ideas, have each group present their personal analysis of the poem to the class in a brief presentation. (R, W, OV)

4. Read the poem aloud to the class. Have students write down their immediate reaction to the poem then share these reactions with a partner or with the class. (OV).

5. Have students re-write the poem in a different genre such as a short story, play, or newspaper article. They can also incorporate what they think has happened before or after the events in the poem. (W)

6. Have students draw a picture or poster to accompany the poem's text and explain why they chose to draw what they did either orally or in written form. (OV)

7. Have students present their favorite poem as a dramatic reading (individually or in small groups). (OV, R)

8. Present one of the poems without its title and have students name the poem, giving reasons for their choice. (W, R)

9. Present one of the poems with a few words omitted. In small groups, have students fill in the missing words and present their versions of the poem to the class. (R, W, OV)

10. Present a poem for the first time to students with the stanzas or verses in a different order. Have students rearrange the poem into what they believe to be the correct order. Then compare these versions to the actual poem. (R)

11. Have students compose their own journey poem. (W)

Non- Fiction

The Catholic Learner is a discerning believer formed in the Catholic Faith Community who develops attitudes and values founded on Catholic social teaching and acts to promote social responsibility, human solidarity, and the common good. He or she respects the life-journeys of all people of good will. The Catholic Learner also examines, evaluates, and applies knowledge of interdependent systems (physical, political, ethical, socio-economic, and ecological) for the development of a just and compassionate society.

Description

This section contains various activities for non-fiction works. Newspaper article and biography suggestions are included in the Support Materials section. A list of websites is also included to assist in the activities which require research.

Students will read various non-fiction works from different sources, each relating to the journey theme. They will use research tools and other media which chronicles the different journeys of various people throughout history and in their own community. They will identify and relate the personal journeys of others to the historical period and to social and political situations.

Expectations

Students will:

- analyze and interpret media works

- use resource materials to illustrate ideas in presentations

- describe a media work, outlining its different parts

- listen to and communicate connected ideas and relate carefully-constructed narratives about real events

- locate and interpret information, suing various conventions of formal texts

- use research skills

- produce pieces of writing using a variety of specific forms

- produce media texts using writing and materials from other media

Possible Activities

1. Using the works in the Support Materials section, or any other relevant non-fiction works, have students fill in the following using complete sentences: (a class or small-group discussion can ensue)

   Title:
   Author:
   Source and date (if applicable):
   Summary of Contents:
   Journey Involved:
   Character Traits that the person possessed throughout his/her journey:
   What I can learn from this person's journey:
   What I Found Most Interesting: (R, W, OV)

2. Allot a specific time each day or each week for students to choose their own newspaper article or non-fiction work depicting a journey and briefly present the article to the class using the elements from the above activity. An additional part outlining the student's reasons for choosing that particular work could also be included. (OV)

3. Discuss any social and political issues that apply to the work. Have students create a poster to create awareness about any particular issue that is discussed or present in any of the non-fiction works. (OV)

4. Have students write a prayer asking God to look upon any people that are undergoing hardships as a result of their situations and journeys (as it relates to the works studied). Or, write a prayer together as a class about the same subject. (W, OV)

5. Read and discuss a biographical work with the students, such as the biography of Jessie Owens in the Support Materials section. After discussing its contents and the elements and style of biographies in general, have students write a biography of a special Canadian who has undertaken a journey (or they could write about any person

they choose). They can use any resource materials on-hand, or the project can be Internet-based. (R, W, OV)

6. After doing research on Canadians who have undergone different journeys (the websites in the Support Materials section can assist with this activity), have pairs of students write and present an interview with the Canadian of their choice, using factual and biographical information as a basis. (W, OV)

7. View a "Heritage Minute" with the class taped from the television or via the Internet (www.histori.ca). Have small groups of students create and dramatize their own "Heritage Minute" based on the journeys of Canadians throughout history. (OV)

8. Using newspapers or the Internet, have students choose a photograph or picture which depicts a journey of some sort. Have students write the story behind the picture. (W)

9. Choose a story in the Bible that involves a journey. Some ideas are the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the Temptation of Jesus in the Desert, the travels of St. Paul and of the other Apostles, and the wandering of the Israelites in the desert. Read the story together and discuss the type of journey involved. Are the journeys and experiences of the biblical figures similar to those in the other works covered?

