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The Influence of Cultural Backgrounds on the Interpretations of Literature Texts Used in the ESL Classroom

Barbara Jostrom Gates
Portland State University

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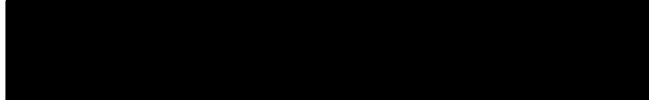
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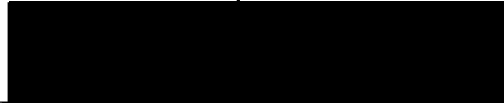
THESIS APPROVAL

The abstract and thesis of Barbara Jostrom Gates for the Masters of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages were presented November 7, 2000, and accepted by the thesis committee and the department.

COMMITTEE APPROVALS:



Kimberley A. Brown, Chair

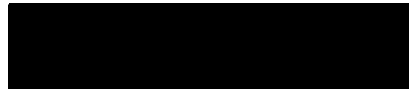


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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Barbara Jostrom Gates for the Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages presented November 7, 2000.

Title: The Influence of Cultural Backgrounds on the Interpretations of Literature Texts Used in the ESL Classroom.

This study was a detailed descriptive investigation into the different interpretations and perceptions that are evoked by readers of United States literature, based on their cultural backgrounds and experience. Grounded in research that advocates for the convergence of culture and literature in the language classroom and a research design based on reader-response theory, this study explored the responses of two groups of students from the University of Portland: international students, the majority of whom were English as a Second Language (ESL), and U.S. citizens, all of whom were native speakers of American English.

Through a reader-response style questionnaire modeled after the research of Sandra Tawake, students were asked to respond to the short story, "The Red Convertible," by U.S. author Louise Erdrich. The responses from the two groups of readers were then compared and contrasted using the following research questions as a guide: 1) Based on their cultural backgrounds, how do the international students perceive and interpret the literature texts? 2) How do these interpretations compare to those of the native speakers of American English who have certain shared experiences

as a result of being a U.S. citizen and/or similar cultural backgrounds as the author of the text? 3) What implication will these findings have for ESL instructors?

Both similarities and differences were found in how the readers from the different cultures related to the story. The concepts portrayed in the story concerning family, social ills, visual images, personal engagement, themes/significance, and behaviors generated similar responses from the majority of both groups of readers. The concepts of values, hope/healing, and social order/personal power generated different responses. The U.S. students also approached interpreting the text differently in three primary ways: in their use of symbolism, in indicating broader and more developed interpretations, and in generalizing the issues and concepts in the text beyond the story's context. These insights hold implications for teachers of international students, especially teachers of ESL, both in curriculum development and in teacher-education programs. The results of this study indicate that literature can be used to expose international students to culture; they also demonstrate the importance of reader-response theory.

**THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS
ON THE INTERPRETATIONS OF
LITERATURE TEXTS USED IN THE ESL CLASSROOM**

by

BARBARA JOSTROM GATES

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS
in
TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS
OF OTHER LANGUAGES**

**Portland State University
2000**

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the two most important men in my life—

my husband Alan and my son Adam.

It was only with your patience, assistance, prayers, and sacrifice that I saw

this project to completion.

And to my daughter, Miranda,

whose brief life taught me more than a thousand books ever could.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study is a detailed descriptive investigation into the different interpretations and perceptions that are evoked by readers of United States literature, based on their cultural backgrounds and experience. Grounded in research that advocates for the convergence of culture and literature in the language classroom and a research design based on reader-response theory, this study explores the responses of two groups of university students: international students, the majority of whom are English as a Second Language (ESL), and U.S. citizens, all of whom are native speakers of American English. Through a reader-response style questionnaire modeled after the research of Sandra Tawake (1995), the students were asked to respond to the short story, "The Red Convertible," by U.S. author Louise Erdrich. Investigating how the students respond "out of the personal, social, and cultural milieu that they brought with them to the text" (Tawake, 1995, p. 296), this study uncovers similarities and differences in the way readers relate to and interpret the literature text. These insights hold implications for teachers of international students, especially teachers of English as a Second Language.

Background and Statement of the Problem

The teaching of both culture and literature in the English as a Second Language classroom has long been a topic of discussion. Byram (1989) argues that Cultural

Studies are an integral part of language teaching because of the relationship between language and culture; one cannot teach a language and ignore the culture surrounding that language. Consequently, one of the ultimate goals of foreign language teaching is to teach something about the target culture (Byram, 1989; Koch, 1990; Magliocco, 1992). It is not surprising, then, that there is a considerable amount of research on integrating culture into the foreign language classroom.

A continuing debate exists over whether or not to use literature as a means of instruction in the ESL classroom. Some arguments include that literature is far removed from the spoken words in daily conversation, and that teachers and students need to know too many literary terms for it to be used satisfactorily in the foreign language classroom (Collie & Slater, 1987). Prominent linguist H.G. Widdowson (1984), however, asserts that using literature is indeed an effective method of language teaching. Research argues that literature has numerous advantages. One of the most important is that literature encourages critical thinking. Since the texts are open to interpretation, are problematic, and are challenging, students can move beyond just reading the text and commenting on it. Discussing the theoretical aspects promotes active participation and thinking (Umaña-Chaverri, 1990). In addition, literature encourages personal involvement and interests, allowing students to engage imaginatively with the text (Collie & Slater, 1987). Unfortunately, the research on teaching literature in the ESL classroom is often not about application and interpretation, but whether or not to teach it.

Despite the debate over whether or not to use literature as a means of instruction in the ESL classroom, literature is frequently noted as an excellent medium through which culture can be taught. Literature is universal (Pugh, 1989); it transmits aspirations, frustration, and criticism, which allows students to experience other world visions (Umaña-Chaverri, 1990). Since culture is inevitably expressed in literature, the texts can help students understand the target culture in a new way (Povey, 1984). In addition, the "world" in many literary texts offers a realistic context in which characters from many different social backgrounds can be portrayed (Collie & Slater, 1987). Literature also shows how the present culture has come to be what it is. This historical perspective helps students understand why U.S. citizens do what they do (Alcorn, 1991). Though these arguments indicate that literature is in fact an excellent means of teaching culture, little actual research has been conducted in the ESL classroom, with virtually no contributions in recent years.

The research of Sandra Tawake (1993, 1995) is one of the few instances where the influences of the cultural backgrounds of readers of literature have been examined. Tawake argues that "readers coming to the novel from different cultural and social backgrounds focus on and emphasize different interpretive stances—experience different degrees of personal engagement" (1995, p. 285). Tawake supports her conclusions with an approach to literary analysis and criticism called reader-response theory. In this theory, Rosenblatt (1938, 1978) describes response to literature as a transaction between the reader and the text. This theory suggests that "what the reader

brings to the text determines the experience the reader will have of the literature" (Tawake, 1993, p. 325). Though Tawake's research does not address either international students—ESL students in particular—in the United States or American English literature texts, her studies do provide useful models for further research.

The Call for Additional Research

American English literature is often required reading in college and university classes in the United States as a way to teach U.S. culture to international students. However, due to varying cultural backgrounds, international students—ESL students in particular—tend to approach and interpret the literature based on their own experiences, values, and beliefs. Thus, their interpretations are most likely different from the interpretations of native speakers of American English, including the authors of the literature, who grew up with similar experiences, values, and beliefs.

The rationale for this study stems from the need for ESL instructors to understand how the cultural backgrounds of their students influence how the students interpret the literature texts used in the ESL classroom. These varying interpretations will influence the type of American English literature texts ESL instructors will select for use in their classrooms and how they will approach teaching those texts.

Adapting a research design based on the reader-response theory as presented in Fish (1970), Rosenblatt (1938, 1978), and Iser (1978, 1980), this study is an attempt to address the dearth of related literature and research in the area of using literature to

teach culture in the ESL classroom in the United States. Since the research design is directly modeled after Tawake's reader-response study to Alan Duff's novel, *Once Were Warriors* (1995), this study will also contribute to research on the reader and the reader's process of creating meaning from a text.

Statement of Guiding Research Questions

A detailed descriptive investigation into the different interpretations and perceptions that are evoked by readers of American English literature, this study explores the response of two groups of university students: international students, the majority of whom are English as a Second Language (ESL), and U.S. citizens, all of whom are native speakers of American English. Through a reader-response style questionnaire, the students were asked to respond to the short story, "The Red Convertible," by U.S. author Louise Erdrich. The responses from the two groups of readers were then compared and contrasted using the following research questions as a guide:

- 1) Based on their cultural backgrounds, how do the international students perceive and interpret the literature texts?

- 2) How do these interpretations compare to those of the native speakers of American English who have certain shared experiences as a result of being a U.S. citizen and/or similar cultural backgrounds as the author of the text?

3) What implication will these findings have for ESL instructors?

This approach of seeking responses from two groups of readers in relation to these research questions is an attempt to reveal insight into the story by identifying various responses to and understanding of the characters and issues presented, "and by revealing a range of interpretation the work is capable of evoking from readers who approach it from different cultural backgrounds" (Tawake, 1995, p. 282). This approach is also an attempt to provide insights into curriculum development in the ESL classroom and in ESL teacher-education programs.

Definition of Terms

Cultural Studies: In foreign language teaching, cultural studies are defined as "Any information, knowledge, or attitudes about the foreign culture which is evident during foreign language teaching" (Byram, 1989, p. 3). "That aspect of language teaching which exposes learners to another way of life by 'situating' the target language in one or more of the countries where it is spoken as a mother tongue" (Byram, 1986, p. 322). The term "cultural studies" as used in this study is defined in the context of foreign language education, not English language education. Therefore, this definition of cultural studies is distinguished from the literary one traditionally used in the English language classroom.

Culture: "The overall phenomenon or system of meanings within which sub-systems of social structure, technology, art, and so on exist and interconnect" (Byram, 1989, p. 80). Culture consists of one's "values, attitudes, and behavior" (Kearny, Kearny, & Crandal, 1984, p. viii).

Culture, Target: The culture of the language being taught or studied. (The target culture in this study is the culture of the United States.)

Intercultural Competence: "The ability of person to behave adequately and in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures. . . Intercultural competence includes the capacity of stabilising one's self-identity in the process of cross-cultural mediation, and of helping other people to stabilise their self-identity" (Meyer, 1991, p. 137).

