

Chandler, K. (2000). Rethinking the reading-writing workshop: Tensions and negotiations between a Stephen King reader and her teacher. *Reading Research and Instruction*, 39, 135-159.

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Summary: This study investigates what happens when engaged high school readers bring their out-of-school reading experiences and interests into school-based reading and writing workshops. In particular, the interactions between Catherine, an 11<sup>th</sup> grade avid reader of Steven King, and her teacher are detailed. The study suggests a framework of the reading /writing workshop that is similar to assisted performance perspectives on instruction and Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading. The researcher's questions are as follows: "What happens when an engaged reader of fiction brings her out-of-school passion for a popular author into the secondary reading-writing workshop?" and "Over time, how do the student and teacher negotiate or fail to negotiate the boundaries of that workshop?"

Assumptions:

- School reading and writing activities should imitate the reading and writing that students do outside-of-school (Atwell, 1987).
- Reading and writing complement one another and should be done together (Romano, 1987).
- Students should be able to choose what they read (Hansen, 1978).
- Extended amounts of time should be set aside for students to be able to do reading and writing activities that are meaningful to them (Bomer, 1995).
- Reading and writing workshops can lead struggling or disengaged readers to the pleasures of reading (Allen, 1995; Henry, 1995).
- A literary work exists in the transaction between the reader and the text. Aesthetic reading is a lived-through experience of the text; efferent reading is done to obtain information (Rosenblatt, 1983).
- Teaching should be defined as assisted performance, where the teacher's role is to scaffold the student's performance of a task that is just beyond their reach (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988).

Results:

- Students who are engaged readers of popular fiction outside of school may come to school with different expectations for the reading and writing experience than those of their teachers and their peers who do not spend a great deal of time reading outside of school.
- Outside of school, avid readers may need scaffolding to expand their range as readers. Catherine, who was an avid outside-of-school reader, struggled with the reading-writing workshop experience and the learning of new skills and strategies.
- The teacher in the study, Ms. Barter, and Catherine had several unsuccessful exchanges about what it means to read well in the reading-writing workshop setting.

- Even though Ms. Barter and the researcher encouraged Catherine to broaden her literacy choice, she only wanted to read Stephen King novels.
- Many of the high engagement, low variety readers like Catherine did not like responding in written form to what they read. They felt it took away from their reading time, and the activities were unauthentic.

#### Conclusions:

- Many students who were avid readers of popular fiction outside of school did not fare well in the reading-writing workshop environment. They had little exposure to other genres and little desire to expand their choice of reading materials.
- Many highly engaged, low variety readers viewed speed in reading as equivalent with success in reading.
- In the reading-writing workshop setting, teachers can help students read popular fiction more critically and examine how books operate within popular culture.

#### Suggestions for Teachers:

- Provide a clear articulation of the purposes of the reading-writing workshop especially for students who are avid readers outside of school.
- Differentiate activities in the reading-writing workshop for a variety of learners who may have different experiences and interests.
- Design the reading-writing workshop so that avid engaged readers can also acquire new competencies with regard to reading.
- Use reading-writing workshops to expose students to a wide variety of literature, and help them develop reading strategies.

#### Suggestions for Literacy Leaders:

- Recognize the reading-writing workshop as an effective approach for building flexible readers and writers.
- Support use of reading-writing workshop to broaden interest in genres.