Films

The Catholic Learner is an effective communicator who uses and integrates the Catholic Faith tradition, in the critical analysis of the arts, media, technology and information systems to enhance the quality of life.

Description

In this section, students will view and analyze various films and point out elements relating to the journey theme. A list of suggested films for viewing is found in the Support Materials Section.

Expectations

Students will:

- listen attentively to organize and classify information and to clarify thinking

- express and respond to a range of ideas and opinions concisely, clearly and appropriately

- analyze and interpret media works

- describe a media work

- evaluate the effectiveness of various informational media works

Possible Questions

1. Before viewing the film, write the title on the board and have students predict what they think the film is going to be about. (OV)

2. Discuss or have students answer the following questions after viewing the film:
a. Who are the main characters in the film?
b. Describe the nature of the relationships between the characters.
c. What are the economic and social circumstances of the time depicted in the film?

d. What methods do the characters use to solve problems?
e. What kind of journey(s) do the characters take in the film?
f. What can we learn from the characters' experiences?
g. What is the theme of the film?
h. Do the lighting, music, editing, images or sound effects help to elicit this mood? (OV, W)

3. Pause the film at various points throughout the viewing and have students predict what they think will happen next. (OV)

4. In small groups have students create and dramatize a sequel or prequel to the film. (W, OV)

5. Have students design a poster to advertise the film. (OV)

6. Bring in a film review (such as one by Roger Ebert) and discuss its content and elements with the class. Then, have students write their own critical review of the film(s) shown. (W, OV)

SUPPORT MATERIALS

List of Quotations Relating to Journeys

"The longest journey is the journey inwards of him who has chosen his destiny"
-- Dag Hammarskjöld

"In the middle of the journey of our life I came to myself within a dark wood where the straight way was lost"   --Dante, Divine Comedy

"A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step" --Lao-tzu

"All God's word is but one word: 'grow'" --Peter Mcarthur

"It appears that many people when they travel really see nothing at all except the reflection of their own ideas" --Stephen Leacock

"He who would learn to fly one day must first learn to stand and walk and run and climb and dance; one cannot fly into flying" --Nietzche

"The traveler was active; he went strenuously in search of people, of adventure, of experience. The tourist is passive; he expects interesting things to happen to him. He goes 'sight-seeing'" --Daniel J. Boorstin

"A road that does not lead to other roads always has to be retraced, unless the traveler chooses to rust at the end of it" --Tehyi Hsieh

"Traveling is a fool's paradise. We owe to our first journeys the discovery that place is nothing" --Emerson

"Seek, and ye shall find" --Matthew 7:7

"The best way to travel is to go where your feet take you, to arrive full of surprise" -- Barry Callaghan

"Is this my journey or do I travel on someone else's?" --Linda Spalding

"Travel a thousand miles up a great river; more than another thousand along great lakes and a succession of smaller lakes; a thousand miles across rolling prairies; and another thousand through woods and over three great ranges of mountains, and you have traveled from Ocean to Ocean through Canada" --George M. Grant

"Does the road wind up-hill along the way?
Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
From morn to night, my friend" --Christina Rossetti

"To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive" --Robert Louis Stevenson

"As you pass from the tender years of youth into harsh and embittered manhood, make sure you take with you on your journey all the human emotions! Don't leave them on the road, for you will not pick them up afterwards!" --Nikolai Gogol

"Cans't thou by searching find out God?" --Job 12:2

"Railway Termini. They are our gates to the glorious and the unknown. Through them we pass out into adventure and sunshine, to them, alas! We return." --E.M Forster

"The man who goes alone can start today; but he who travels with another must wait 'till that other is ready" --Thoreau

"For my part, I travel not to go anywhere, but to go. I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move" --Robert Louis Stevenson

"Ah, what is more blessed than to put cares away, when the mind lays by its burden, and tired with the labor of far travel we have come to our own home and rest on the couch we have longed for? This it is which alone is worth all these toils" -- Catullus

"We must travel in the direction of our own fear" --John Berryman

"Two roads diverged in a wood - and I -
I took the one less traveled by,
and that has made all the difference" --Robert Frost

"A man travels the world in search of what he needs and returns home to find it"
-- George Moore

Some Novels Containing the Journey Motif

The following are just a few of the many novels for young adults containing a journey motif.