Interpretive: Explaining the meaning of and expounding on the significance of the literature text (Soukhanov, 1984, p. 638).

Language, Target: The language being taught or studied. (The target language in this study is American English.)

Literal: "In accordance with, conforming to, or upholding the primary or exact meaning of a word or words" (Soukhanov, 1984, p. 698). The word for word meaning of the literature text.

Literature: Fiction writing such as short stories, novels, folk tales, children's stories, drama, poetry, and simplified texts. Literature is "writing that preeminently reflects in depth and quality some aspect of the human experience, illuminating it from the perspective of a sensitive and intelligent observer" (Pugh, 1989, p. 321).

Thematic: Of, constituting, or relating to "an idea, point of view, or perception embodied and expanded upon in a work of art" (Soukhanov, 1984, p. 1199).

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The teaching of both culture and literature in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom has long been a topic of discussion. Cultural studies inevitably play a fundamental role in language learning, due to the interconnected relationship between language and culture. This is especially true for international students studying in colleges and universities in the United States, where it is essential for these students to know and understand how U.S. citizens think and view the world. Despite the debate over whether or not to teach literature in the ESL classroom, literary texts are often recommended—and even required—as an excellent way to teach culture.

Consequently, it is important to understand how the reader responds to the text. The rationale for this study stems from the need for ESL instructors to understand how the cultural backgrounds of their students influence how the students interpret the literature texts used in the ESL classroom. These varying interpretations will influence the type of American literature texts ESL instructors will select for use in their classrooms and how they will approach teaching those texts.

Culture Learning: Background and Research

Culture learning plays a fundamental role in second and foreign language classrooms. Byram (1989), in the context of foreign language teaching, defines cultural studies as "any information, knowledge, or attitudes about the foreign culture which is

evident during foreign language teaching" (p. 3). He also refers to it as another way of life by 'situating' the target language in one or more of the countries where it is spoken as a mother tongue (Byram, 1986). Cultural studies are an integral part of language teaching because of the relationship between language and culture; one cannot teach a language and ignore the culture surrounding that language. Foremost, language manifests the values and meaning of culture, refers to cultural artifacts, and indicates people's cultural identity (Byram, 1989). Therefore, one of the ultimate goals of foreign language teaching is to teach something about the target culture (Byram, 1989; Koch, 1990; Magliocco, 1992).

The study of culture has two interdependent purposes. One is to facilitate students' use of language. The second is to help students understand and recognize the concept of cultural 'otherness' (Byram, 1989). In Cultural Studies, students are not only confronted with the language of other people, but with their own way of thinking and dealing with the world (Byram, 1989). As the students learn how to empathize with another culture, they start to gain new insights into their own culture (Kearny, Kearny, & Crandall, 1984; Stern, 1991; Wegmann, Knezevic, & Werner, 1994).

There is a considerable amount of research on integrating culture into the foreign language classroom. A primary goal of many of these studies is to look at student attitudes toward the target culture. One such case study, the Durham Project, explored the effects of French teaching on British students' tolerance of the French people and their culture (Byram, Esarte-Sarries, Taylor, & Allatt, 1991). Another

study looked at the development of intercultural competence in students from a German upper secondary school. Through case study investigations, the researcher made conclusions based on whether or not intercultural competence is a natural by-product of foreign language teaching (Meyer, 1991). Another three-year empirical study in British secondary schools investigated teacher attitudes toward culture learning in the foreign language classroom. The study also looked at the students' perceptions of how the teacher teaches culture, and how the textbook teaches culture (Byram, 1989).

Though these studies are insightful, they do not sufficiently address several areas. First, the studies were conducted with students in secondary education courses, not university and college courses. Secondly, the studies were conducted in foreign language classrooms, not ESL classrooms. Third, one of these studies confronted the issue of intercultural competence, while the others addressed student and teacher attitudes; these studies did not take into consideration how the students' cultural backgrounds influenced their foreign culture learning. And finally, all of this research was conducted in Europe, not the United States.

Although much of the foreign language culture teaching research comes from the United Kingdom (see Buttjes & Byram, 1991), the United States has placed a large emphasis on teaching culture in foreign language classes for many years (Kramsch, 1989). In one of the few sources that specifically discusses culture teaching in foreign language classes in the United States, Kramsch (1989) lists only teaching goals and

objectives. Consequently, there is a need for research to go beyond just these goals and objectives. Teachers need to know how their students' cultural backgrounds are influencing their foreign culture learning.

As in all foreign language classes, there is an essential need to teach culture. This is especially true in ESL classes in U.S. colleges and universities. ESL students have many questions about life in the United States; they are frequently confused or puzzled about the values, attitudes, and cultural patterns that surround them. Often ESL students who are proficient enough in English to enroll in mainstream university courses find that they do not have a clear understanding of the cultural rules that are required for them to be successful U.S. students (Kearny, Kearny, & Crandall, 1984). Unfortunately, of the research that discusses ESL culture teaching in the U.S., very little focuses exclusively on U.S. culture. It is important to note here that the goal of teaching ESL students about U.S. culture is not to persuade them to approve of all aspects of life in the United States, but to help them develop a better understanding so they can adapt (Kearny, Kearny, & Crandall, 1984). If the students are encouraged to study cultural differences and similarities, they can avoid making false assumptions about what they hear and read concerning U.S. culture (Wegmann, Knezevic, & Werner, 1994; see also Povey, 1984).

The Literature Teaching Debate

Literature is often noted as an excellent way to teach culture. In the last few years, there has been an emerging interest in using literature in the ESL classroom (Stern, 1991). Prior to this time, literature played a minimal role largely due to the "emphasis in modern linguistics on the primacy of the spoken language [that] made many distrust what was seen as essentially a written, crystallised form" (Collie & Slater, 1987, p. 2). There is still, however, a continuing debate over whether or not to use literature as a means of instruction in the ESL classroom. Widdowson (1984), when addressing the issue of teaching reading, states that there are three main claims against teaching literature: 1) Why do students need literature if they are studying a discipline like the sciences? 2) Literature cannot be taught if it does not teach grammar constructions in sequence (from less difficult to more difficult). 3) What if students saw a use in literature that was not grammatically correct? Widdowson then offers three counter arguments: 1) Learning language is not just for training—it is an education process. 2) The non-literature examples used to teach language are made up and are out of context (literature is authentic). 3) Literature is used to provoke students to invent their own fiction. Thus, Widdowson concludes that using literature is indeed an effective method of language teaching. (see also Horowitz, 1990; McKay, 1982)

Other arguments against using literature contend that it contains too much convoluted language, and that it is far removed from the spoken words in daily

communication. In addition, opponents argue that teachers and students need to know too many literary terms for it to be used satisfactorily in the foreign language classroom (Collie & Slater, 1987).

Unfortunately, the research on teaching literature in the ESL classroom is often not about application and interpretation, but whether or not to teach it. Of the only two master's theses at Portland State University that research literature teaching in the ESL classroom, one of them deals exclusively with this debate (Appley, 1988).

Research on Using Literature in the ESL Classroom

Though there is research on using literature in the ESL classroom, much of the research has declined during the past 25 years (Stern, 1991). In addition, many of these investigations only examine why literature should be taught. Research argues that literature should be taught in the ESL classroom because of its numerous advantages. One of the most important is that literature encourages critical thinking. Since the texts are open to interpretation, are problematic, and are challenging, students can move beyond just reading the text and commenting on it. Discussing the theoretical aspects promotes active participation and thinking (Umaña-Chaverri, 1990).

Another advantage is that literature also provides language skills enrichment. Because literature texts are not written for the specific purpose of language teaching, they provide valuable, authentic material in a classroom context; the language is genuine and undistorted (Collie & Slater, 1987). Therefore, as they read a "substantial

and contextualized body of text, students gain familiarity with many features of the written language—the formation and function of sentences, the variety of possible structures, the different ways of connecting ideas—which broaden and enrich their own writing skills" (Collie & Slater, 1987, p. 5). In addition, other language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar, and vocabulary also improve (Costello, 1990; Povey, 1984; Stern, 1991; Umaña-Chaverri, 1990).

Literature also encourages personal involvement and interests. Engaging imaginatively with literature allows students to shift "the focus of their attention beyond the more mechanical aspects of the foreign language system" (Collie & Slater, 1987, p. 5). Students like studying literature because it provides pleasure; they enjoy and learn simultaneously (Collie & Slater, 1987; Povey, 1984). Literature is one of the few academic subjects that encompasses every human activity and every other field of knowledge; students can choose to read about their particular interests, or discover new things that interest them (Alcorn, 1991). Literature extends their range of interests and feelings (McConochie, 1985). It motivates students to appreciate literature and to read in on their own (Mayer, 1993; Stern, 1991). It also gives students a topic to discuss in the language they want to learn. Though a literature text may be written at a higher language level, students can discuss it at a lower level (Alcorn, 1991).

Another advantage is that literature exposes students to language variants. In a novel or dramatic text, characters are identified by their actions and the language variant they speak. This is not common in other kinds of texts, in which the writing

usually includes a single variant. Students need to know, besides the formal or standard variant taught at universities, there is a large variety of discourse models, including some that are not acceptable in certain social circles. Contact with these other variants will help students recognize registers in real contexts (Umaña-Chaverri, 1990).

Literature also helps students learn about other students' perspectives. "Our experience, culture, and personal desires act as 'lenses' through which we see what lies before us" (Oster, 1989, p. 85). Students see through one set of "lenses," but by listening to the comments other students make during class discussions of literary texts, they learn about others' views and perceptions (Oster, 1989).

Though the above research proposes many viable arguments for using literature in the ESL classroom, it does not address the application and interpretation of the texts. Most specifically, it does not address how students' cultural backgrounds influence their understanding and interpretations of the texts.

Teaching Culture through Literature: Arguments and Research

Literature is believed to be an excellent means of teaching culture for a number of reasons. Consequently, literature is often required reading in college and university classes as a way to teach culture to international students. One reason is that literature is universal; it connects across cultures. With universal themes like love, hate, death, work, parents, and family, all students can identify with and relate to the text.

As a result,

literary works may transcend any particular place or time or may link students with their immediate culture and enable them to participate in its development. In both cases, students are finding their identities as members of a community (local or world) with shared values rather than as separate individuals with only their own problems to solve.

(Pugh, 1989, p. 321)

Since literature transmits aspirations, frustration, and criticism, this allows students to experience other world visions (Umaña-Chaverri, 1990). When students realize that they are part of a larger world, they learn to empathize with other cultures. And, as students empathize with and experience other cultures, they obtain deeper understanding and insights into their own (Stern, 1991; see also Flickinger, 1984; Povey, 1984).

Another reason for teaching culture and literature together is that culture is inevitably expressed in literature. As students experience culture through the eyes of the literary characters, it helps them understand the target culture in a new way. For example, "literary characters are faced with choices that require them to challenge or submit to the expectations of society. By seeing how they respond, students will begin to discover the rules and nature of the American system and the nature of its national or regional culture" (Povey, 1984, p. x). In addition, though the "world" in many literary texts is not real, it offers a realistic context in which characters from many social

backgrounds can be portrayed. An ESL student can learn the characters' thoughts, feelings, customs, etc. This "world" can also give them an idea of the codes and preoccupations that structure a real society (Collie & Slater, 1987). In addition, the characters' conflicts, complexities, and points of view can be felt and understood at no great personal risk to the student; they become involved in a world that engages their feelings, yet it is not the world they actually live in. This helps students develop the concept of "otherness," to see from different perspectives (Oster, 1989; see also Costello, 1990).

Literature also shows how the present culture has come to be what it is. This historical perspective helps students understand why U.S. citizens do what they do (Alcorn, 1991). In actuality, literature is one of the few ways to teach culture since cultural beliefs cannot be expressed in simple thoughts; a more complex syntax needs to exist to contain these ideas (Povey, 1984).

The above arguments indicate that literature is in fact an excellent medium through which culture can be taught. However, they do not take into consideration what aspect of culture to teach. For example, when focusing on teaching United States culture, which aspects are defined specifically as being "American"? While there are national values that apply to the population as a whole, there are also numerous subcultural values (Scarcella, 1990). For example, Scarcella (1990) categorizes U.S. subcultures into two main groups: Asian-American (such as Cambodians, Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, Laotians, and Vietnamese) and Latinos (such as Mexicans and

Puerto Ricans). Other major subcultures include Native Americans and African Americans. Within the research on using literature to teach culture, only two sources dealing with this issue of teaching about subcultures in the U.S. were found. Flickinger (1984) suggests that today, in our culturally diverse environment, teachers should move beyond using texts that present U.S. culture from the middle class view. Smallwood (1988) recommends using texts that portray U.S. immigrant experiences.

In addition, one of the primary arguments in favor of using literature to teach about culture assumes that literature carries universal themes like love, hate, death, work, parents, and family. While this is true, one cannot assume that each of these themes conjures up the same images and meaning for individuals from different cultures. Tawake (1993) states:

It is important for those who would teach world literatures written in English to understand, for example, the difference between what *family* denotes to a Western reader and what it denotes to a writer who uses the English word *family* but who has a very different cluster of images and concepts in mind than the Westerner does when it is used. Without an understanding of such critical differences, teachers may have an impoverished view of the literatures they teach and consequently their students may experience only superficially the worlds into which these literary texts provide entry. (p. 332)

Consequently, it becomes important that teachers of international students learn how to

identify and understand these cultural differences.

Little actual research has been done on using literature as a means of teaching culture in the ESL classroom. Though some ESL educators suggest potential texts to use in the classroom (for examples see Alcorn, 1991; Flickinger, 1984; Mayer, 1993; Potter, 1983; Pugh, 1989; Smallwood, 1988), there has been little study into how it is taught; these educators suggest texts, but give no guidelines for application. Of the insights given on how to teach culture through literature, the majority come from personal ESL classroom teaching experiences (for examples see Collie & Slater, 1987; Costello, 1990; Magliocco, 1992; McConochie 1985; McKay, 1982; Oster, 1989; Povey, 1984; Stern, 1991; Umaña-Chaverri, 1990). Of these, few specifically address how to teach U.S. culture (for examples see Costello, 1990; Oster, 1989; McConochie, 1990; McKay, 1982; Povey, 1984), and even fewer describe it in a series of detailed lesson plans (for example see Povey, 1984).

The Reader and the Text: Theory and Research

The research of Sandra Tawake (1993, 1995) is one of the few instances where the influences of the cultural backgrounds of readers of literature have been examined. In one study, Tawake (1993) examined how *The Bone People*, a novel by New Zealand Maori Keri Hulme, might be interpreted differently by readers from varying cultural backgrounds. She argues that "these cultural differences may cause readers from different backgrounds to have very different imaginative experiences when they read

the same literary text" (1993, p. 325). Tawake supports her conclusions with an approach to literary analysis and criticism called reader-response theory. This theory suggests that "what the reader brings to the text determines the experience the reader will have of the literature" (Tawake, 1993, p. 325). Tawake states that the reader-response theory is supported by research in psycholinguistics, and that research in reading "suggests that readers actively construct their own meaning from the texts they read" (Tawake, 1993, p. 325-326).

A closer look at reader-response theory reveals that the theory is not easily defined. "Scholars and researchers affiliated with this school of criticism are dispersed in their ideas and areas of interest regarding the text-reader relationship" (Chase & Hynd, 1987, p. 531). There are, however, four basic assumptions of the reader-response theory that are usually agreed upon: Stance is important; readers make meaning; this meaning is personal, but also grounded in text; and, because readers themselves make meaning, multiple interpretations of the text are constructed (Spiegel, 1998).

Stance Is Important

Rosenblatt (1938) describes response to literature as a transaction between the reader and the text, not as answering a set of questions or attending to details. "The nature of this transaction depends on the stance or approach the reader takes to the text, focusing the reader and making an impact on how he or she responds to the text

and constructs meaning" (Spiegel, 1998, p. 42; see also Ali, 1994; Cox & Many 1992; Langer, 1992). Rosenblatt (1978) identifies two stances, the aesthetic and the efferent. The aesthetic stance is what the reader thinks, feels, and experiences *during* the actual reading of the text. The efferent stance, on the other hand, is the information that is carried away from the text. The purpose is to study and learn from the text, not to experience it. "Reader response approaches generally emphasize the aesthetic as the primary stance, although most reading is on a continuum across the two stances" (Spiegel, 1998, p.42).

Readers Make Meaning

Readers do not discover the meaning in a text, but make meaning from a reflective, introspective process; meaning is constructed, interpreted, and revised by readers, themselves (Chase & Hynd 1987; Spiegel, 1998). Rosenblatt (1978) argues that the text is nothing more than ink on paper. Consequently, the text does not contribute to any kind of meaning or literary experience until it is read and reformulated in the reader's mind. Fish (1970) supports this theory by arguing that the interaction between the text and the reader is an event. In this event "—all of it and not anything that could be said about it or any information one might take away from it—" is the meaning of the text (p. 125). In addition, Iser (1978) states that the reader, with all of his or her past experiences, beliefs, and assumptions, interacts with the perspectives in the text, and meaning is determined as the result of the transaction.

Meaning Is Personal, but Grounded in Text

Rosenblatt (1938) states that although the construction of meaning from a text is personal, the text cannot be ignored. The reader's responses to the text take into account *both* the text and the reader's cultural background and individual uniqueness (Chase & Hynd, 1987).

Multiple Interpretations of Text Are Constructed

Because meaning is constructed by unique individuals with different backgrounds, beliefs, and assumptions, multiple meanings are to be expected; no two responses will be alike (Ali, 1994; Chase & Hynd 1987; Spiegel, 1998). Thus, "making meaning is indeed dynamic, reflective, and introspective" (Spiegel, 1998, p. 43).

The reader-response theory largely grew out of a response to earlier literary theories that tended to focus on how the text makes meaning, not the reader. "This method of analysis [reader-response] differs from those methods implied by earlier literary theories in that it takes the reader more fully into account than analytical methods advocated by earlier theorists had done" (Tawake, 1995, p. 283). Fish (1970) states that no one claims that the act of reading takes place without the reader, but when it "comes time to make analytical statements about the end product of reading (meaning or understanding), the reader is usually forgotten or ignored. Indeed in recent literary history he has been excluded by legislation" (p. 123). Especially since

Fish's claim, and the work of Rosenblatt (1978) and Iser (1978, 1980), there has been some increased investigation into the reader and the reader's process of creating meaning from a text (for examples see Ali, 1994; Chase & Hynd, 1987; Cox & Many, 1992; Langer 1992; Spiegel, 1998; Tawake 1993, 1995), yet the need for further research still remains.

Guided by this reader-response theory, Tawake (1995) again examined how a literature piece might be interpreted differently by readers from varying cultural backgrounds. This study compared the responses of two groups of readers from different cultures to the same novel, *Once Were Warriors*, by New Zealand Maori Alan Duff. By comparing and contrasting readers' responses, Tawake uncovered "differences in the ways readers from different cultures relate to the literary work, differences in the values they attach to behavior, and the differences in their understanding of the novel's themes and significance" (p. 282). She concludes that readers with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds respond to a text out of the personal, social, and cultural milieu that they brought with them to the text. And that is exactly the point reader-response critics have maintained: the reader is key to the whole literary enterprise. No analysis of a text's impact or interpretation of its meaning can be complete without a consideration of the identity of the one reading, analyzing, and interpreting that text. (p. 296)

Though Tawake's research is insightful and sheds light on how readers from varying cultural backgrounds interpret literary texts differently, the literature pieces in her studies were written by native Maoris of New Zealand, not U.S. citizens. Consequently, her studies do not address either ESL students studying in higher educational institutions in the United States, or native speaking students of American English. However, her studies (especially the 1995 study on reader response to Alan Duff's *Once Were Warriors*) do provide useful models for further research.

Conclusions

The call for additional research stems from the need for ESL instructors to understand how the cultural backgrounds of their students influence how the students interpret the literature texts used in the ESL classroom. These varying interpretations will influence the type of U.S. literature texts ESL instructors will select for use in their classrooms and how they will approach teaching those texts. Though educators and researchers argue that literature is in fact an excellent means of teaching culture, little research has been conducted in the ESL classroom, with virtually no contributions in recent years. In addition, much of the information on using literature to teach culture in the ESL classroom only suggests potential texts, with no description of application. More importantly, there is even less research on how the cultural backgrounds of ESL students influence how they perceive and interpret the literature texts. Due to this lack of related research and information on how to teach U.S. culture through literature, the

following investigation is an attempt to address this neglect. In addition, before the work of most of the reader-response theorists, earlier literary theorists tended to focus on how the text makes meaning, not the reader. There has been some increased investigation into the reader and the reader's process of creating meaning from a text, yet the need for further research still remains. By using a research design based on reader-response theory, this study is also an attempt to address that neglect.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

General Research Methodology and Design

The study design, especially including the methods of seeking responses from readers of Louise Erdrich's short story, "The Red Convertible," has been guided by the reader-response theory presented in Fish (1970), Rosenblatt (1938, 1978), and Iser (1978, 1980). The study design was most directly influenced by the research of Tawake (1995) whose study was also guided by reader-response theory. All of the above were discussed in Chapter II.