Bach, Richard. Jonathan Livingston Seagull (1970)

Bawden, Nina. Henry (1988)

Bellingham, Brenda. Storm Child (1985)

Blades, Ann. A Boy of Tache (1973)

Burnford, Sheila. The Incredible Journey (1961)

Coelho, Paulo. The Alchemist: A Fable About Following Your Dream. (1988)

Collura, Mary-Ellen Lang. Winners (1984)

Cormier, Robert. Other Bells For Us To Ring (1990)

George, Jean Craighead. Julie of the Wolves (1972)

_____. My Side of the Mountain (1984)

Halvorson, Marilyn. Hold On, Geronimo (1988)

Hough, Richard. Flight to Victory (1985)

Houston, James. Frozen Fire: A Tale of Courage (1977)

Westhall, Robert. The Kingdom by the Sea (1991)

L'Engle, Madeline. A Wrinkle in Time (1967)

Levitin, Sonia. The Return (1978)

Matas, Carol. Lisa (1987)

Mowat, Farley. Lost in the Barrens (1956)

Paulsen, Gary. Hatchet   (1987)

Paulsen, Gary. The Island   (1988)

Rawls, Wilson. Where the Red Fern Grows   (1961)

Roe, Elaine Corbeil. Circle of Light   (1989)

Steinbeck, John. The Red Pony   (1937)

Suggested Short Stories

As with the novels, there are also many short stories for young adults which contain a journey of some sort. Though most short story anthologies found in schools would contain appropriate stories, here are some other suggestions. (Bibliographic Information about the titles mentioned below is found in the Resource List at the end of the unit).

The Blue Jean Collection is a compilation of the top nineteen Canadian short stories for young adults selected through a competition initiated by the publisher in 1991. Although most of the stories relate to the journey motif in some way, the following stories in the collection are especially recommended:

- "Saying Goodbye" – Linda Coleman
- "All is Calm" – Ann Walsh
- "The Boy, the Balloon, and the Open Blue" – Heather Haas Barclay
- "The Tulpa" – Eileen Kernaghan
- "Laura" – Gwen Davies

Sixteen Short Stories By Outstanding Writers for Young Adults is another, though primarily American, compilation of sixteen short stories. The following could be incorporated into the unit:

- "Pigeon Humor" – Susan Beth Pfeffer
- "The Gift-Giving" – Joan Aiken

Paulo Coelho's book The Alchemist: A Fable About Following Your Dreams is a beautiful book with a spiritual dimension that is not found in too many works suitable for young adults. An excerpt from the book can easily be studied as a short story. Pages 134-145 are highly recommended.

"Footprints in the Sand", the well-known story about a man reflecting upon his life as he walks along the beach with Jesus, is also highly recommended.

Poetry Selections

The following is a list of relevant and easily-found poems that can be studied in this unit. They were chosen because of their distinct depiction of the journey motif.

- "The Arrival" – Alexander McLaughlin (in <u>The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse)</u>

- "The Forsaken" – Duncan Campbell Scott (in <u>The New Wind Has Wings</u>)

- "George Gray" – Edgar Lee Masters (in <u>Heroic Adventures</u>)

- "The Road Not Taken" – Robert Frost (in <u>You Come Too</u>)

- "The Ships of Yule" – Bliss Carman (in <u>The New Wind Has Wings</u>)

- "You Begin" – Margaret Atwood (in <u>The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse</u>)

<u>Note</u>: Many relevant songs can also be studied as poetry. I recommend "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" by the well-known Irish rock band U2. The song is found in the album "The Joshua Tree". A gospel version of this same song can be found in U2's "Rattle and Hum". Lyrics can be accessed easily through the Internet. Christian rock artists such as Amy Grant sing many relevant songs that students might not be aware of since they are often not included in mainstream radio playlists.

Non-Fiction Suggestions

Many relevant biographies and newspaper articles can be found in local libraries and in school resource centers, The following are a few recommendations. Bibliographic information about these sources is found in the Resource List at the end of the unit.

Atheneum Books For Young Readers publishes a series entitled <u>Great Lives</u>, which chronicles the lives of famous inventors, politicians, explorers, and athletes. The length of each biography and the level of difficulty are suitable for grade eight students. I recommend "Jessie Owens: Track Athlete of the Century", found in <u>Great Lives: Sports</u> (193-198).