This study was directly modeled after Tawake's reader-response study to Alan Duff's novel, *Once Were Warriors* (1995). As with Tawake, the research in this study was to explore the responses of two groups of readers in an attempt to reveal the range of interpretation the story is "capable of evoking from readers who approach it from different cultural backgrounds" (1995, p. 282). By comparing and contrasting readers' responses, Tawake's study uncovered "differences in the ways readers from different cultures relate to the literary work, differences in the values they attach to behavior, and differences in their understanding of the novel's themes and significance" (p. 282). Tawake concludes that readers from different cultures do in fact, "create vivid, dynamic, but different, imaginative experiences from the same text and reach very different interpretations of the meaning of the text" (1995, p. 296). The literature piece used in her study was written by a native of New Zealand, about the indigenous Maori

of that area. This study, on the other hand, uses a piece of literature written by a native English speaking U.S. citizen about a Native American Indian family in North Dakota. It is a typical sample of the kind of literature used to teach international students about United States culture.

While there are many possibilities for selecting a methodology to examine how the cultural backgrounds of students influence their interpretations of literature texts, this methodology was selected primarily for its questionnaire design based on reader-response theory. With a questionnaire that generated responses from two different groups of readers on the same topics, it facilitated data collection and analysis. This method guided students to respond in a specific way, thus producing responses and discussions from both groups of readers on the same issues. This made it easier to compare and contrast the responses on these specific topics. Consequently, this allowed for a more accurate interpretation of the data.

A Brief Overview of Procedures

The original method for this study was quasi-experimental. The study was designed to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data through a questionnaire elicitation technique. However, due to the small response rate, it was changed to a detailed descriptive study. The data were collected from two population groups, international students and native English speaking U.S. students from the University of Portland (UP), a higher education institution in Portland, Oregon. For both groups, the

researcher presented the study during the students' English classes. After a brief introduction which explained the purpose of the study and what was expected of the participants, the students received a copy of both the short story, "The Red Convertible," and a questionnaire designed to investigate the readers' responses to the story. The students were given one week to complete the reading and questionnaire at their leisure. The researcher then returned to the classroom and collected the questionnaires.

Research Population

The subjects for this study came from the University of Portland (UP), a higher education institution in Portland, Oregon. The subjects fell into two categories: international and U.S. students.

International Students

The majority of these subjects were enrolled in English 101, *English as a Second Language for Foreign Students: Advanced*, during Fall Semester 1999. This is an advanced ESL reading and writing course designed to prepare students for academic writing in U.S. universities. Some of the students were also from English 107, *College Writing* (see below under "U.S. Students"). These students either placed out of English 101 and into 107 during the English Placement Exam at the beginning of the semester, or they were native speakers of Canadian English and automatically

placed in English 107. Though two of the international students were Canadian, it is unknown if they were native English speakers.

All undergraduate ESL students have a minimum Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of 525, with a subscore of at least 50 in each section. A minimum of 550 is required for a graduate student, except for the master's programs in Business Administration, History and Government, and Communication Studies. In the first two programs the minimum score is 570; in the latter it is 600.

Five international students participated in the study.

U.S. Students

These subjects were enrolled in English 107, *College Writing*, during Fall Semester 1999. This course, also aimed at the development of university writing skills, is next in the sequence following English 101 and is required for entering freshmen and transfer students. Students are exempted from English 107 if they have a SAT I score of 620 or higher and if they are in the 90th percentile of the SAT II Writing Test. Transfer students are exempted if they have taken an equivalent course and passed with a grade of C or better.

Seven U.S. students participated in the study.

Recruitment of both the international and U.S. students was the same. With the permission of both the English 101 and 107 instructors, the researcher arrived at

the class, clearly explained the study and what the students would be asked to do, passed out the materials, answered any questions, and then left the room. The students were given one week to complete the questionnaire at their leisure. The researcher then returned to each classroom to collect the questionnaires. For each completed questionnaire, the researcher offered a five dollar phone card as an incentive.

Recruitment of both the international and U.S. students was also based on availability (whoever was enrolled in English 101 and 107 during the semester the data were collected, Fall 1999). The estimated number of U.S. students who were asked to participate was 30. The estimated number of international students who were asked to participate was 25.

In addition to investigating the responses of international students, the researcher chose to collect responses from U.S. students as a way to compare and contrast the data generated by the international students. English 107 students were selected as the best match for the English 101 students since the majority of both classes were comprised of freshmen, therefore of similar age and educational level, and at UP to obtain a four-year degree.

Instruments and Materials

This descriptive study obtained predominately qualitative data, as well as some quantitative data, through a questionnaire elicitation technique. The subjects were

asked to first read the short story, "The Red Convertible" by Louise Erdrich, then to complete a two-part questionnaire. The estimated time for completing the study was one hour.

Story Selection

Louise Erdrich's short story, "The Red Convertible," was chosen as the test instrument for several reasons. Since students were asked to volunteer to complete the study on their own time, the story needed to be short in order to increase the response rate. Also, given the English ability level of the international students, the story needed to be at a university freshmen level. Novels, such as the one used in Tawake's research, would not have been practical. "The Red Convertible" was actually taken from a reader titled *American Visions: Multicultural Literature for Writers*, edited by laGuardia and Guth (1995). The researcher had previously used the story while teaching English 101 at UP as a way to teach U.S. culture in the classroom; therefore, she knew the story could be easily read and understood by the international students in a short time frame.

Since the story was to be representative of U.S. culture today, it needed to be recently written and as realistic as possible. In addition, it was preferable that the story focus on at least one of the major U.S. subcultures, due to a lack of information on teaching about U.S. subcultures through literature (see Chapter II). "The Red Convertible," written in 1984, is a realistic story about a Native American Indian family

on an reservation in North Dakota. Yet since it was to be read by students from many different cultural backgrounds, it also needed to include themes characteristic of U.S. culture and that most international students could relate to (such as war, cars, etc.). In addition, the story needed to address topics similar to those addressed in Tawake's study—topics such as family, values, behaviors, social ills, hope/healing, and social order/personal power.

In addition to meeting the above criteria, "The Red Convertible" also needed to be found interesting enough to hold the reader's attention and to have emotional appeal. These two aspects were important since they would affect how the students responded to the story, as well as motivate them to complete the study. It is difficult for one piece of literature to appeal to many students of varying cultural backgrounds; however, since the researcher had previously used the story in her English 101 classroom, she had already received very positive responses from students and was confident that the story would be well received in the study.

A copy of "The Red Convertible" can be found in Appendix A.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was designed in two parts. Part I requested demographic information. This information was taken into consideration when analyzing the responses of Part II, the reader-response protocol, since these responses might have been dependent on demographic information such as student age, sex, nationality,

length of stay in the United States, and level of education. It was also used to determine if an appropriate match had been made between the international and U.S. student subjects (see Tawake, 1995). Appendix B contains a sample questionnaire.

Part II of the questionnaire was modeled after Sandra Tawake's reader-response style protocol (Tawake, 1995). Like Tawake, three levels of interpretations were elicited through this protocol: literal, interpretive, and thematic. All of the questions were modeled directly after Tawake's questions and generated interpretations concerning the same topics: family, values, behaviors, social ills, hope/healing, social order/personal power, visual images, personal engagement, and themes/significance. Each question was designed to map directly to one of these topics. Tawake's study, however, does examine more topics than were examined in this study. Appendix C contains a key specifying which questions are from the literal, interpretive, or thematic levels. It also specifies which topics are mapped to which questions. Each of the topics are operationalized as follows:

Family. A fundamental social group in society consisting especially of a man and/or woman and their offspring (Soukhanov, 1984); a group of people sharing a common relationship due to ancestry, marriage, adoption, etc.

Value. To consider with respect to worth, excellence, usefulness, or importance; to regard or esteem highly (Soukhanov, 1984).

Behaviors. "One's actions or reactions under specified circumstances" (Soukhanov, 1984, p. 163).

Social ills. Problems within a society that cause it to be socially unhealthy and diseased, or "not up to recognized standards of excellence or conduct" (Soukhanov, 1984, p. 609), often resulting in suffering. In "The Red Convertible," examples of social ills include alcohol and drug abuse, war, and mental instability.

Hope. A wish or desire accompanied by the expectation of its fulfillment; to have confidence in, to trust in (Soukhanov, 1984).

Heal. To restore to health or soundness; to set right; to restore to spiritual wholeness (Soukhanov, 1984).

Social order. The organization of groups of people within a society, often based on ethnic or economic backgrounds.

Personal power. The amount of control or influence one individual has over other people or situations.

Visual images. Having the nature of or creating a mental picture (Soukhanov, 1984).

Personal engagement. To obtain and hold the attention of the reader (Soukhanov, 1984).

Theme. "An idea, point of view, or perception embodied and expanded upon in a work of art" (Soukhanov, 1984, p. 1199).

Significance. The state of having or expressing a meaning; meaningful, important (Soukhanov, 1984).

The first part of the protocol asked questions about the story on a literal level: What is the word for word meaning of the text? As in Tawake's study, "Questions for the questionnaire were formulated and arranged hierarchically so that the text referred to by literal level questions contained information readers needed in order to make inferences about meaning they had to derive before they could respond to interpretive- and thematic-level questions" (Tawake, 1995, p. 284).

Next, the interpretive level asked the readers to determine the meaning and significance of the text. In this level, readers were "prompted by the questionnaire to draw on their own life experiences to judge" the appropriateness of the characters' actions or the motivation behind a particular behavior in the story (Tawake, 1995, p. 284).

The final level, thematic, asked students to look for "an idea, point of view, or perception embodied and expanded upon" (Soukhanov, 1984, p. 1199) in the story. These questions invite "readers to respond to or to provide generalizations about themes they felt were developed or suggested by the text" (Tawake, 1995, p. 284).

These interpretations were compared and contrasted in order to find similarities and differences 1) in how the readers from different cultures relate to the story, 2) in the values the readers attach to the behavior of the characters, and 3) in what the readers believe the story's themes and significance to be (Tawake, 1995).

Reliability and Validity

To gather valid data, the researcher attempted to create a questionnaire that was appropriate for the respondents of the study. Appropriate survey measurement techniques took "into account respondents' educational levels and cultural backgrounds by posing questions that use language and ideas with which they are familiar, thus maximizing the chances that the survey questions will be understood and answered" (Frey et. al, 1992, p. 190). The researcher "encourage[d] respondents to provide full and accurate information by. . . explain[ing] the purpose and significance of the study. . . [and by assuring] respondents that their names and all the answers they provide will be kept confidential and reported as aggregate data (grouped with responses of many other respondents) to relieve people's anxieties about divulging sensitive information" (Frey et. al, 1992, p. 190).

To enhance the validity of the results, the last part of the reader-response questionnaire contained open-ended questions. It is "likely that responses to open questions will more accurately reflect what the respondent wants to say" (Nunan, 1992, p. 143), thus helping to establish construct validity. To strengthen the internal validity of the study, the qualitative data was supplemented by a small amount of quantitative data (Nunan, 1992). Due to the small sample size, the data were not generalizable to large populations, thus creating low external validity.

Since this study was modeled after Sandra Tawake's reader-response study to Alan Duff's novel, *Once Were Warriors* (Tawake, 1995), there are good possibilities

for external reliability. Tawake describes her questionnaire design clearly and in enough detail, which made it easy to replicate. With Tawake's study as a model, this study also clearly describes the questionnaire design, thus allowing others to replicate the study. Internal reliability, on the other hand, is not as strong since Tawake's description of her methods of analysis is not detailed. The researcher strengthened the internal reliability by having an outside person, the researcher's spouse, help verify the consistency of the data analysis and interpretation. This outside person read the questionnaire responses and then the researcher's analysis and interpretation of the data for all but Question Six. Any discrepancies were pointed out to the researcher and changed.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in order to test both parts of the questionnaire using subjects with similar demographic backgrounds as those subjects who would participate in the actual study. The purpose was to test for clarity and completeness, and to test the questionnaire design, thus refining the instrument.

The international students for the pilot study came from the researcher's English 101 class at the University of Portland during Summer Session A 1999. The students were assigned the reading and questionnaire as a part of the normal class curriculum. The U.S. students were volunteers and friends of the researcher, all early college-aged. Five international and three U.S. questionnaires were collected. In addition to these

two test groups, the questionnaire was also reviewed by an outside third party, the researcher's spouse. He read the short story, reviewed each question for clarity and accuracy, and offered suggestions on how to reword the essay questions in Question Six of Part II to increase student comprehension.

The data generated by the pilot study revealed several areas that needed modification. The first area included structural issues. In order for the questionnaire to appear shorter, since many students complained of its length, smaller font and margins were used. Both the questionnaire and the story also went from single-sided to double-sided, reducing the total number of pages by half. In addition, in Questions One, Three, and Five of Part II, a clearer visual distinction was made by adding additional space between the questions and quotes in each list.

Question Six of Part II, the essay questions, was the second area that needed modification. The majority of the subjects complained that it was too difficult to meet the 150-200 word per question requirement. Again to increase response rate, the word per question requirement was eliminated; instead, blank space was left after each question, suggesting the appropriate response length. In order to increase comprehension, difficult questions were reworded using simpler language and fewer words. Long questions were broken into smaller sections so each section could be answered individually. Plus, sections that were not crucial to the overall question were eliminated. An unexpectedly difficult vocabulary term, "value" in Topic 4, was also defined. And finally, instead of labeling each of the questions by number alone, they

were labeled by topic and number.

A sample of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

Data Collection

The data for the study were collected from one class section of English 101 and two class sections of English 107. With the permission of both the 101 and 107 instructors, the researcher arrived at each classroom during the last 10 minutes of the regular class session. She explained who she was, her purpose for being there, and about the background of her study. The researcher then explained that the study involved reading a short story and answering questions based on that story. Next, the researcher emphasized that participation was voluntary and that the students would remain anonymous, thus allowing the students to choose whether or not to fill out both the demographic and/or reader-response parts of the questionnaire. The researcher then passed out two copies of the Informed Consent Form to each subject, one to return to the researcher and one for the subjects' own records, explaining that they should sign and date both copies. The researcher read the Informed Consent Form aloud to the subjects, explaining each point on the form and answering any questions the students had. (A copy of the Informed Consent Form can be found in Appendix D.) Finally, the researcher stated that the students could complete the study at their leisure and that she would return in one week to collect the study. She asked that they please complete the questionnaire on their own. For each fully or partially completed

questionnaire, the researcher would provide a five dollar phone card.

The researcher had no contact with any of the students after administration of the test materials and before collection. One week later, the researcher returned to the English 101 class during the last five minutes of the regular class session, and during the first five minutes of both sections of 107. She collected the questionnaires and consent forms, distributed the phone cards, and thanked the students for helping with her research.

Human Subjects

Since the study involved collecting data from students, human subjects approval was required by both Portland State University (PSU) and the University of Portland (UP). For PSU approval, the Application for Review of the Protection of Human Subjects in Proposed Research was submitted to and immediately approved by the Human Subjects Research Review Committee (HSRRC). For UP approval, the same application that was approved by PSU was submitted to the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, along with an addendum describing how the data generated from the study would be distributed. After reviewing the application, the UP committee determined that two issues needed to be addressed before they could grant approval. First, they asked to see a copy of the story, "The Red Convertible." Second, they asked that compensation issues surrounding the calling card be clarified—more specifically, they wanted to know if students would still receive a calling card if they

withdrew from the study or if they only submitted a partially completed questionnaire. After the UP committee received a copy of the story and the compensation issues were clarified, the research proposal was approved.

Safeguards

The study was designed so that all human subjects would remain completely anonymous; the information obtained was recorded in such a manner that the subjects could not be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Anonymity during data collection was safeguarded by the following: 1) The researcher asked the students not to put their names on the story or questionnaire, 2) the researcher pointed out that the Informed Consent Form clearly stated that the students' names would remain anonymous, 3) the Informed Consent Form was kept separate from the story and questionnaire when the researcher collected the data, and 4) the researcher would not accept stories or questionnaires if the students' names were on them (this was not an issue, however). In the event that the information from this study will be kept on file or distributed (e.g., published or discussed), individual students' names and responses will not be linked.

Treatment of the Data

Study Limitations

This study has attempted to accurately examine how the cultural backgrounds

of international students influence their interpretations of the literature texts they read in class. However, the study was constrained by several limitations. The first set of limitations pertains to the original study design. The study was not designed to examine how the students' knowledge of certain cultural and literary symbols commonly used in the United States affected their interpretations. In addition, this study did not attempt to determine *if* United States culture should or should not be taught through American English literature in the ESL classroom.

The second set of limitations relates to the number of subjects used in the study. Since there were only twelve respondents, the results could not be statistically analyzed, nor could they be generalized to larger populations. The study was not redesigned to generate more subjects for several reasons. Largely, there were no advantages in doing so; actually, there would have been additional design problems. The international and U.S. students from the English 101 and 107 classes at the University of Portland were demographically as close of a match as possible. If the researcher had obtained more responses from different classes, the subjects would not have been as closely matched, thus skewing the data already obtained from the 101 and 107 classes. In addition, when designing the study, the researcher knew the response rate would be low since both the English 101 and 107 classes always have a limited number of students. This was not a large concern, however, since the model study, Tawake's reader-response study to Alan Duff's novel, *Once Were Warriors* (1995), contained only eight respondents. Despite the limited number of responses, the present

study produced an adequate amount of rich data that could easily be descriptively analyzed.

The third set of limitations surfaced after the questionnaires were analyzed. In the demographics section of the questionnaire, students were asked to state their native country and to indicate whether or not they were natural born U.S. citizens. The questionnaire did not ask if they were native English speakers. Nevertheless, it was assumed that the international students would also be ESL. When the questionnaire was pilot-tested, all of the international students were Asian; hence, no problems surfaced in the questionnaire design. In the actual study, however, two out of the five international students listed Canada as their native country. It is unknown if these students spoke English as a first or second language. This was not seen as a problem, since the purpose of the study was to examine the influence of the students' cultural backgrounds, not their language backgrounds. Therefore, the group of "ESL readers" was changed to "international readers." Consequently, this study does not have implications exclusively for ESL readers, but for both international and ESL readers.

Specific Method of Analysis

The original method for this study was quasi-experimental. The study was designed to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data through a questionnaire elicitation technique. However, due to the limited response rate, it was changed to a detailed descriptive study.

In the original quasi-experimental design, the data generated by the study was to be analyzed both interpretively and statistically. The independent variable in the study was nationality. The dependent variables were the interpretations the students gave in response to the literature reading. The questionnaire was designed so that the interpretations, and thus the dependent variables, could be organized into the following categories: family, values, behaviors, social ills, hope/healing, social order/personal power, visual images, personal engagement, and themes/significance. This design was based on the fact that "observational measurement techniques are also used by survey researchers to classify the content of open-ended responses generated by on-directive questionnaires and interviews into distinct categories that can be compared qualitatively (by theme) and quantitatively (by frequency of occurrence)" (Frey et. al., 1991, pp. 189-90). All of the above dependent variables were to be measured qualitatively; however, some were also to be measured quantitatively (by frequency of occurrence) using descriptive statistics.

In the modified descriptive study design, all of the data were analyzed qualitatively. However, Question Four was also analyzed quantitatively to facilitate an accurate interpretation of the raw data. First, the averages for both the international and U.S. responses were calculated to confirm patterns. Next, the standard deviation of each response was calculated to look for additional patterns.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter examines the results of the data generated by the student questionnaire. Through detailed descriptive analysis, each section of the questionnaire is examined in relation to the guiding research questions.

QUESTIONNAIRE STRUCTURE

Data for this descriptive study were obtained through a questionnaire elicitation technique. The subjects were asked to first read the short story, "The Red Convertible" by Louise Erdrich, then to complete a questionnaire. As described in Chapter III, the questionnaire was designed in two parts. Part I requested demographic information. This information was taken into consideration when analyzing the responses of Part II, the reader-response protocol.