Since it is important to include a Catholic element, I recommend any book chronicling the lives of Saints, as well as the book <u>Fighting For Their Faith</u>, which describes the lives and struggles of various saints, martyrs, and others who sacrificed much for their faiths. The following sections in the book would be suitable for the unit:

- "The Great Missionary" (10-11) – about St. Paul
- "Joan of Arc" (20-23)
- "Travelers for God" (28-29) – about St. Francis Xavier
- "Missionary Hero" (32-33) – about St. Jean de Brebeuf

Newspapers are a valuable source of information containing many articles relating to journeys. I especially recommend the "Nation Builders: Stories from Canadian Immigrants" series, found every second Monday in the <u>Hamilton Spectator</u>, as well as the "Alt. Spec." section for young adults, also found in the <u>Hamilton Spectator</u> on Mondays. These articles are accessible in local libraries, as well as through the Internet (www.hamiltonspectator.com).

A List of Films Relating to the Journey Motif

As with the novels, there are also numerous films which deal with the journey theme. Many of the novels in the previous list have been made into feature films as well. Below are a few suggestions. It is up to the teacher to determine the appropriateness of the titles for classroom use.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Albert Einstein: Light to the Power of 2

Anna and the King

Around the World in 80 Days

Beethoven Lives Upstairs

The Call of the Wild

Chariots of Fire

Citizen Kane

A Dog of Flanders

Field of Dreams

Gulliver's Travels

The Jackie Robinson Story

Marie Curie: More Than Meets the Eye

The Miracle Worker

Music of the Heart

My Dog Skip

October Sky

Shiloh

Smoke Signals

Stand and Deliver

Stand By Me

Who Has Seen the Wind

Websites

The following is a list of some of the many websites that are useful for the non-fiction activities in this unit which require Internet research..

www.biography.com

www.distinguishedwomen.com

www.heritageproject.ca

www.heroes.ca

www.histori.ca

www.nlc-bnc.ca/heroes/ehome.htm

Resource List

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Clarke, Brenda. Tales of Courage: Fighting For Their Faith. Austin: Steck-Vaughan Co., 1990

Coelho, Paulo. The Alchemist: A Fable About Following Your Dreams. Translated by Allan R. Clarke. San Francisco: Harper Collins Inc., 1993.

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CONCLUSION

The effective and successful development of curriculum is a continuous process which does not end when the unit has been written. There are still steps that need to be taken upon the so-called completion of a unit of study. The "Journeys" unit is no exception. Although the unit fulfills the list of criteria outlined in the summative checklist at the end of Chapter Four, there is still more that needs to be done in order to evaluate its effectiveness.

The first step in evaluating the effectiveness of the unit would be to present the unit to the Language Arts Subject Council for the Niagara Catholic District School Board, of which I am a member. Since curriculum is usually written in teams, the ideas of the members of the council could help enhance the unit and point out anything that I may have missed. Once we have worked together to revise and/or add to the unit, it will be typed and hopefully approved by the Program Council for distribution in the schools. Prior to this, I would like some feedback from the consultants for Curriculum and Religion. Although the unit also seems to fulfill many of the criteria outlined in the Institute for Catholic Education's Framework <u>Writing Curriculum for Catholic Schools</u> (1996), it would be useful to receive feedback from specialists in the fields of Catholic Education and in the development of Catholic Curriculum.

One of the goals of the Language Arts Council for the 2000-01 academic year is to provide professional development for teachers through in-services and workshops. If and when the unit is distributed in the schools, there is still the chance that it will be left by

the wayside if it is simply sent to the schools without prior warning or information. This is where the workshops play a role. Teachers need to be provided with information on how to effectively use the unit, so that they may, indeed, implement it within their classrooms. They also need to be reminded that this unit exists for their use. Just as a business markets a product to its consumer, so does the workshop to the teacher.

Once the unit has been implemented in the schools, it would be necessary to get feedback in order to improve the unit even further. The Language Arts Subject Council could send out short surveys to determine whether the unit is meeting the needs of the teachers and students. Changes or additions could then be made to the unit based on the results of the survey.

On a more personal level, I enjoyed developing this unit and am seriously considering submitting the unit to the Catholic Curriculum Cooperative and to other related organizations so that other educators can use the unit. Ideally, I would like to receive permission to reprint and include some of the short stories, poems and articles that I have recommended so that the unit could truly be a ready-to-use educational tool. Since I have gained much knowledge about the development, nature, and importance of Catholic curriculum, I would also feel comfortable giving a workshop about that topic. There are many possibilities. I have realized that the journey that I have embarked upon as a result of this project is not yet complete. Where this journey will lead me is yet to be determined!

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