Part II of the questionnaire was modeled after Sandra Tawake's reader-response style protocol (Tawake, 1995). Like Tawake, three levels of interpretations were elicited through this protocol: literal, interpretive, and thematic. All of the questions were directly modeled after Tawake's questions and generated interpretations concerning the same topics: A) family, B) values, C) behaviors, D) social ills, E) hope/healing, F) social order/personal power, G) visual images, H) personal engagement, and I) themes/significance.

Each question in Part II of the questionnaire was designed to map directly to one or more of these topics. Appendix C contains a key specifying which questions are from the literal, interpretive, or thematic levels. It also specifies which topics are mapped to which questions.

The interpretations generated by the questionnaire were compared and contrasted in order to find similarities and differences 1) in how the readers from different cultures relate to the story, 2) in the values the readers attach to the behavior of the characters, and 3) in what the readers believe the story's themes and significance to be (Tawake, 1995).

Appendix A contains the story, "The Red Convertible," by Louise Erdrich, Appendix B a sample questionnaire, and Appendix C the key to Part II of the questionnaire.

RESTATEMENT OF GUIDING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As discussed in Chapter I, the rationale for this study stems from the need for ESL instructors to understand how the cultural backgrounds of their students influence how the students interpret the literature texts used in the ESL classroom. This study was born in response to this need, generating data to be examined using the following research questions as a guide:

- 1) Based on their cultural backgrounds, how do the international students perceive and interpret the literature texts?

- 2) How do these interpretations compare to those of the native speakers of American English who have certain shared experiences as a result of being a U.S. citizen and/or similar cultural backgrounds as the author of the text?

- 3) What implication will these findings have for ESL instructors?

In the following analysis of the data, an attempt has been made to examine and explore in detail the results in relation to these guiding research questions.

QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS: PART I

Part I of the questionnaire requested demographic information. This information was obtained by asking students to either check the most appropriate box or to respond with a brief one or two word answer. This information was taken into consideration when analyzing the responses of Part II, the reader-response protocol. It was also used to determine if an appropriate match had been made between the international and U.S. student subjects (see Tawake, 1995).

International Demographics

There were five international students who participated in the study, representing three countries. Two were from Indonesia, one from India, and two from Canada. Four of the five students had been living in the U.S. between two and four

months, while the other had been living here for twelve years. None of the students were natural born U.S. citizens. Three of the students were under twenty years of age, while the other two fell into the twenty to twenty-four age category. All of the students were male, except one. Two of the students classified themselves as being urban, two as suburban, and the other did not specify. Four of the students had obtained a high school diploma and were in their first semester of college. The fifth student held both a high school diploma and a bachelor's degree.

U.S. Demographics

There were seven U.S. students who participated in the study. All of them were natural born U.S. citizens, under twenty years of age, and had lived in the U.S. since birth. Five of the students were female, and two were male. Five classified themselves as suburban, and two as rural. All seven of the students had obtained a high school diploma and were in their first semester of college.

Demographics Overview

Upon review of the demographic data, it was determined that the U.S. and international groups were an appropriate match. Both groups of students were of similar age and educational level, as in Tawake's study (1995). In addition, all but one of the international students had been in the U.S. four months or less. It is important to note, however, the differences in the sex and geographical background of the students.

Four of the international students were male and one was female, while five of the U.S. students were female and two were male. A look at geographical backgrounds revealed that at least two of the international students classified themselves as urban, and none as rural. Two of the U.S. students, on the other hand, classified themselves as rural, and none as urban. Whether or not these differences influenced the data results will be discussed in Chapter V.

QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS: PART II

Literal Level

The first part of the protocol asked questions about the story on a literal level: What is the word for word meaning of the text? As in Tawake's study, "Questions for the questionnaire were formulated and arranged hierarchically so that the text referred to by literal level questions contained information readers needed in order to make inferences about meaning they had to derive before they could respond to interpretive- and thematic-level questions" (Tawake, 1995, p. 284).

Question Number One

Question number one of the protocol asked subjects to read quotations that revealed many of the major themes and issues in the story. They were then asked to specify which quotations were associated with the characters Lyman, Henry, or both

Lyman and Henry. This question was not designed to generate data for analysis. Its purpose was to familiarize the subjects with information from the story that would help them answer the interpretive- and thematic-level questions. Each of the quotations revealed information that specifically related to one of the topics under examination (see the list of topics A-F at the beginning of this chapter). Evaluation of the students' responses in Question One revealed that the question adequately served the purpose for which it was designed. This was confirmed after analyzing Question Six, the essay questions; many students made direct references to the quotations listed in Question One when answering these questions.

Interpretive Level

The interpretive level asked the readers to determine the meaning and significance of the text. In this level, readers were "prompted by the questionnaire to draw on their own life experiences to judge" the appropriateness of the characters' actions or the motivation behind a particular behavior in the story (Tawake, 1995, p. 284).

Question Number Two

Question number two asked subjects to specify what pictures and/or associations came to mind when they read the title of the story, "The Red Convertible." This question was mapped to topic G, visual images. The majority of both the

international and U.S. subjects indicated the literal meaning, "a shiny red car" (see Figure 1). None of the subjects selected "a burial site." In the category labeled "other," one of the U.S. subjects suggested the response, "Henry getting pulled under the water," while an international subject indicated "the meaning of our red car." The remaining category, "a symbol of hope and freedom," was selected by two of the U.S. subjects, but none of the international subjects.

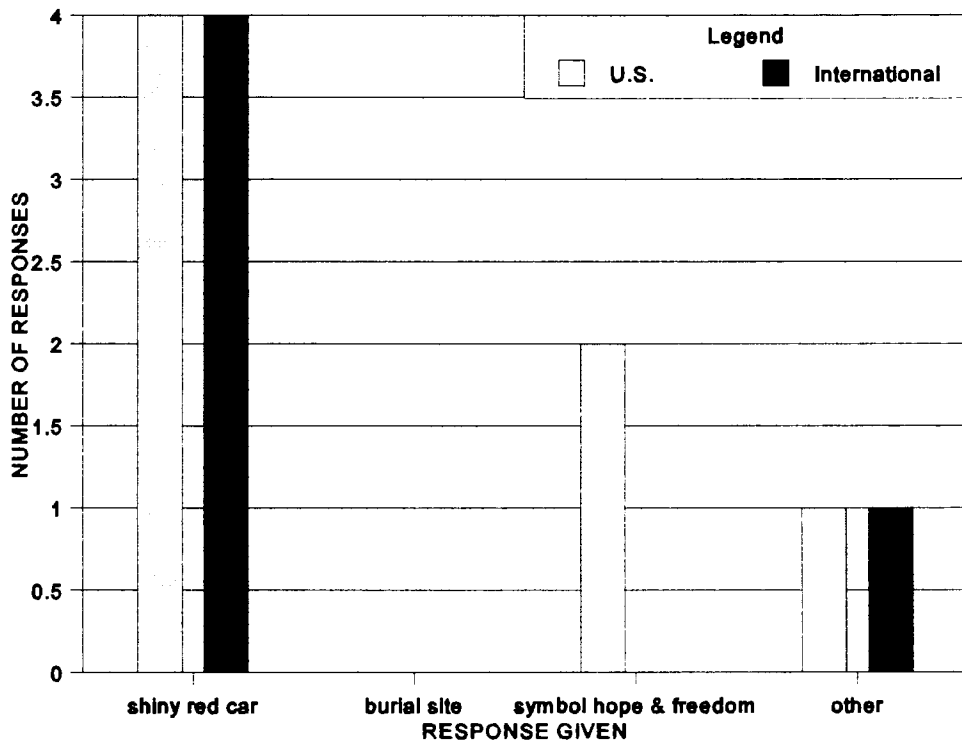


Figure 1. The number and type of pictures/associations that came to mind when students read the title of the story, as specified in Question Two.

Overview

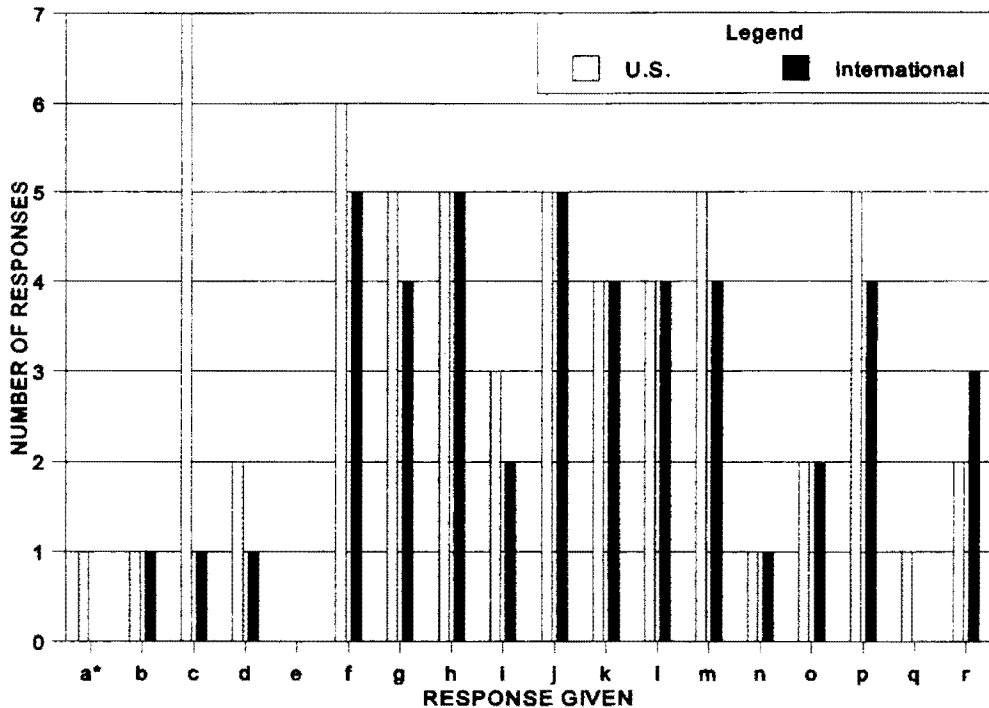
While the interpretive data generated by Question Two revealed that the majority of both the U.S. and international students selected the literal meaning of the story's title, 2 of the 7 U.S. students selected the symbolic meaning, in contrast to 0 out of 5 of international students. When interpreting the visual images, some of the U.S. students were able to picture a symbolic meaning.

Question Number Three

Question number three asked subjects to identify what was wrong with Henry after he returned from the war. They were to put a check mark next to the symptoms, actions, and/or situations of Henry's condition or next to the things he said that revealed the state of his heart and mind. This question was mapped to topics A-F: family, values, behaviors, social ills, hope/healing, and social order/personal power.

The majority of the data (15 out of the 18 categories) revealed a general pattern that was similar between the international and U.S. responses to Henry's condition. As illustrated in Figure 2, seven of these categories (b, h, j, k, l, n, o) had the same number of international and U.S. responses. Six of the categories (d, f, g, i, m, p) had one more U.S. response than international response, while one category (r) had one more international response than U.S. response. One category (e) had no international or U.S. responses.

Differences appeared in the remaining three categories. Two of these, "he has no father" (a) and "he fights too much" (q), each had one U.S. response, but no international responses. The final category, "he witnessed too much death and destruction during the war" (c), revealed the largest discrepancy; all seven U.S. subjects indicated this was part of what was wrong with Henry when he returned from the war. In contrast, this category generated only one international response.



*The following indicates which letter corresponds to which response:

a = he has no father

b = he does not have a job

c = he witnessed too much death and destruction during the war

d = he lost the freedom he once had when he used to drive his car wherever he wanted

e = he drinks too much

f = "he was quiet . . . and never comfortable sitting still anywhere."

g = he wouldn't laugh, and "when he did it was more the sound of a man choking."

h = Henry was jumpy and mean."

i = he watches too much TV

j = "he'd bitten through his lip. Blood was going down his chin."

k = When Lyman went to turn the TV off, Henry "rushed from his chair and shoved me [Lyman] out of the way, against the wall."

l = he "took his other arm and put it over my [Lyman's] shoulder, very carefully, as though it was heavy for him to lift and he didn't want to bring the weight down all at once."

m = "that one, first smile that looked like it might have hurt his face."

n = he always wears the same clothes

o = "I [Henry] know it. I can't help it. It's no use."

p = he doesn't want to be touched: "He [Henry] slaps my [Lyman's] hand off."

q = he fights too much

r = "'That's right!' he [Henry] says. 'Crazier 'n hell. Crazy Indians.'"

Figure 2. What students believed was wrong with Henry when he returned from the war, as listed in Question Three.

Overview

While the interpretive data generated by Question Three revealed that the majority of both the U.S. and international students viewed Henry's post-war behaviors similarly, two primary differences were identified. First, the U.S. students indicated a larger variety of responses, and thus a broader interpretation of Henry's condition as depicted in the story. A larger variety of responses by U.S. students are also seen in Question Five. Secondly, all of the U.S. students, as opposed to only one international student, interpreted Henry's condition as being a direct result of the war. Thus, the U.S. students viewed the social ill of war as the primary cause for Henry's behaviors.

Question Number Four

Question number four listed actions of characters depicted in the story. Subjects were asked to judge the appropriateness of each of the actions by rating them on a scale of one to five, with one being the least appropriate and five being the most appropriate. This question was mapped to topics A-F: family, values, behaviors, social ills, hope/healing, and social order/personal power.

To facilitate an accurate interpretation of the raw data, the responses were analyzed using two additional methods. First, the averages for both the international and U.S. responses were calculated to confirm patterns. Next, the standard deviation of each response was calculated to look for additional patterns (see Appendix E for graphs of averages and standard deviations).

Upon visual inspection of the raw data, the majority of the data, 9 out of the 12 categories (a, b, c, f, g, h, i, j, l) revealed a general rating pattern that was similar between the international and U.S. responses to the actions of the characters in the story (see the Raw Data for Question Four in Appendix E). The remaining three categories (d, e, k) indicated a larger discrepancy between the international and U.S. ratings. This difference was confirmed by analyzing the averages; each of the three categories had a difference in the international and U.S. averages of at least 1.2 or greater, while the other nine categories had a difference of .8 or less. Category (d) "Lyman and Henry get drunk and take drugs" had a difference of 1.3 between the averages. The international students rated this behavior more appropriate than did the US students. Category (e) "On the spur of the moment, Henry and Lyman spend all of their money on the car" had a difference of 1.2, again with the international students rating this behavior more appropriate. The final category, (k) "Henry's family does not take him to see a doctor," had a difference of 1.9, the greatest difference of all the averages. As with the other two categories, the international students rated this behavior more appropriate, while the US students rated it less appropriate.

The standard deviations for the international and U.S. responses to Question Four were also calculated to determine if additional patterns existed (see Appendix E for graphs of standard deviations). The data revealed that in all but one category (g), the international standard deviations were greater than the U.S. standard deviations.

Overview

The interpretive data generated by Question Four revealed that, in most instances, the U.S. and international students similarly rated the appropriateness of the characters' actions. However, two primary differences were identified. The first difference is found in categories (d) and (e). The international students identified the extreme behaviors listed in these categories—drinking, drugs, and a costly, unplanned purchase—as more appropriate than did the U.S. students. Speculation on the cause for these differences will be discussed in Chapter V. The second primary difference appeared in category (k), "Henry's family does not take him to see a doctor." This behavior was rated as more appropriate by the international students, thus revealing a difference in the value the international and U.S. students attached to the behavior. The international and U.S. students' interpretations of this behavior not only reveal insight into what the students value, but also in what they believe will bring hope and healing to the Lamartine family. Findings in Question Six, Topic 5 confirm that U.S. students do place a large importance on the role of professional medical help in bringing healing.

The data generated by calculating the standard deviations of the responses revealed that in all but one category (g), the international standard deviations were greater than the U.S. standard deviations. The importance of this finding will be discussed in Chapter V.

Thematic Level

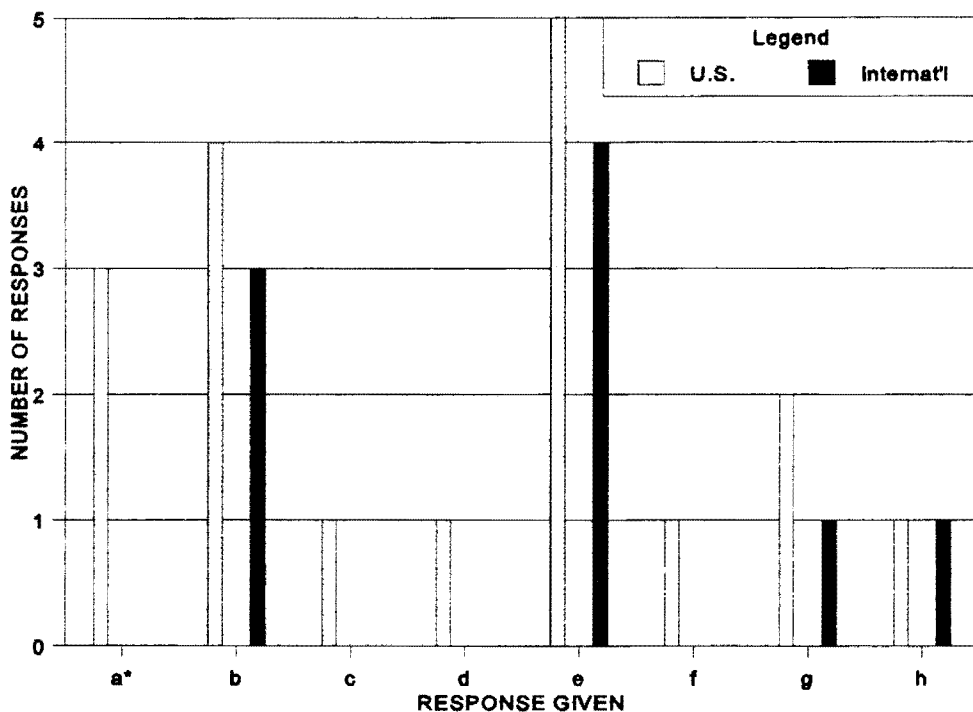
The final level, thematic, asked students to look for "an idea, point of view, or perception embodied and expanded upon" (Soukhanov, 1984, p. 1199) in the story. These questions invite "readers to respond to or to provide generalizations about themes they felt were developed or suggested by the text" (Tawake, 1995, p. 284).

Question Number Five

Question number five asked subjects to check one or more of the generalizations listed that they felt the story would support. If they felt none of the generalizations were supported by the story, they were asked to write one that stated what they believed the story revealed about life, human nature, or the specific situation the story dealt with. This question was mapped to topic I, themes and significance.

The two generalizations with the most international and U.S. responses were (b) and (e) (see Figure 3). Generalization (b), "War irrevocably changes people for the worse," generated four U.S. and three international responses. Generalization (e), "War not only changes the veteran, it can change family members and breakdown the family structure," generated five U.S. and four international responses. The generalization with the next highest number of U.S. responses, three, was (a) "One's youth, characterized by laughter and fun, is forever lost once the realities of the real world are known." This generalization, however, did not produce any international responses. Generalization (g) "Young people value and dream of owning their own car

because it brings freedom and control" generated two U.S. responses and one international response. Generalization (h), the "Other" category, produced one response from both the international and U.S. subjects. One of the U.S. subjects suggested the response, "Tragic events can change a person's mindset compared to one who has not experienced it themselves," while an international subject indicated "Shit happens." The remaining generalizations (c, d, f) each produced one U.S. response, but no international responses.



*The following indicates which letter corresponds to which response:

a = One's youth, characterized by laughter and fun, is forever lost once the realities of the real world are known.

b = War irrevocably changes people for the worse.

c = Restoration cannot come about through destruction.

d = Government decisions can cause people to lose freedom and control.

e = War not only changes the veteran, it can change family members and breakdown the family structure.

f = Poor economic conditions, drug and alcohol abuse, suicide, and inadequate health facilities on Native American Indian reservations in the U.S. are partially a result of the government's unfaithful promises.

g = Young people value and dream of owning their own car because it brings freedom and control.

h = Other

Figure 3. The number and type of generalizations students believed the story supported, as listed in Question Five.

Overview

The thematic data generated by Question Five revealed that the U.S. and international students agreed on which two generalizations (b, e) they felt were most representative of the themes depicted in the story. These were the only two themes listed that directly addressed war and its consequences, and as such, were generalizations that revealed the specific situation the story dealt with. Three of the U.S. students, however, also indicated that generalization (a) was representative of the story's themes. This generalization revealed insight into life and human nature, not just the situation specific to the story. By identifying this theme, these U.S. students generalized past the specific war context to encompass a broader interpretation of the story.

An overview of the data reveals that at least one U.S. subject responded to each of the eight generalization categories. In contrast, the international subjects responded to only half of the categories. As with Question Three, the U.S. students again indicated a larger variety of responses, and thus a broader interpretation of the generalizations supported by the story.

Question Number Six

Question number six asked subjects to write on eight topics, using the space provided on the questionnaire.

Topic 1

Topic 1 was a two-part question. It was designed to elicit responses based on topics H and I, personal engagement and themes/significance.

International response. The international readers found the story believable, and for the most part realistic. Several also commented that it was sentimental. All of the international readers indicated themes (the ideas about life/reality the story supports) that were similar. Three mentioned how war has lasting, negative effects, and specifically how it changes the behavior of the veterans. One international reader wrote:

I think it is a good story. The story tries to tell something about the Vietnam war effect . . . About the theme, I think it is about how the war changes the behavior of the veterans totally.

The other two readers generalized themes beyond the war context to the difficulties of life in general. For example, one reader wrote:

I believe the theme is related to the hardships of the realization of the reality of life.

U.S. response. The U.S. readers, excluding one, also found the story realistic and believable. A couple of the readers commented that the story was imaginative, while one stated that it was melodramatic, and another that it was sentimental. Like

the international readers, all of the U.S. readers indicated themes that were similar. Six out of the seven readers mentioned as a theme that war has lasting, negative effects and changes the veterans. The seventh reader stated that war is not the answer because everyone loses. Unlike the international students, the majority of the U.S. students also mentioned that war effects the dynamics of the family, as well as the veteran—specifically in the case of the story, how it affected the relationship between the brothers Lyman and Henry. One U.S. student wrote:

The story illustrates war's negative effect on humans as well as the bond between two brothers.

Like the international students, one U.S. reader generalized themes beyond the war context to the difficulties of life in general.

A primary difference between the international and U.S. responses appeared in the discussions of the Vietnam War, itself, and the Native American Indian perspective. Almost half of the U.S. readers indicated that the story revealed interesting insight into this specific war—not just wars in general. For one reader, it was something he or she could personally identify with:

It's sad. I wish there was something else that could help Henry. I can relate with a father who was in the Vietnam War.

Another U.S. student also mentioned that the story allowed the reader to view the Vietnam War from the perspective of Native American Indians on reservations.

Overview. Both groups of readers became personally engaged in the story, finding it realistic and believable. The U.S. students did, however, show a greater level of engagement because of their personal encounters with the effects of the Vietnam War, and because of their understanding of the Native American Indian subculture. Both groups of readers also agreed on the major themes that were depicted in the story, though the U.S. students did provide a broader interpretation of themes by expounding on the war's influence on family dynamics. In contrast to their responses in Questions Two through Five, some of the international students did generalize themes beyond the war context.

Topic 2

This question asked subjects to choose and discuss one character from the story. It was designed to elicit responses based on several topics: family, values, behaviors, social ills, hope/healing, and social order/personal power.

International response. When asked to select a character from the story that interested and intrigued them, three of the international readers chose Lyman. Overall, they characterized him as young and talented, as someone who liked to have a good time, but was forced to face the reality of Henry's situation when he returned from the war. One reader observed that Lyman loved his brother so much that he was willing to sacrifice the car he loved to bring healing to Henry. Another reader viewed Lyman's

actions as irresponsible:

If Lyman was so good at making money, why didn't he get to a better plan and have a secure future?

The other two international readers chose to discuss Henry. One stated that Henry was interesting because his reactions were the most natural. The other commented that Henry, suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome, gave up because he was not a fighter, while other people who are more or less worse off survive.

U.S. response. When asked to select a character from the story that interested and intrigued them, six out of the seven U.S. readers chose Lyman. Like the international readers, the U.S. readers described Lyman as talented and lucky, with a motive to enjoy life, but forced to cope with the changed relationship with his brother. In contrast, however, the U.S. readers also emphasized Lyman as a strong character. They described him as being a hard worker, motivated beyond most people, strong, never giving up, and unselfish. One reader did mention a weakness in Lyman—that since he always had luck on his side, he had no experience dealing with a situation like Henry's. The U.S. readers also emphasized Lyman's compassion, remarking on his love for his family, especially for Henry. One student found Lyman arrogant, however, stating that he bragged too much about making money. Unlike the international readers, most of the U.S. readers remarked on the nature of Lyman's conflicts in the

story: How to cope with his changed relationship with Henry and loss of the old, happy way of life; how to bring the old Henry back; and how to accept that Henry's change was permanent.

Only one U.S. student chose to discuss Henry, stating:

Henry sparks my interest. At first he is freewilled and happy, and enjoys living in the moment. After the war he lost all these values and winds up killing himself because he lost the will to love in such an inhumane world that he experienced during the war.

Overview. The majority of both groups of readers chose Lyman as the intriguing character. In their descriptions of Lyman, however, the U.S. students did provide a broader interpretation of Lyman's character and the nature of his conflicts in the story. In general, both groups painted Lyman as having more personal power than Henry.

Topic 3

Topic question 3 asked subjects to discuss the role of family and the importance of family relationships expressed in the story. It was designed to elicit responses based on topic A, family.

International response. When discussing the role of family relationships, the majority of the international readers emphasized the close relationship between Lyman and Henry. One reader suggested that it was important to Lyman to have a close relationship with Henry since he did not have a father figure. This is the only reference any of the international readers make to the father. Only one reader mentioned the role of the mother and sister: the mother takes the role of deciding how to take care of Henry after the war, and the sister takes the important picture of Lyman and Henry. Only two of the readers discussed the more general concept of "family" as portrayed in the story, and their opinions were divided. One stated that the family relationship was neither too close nor too far, and:

The family tried to heal Henry's problem, but they didn't try their best or maybe they didn't know that family's support is also important, and [it] seems that Henry's family didn't try to talk to him.

In contrast, the other international reader stated that "the sense of family shines forth" as they helped Henry recover from his trauma.

U.S. response. Like the international readers, the majority of the U.S. readers also emphasized the close relationship between Lyman and Henry. One reader stated that their sibling relationship was very important; Lyman and Henry were the best of friends and that made their lives brighter. Another mentioned that the boys' relationship was a strong and important one. In general, the readers indicated that

although there was a tight bond between the brothers, there did not appear to be a close relationship between the entire family, or between the brothers and the rest of the family. One reader summarized the situation:

The brothers are close, but it seems they are adrift from the family.

There was no mention of the father and the boys seemed to be on their own at an early age and the brother [Lyman] was the one to write him [Henry] while he was at war.

All but one of the U.S. readers mentioned that the father played no role in the lives of the brothers. Several mentioned that the mother was there, but did not play a significant role. One reader indicated Lyman and Henry gave the impression that they cared for their mother, while another reader stated that the mother cared for Henry, but should have helped him by taking him to see a doctor. Only one reader mentioned the role of the sister, stating that she did not hold much importance in the story.

In contrast to the international readers, the majority of the U.S. readers discussed the more general concept of "family" as portrayed in the story. Overall they indicated that, other than the relationship between Lyman and Henry, family did not play a large role in the story. Readers mentioned that the boys seemed on their own at an early age, and that the family appeared to have little concern for their welfare since they spontaneously drove across the country by themselves.

Unlike the international readers, one U.S. reader did generalize a theme beyond the context of the Lamartine family:

Above all, parents must be supportive of children and let them discover their own identities.

Overview. Though the majority of both groups of readers emphasized the importance of Lyman and Henry's close relationship, the U.S. students expanded their discussion to include a more comprehensive interpretation of the role of family. They discussed the broader concept of "family" portrayed in the story, and one generalized this concept beyond the story context.

Topic 4

This question asked subjects to discuss what the characters in the story value most. It was designed to elicit responses based on topic B, values.

International response. When asked what the characters in the story value most, all but one of the international students indicated that the characters valued good times—like laughter and the joys of life (cars, traveling). The majority of the students indicated that the characters valued relationships, especially Lyman and Henry. One student also listed money and materialism as values.

The students were then asked if they believed these values changed after Henry came back from the war. All but one of the students said the values did change. Three mentioned how the characters no longer valued the joys of life, especially Henry.

One student wrote:

The war changed him [Henry] 180°. From someone that enjoy[ed] life to someone that hate[d] their life.

Two of these three students speculated this value changed because Henry saw more than he could take during the war. This caused Henry to go into a shell, which impacted the entire family.

Two students also mentioned how the value of relationships changed. For Henry, relationships became less important. One student clearly described this change:

Lyman and Henry are very close before the war. They spent their times together, they shared laughters and joy together. But after the war, Lyman cannot approach his brother anymore. Henry is like a stranger to Lyman. I think this change is caused by the extremely bad experience that Henry had during the war.

U.S. response. When asked what the characters in the story value most, all but two of the U.S. students indicated that the characters valued the car; they valued driving in the car and what the car stood for before the war. Three of the U.S. students, like the international students, indicated that the characters valued relationships—especially Lyman and Henry. Unlike the international students, however, two of the U.S. students listed freedom/freewill as a value, and one student listed happiness.

When asked if they believed these values changed after Henry came back from the war, only three of the U.S. students said the values did change. Two of these students mentioned that Lyman now valued his brother's health and wanted to restore it back to "normal." One of these students listed the T.V. as a new value, and another that Henry no longer valued anything. None of the students speculated as to why the values changed.

Unlike the international students, the majority of U.S. students believed that what the characters valued most stayed the same after the war—it was just their perspectives on the values that changed. One student described this change:

I think both boys value the car and what it stood for before the war.

After the war I still think they both value it but in different ways. After the war, it is a way of the past, innocence, for Henry. Lyman looks at it as a way to get things to how they used to be.

Another student also described the change:

It seemed that they valued each other more than they valued physical possessions. I don't think that changed after the war, they still valued each other. It made it a little difficult of course, but they still valued their family.

Overview. What the characters in the story value most was seen differently by the two groups of readers. The U.S. students viewed the red convertible as the most

important value. This interpretation is similar to the one found in Question Six, Topic 6. The international students indicated, however, that the characters placed more importance on the value of enjoying life. Both groups of readers, however, did mention relationships as a secondary value. While the international students believed these values changed after the war, the U.S. students did not. Instead, the U.S. students offered a different interpretation: They believed it was just the characters' perspectives on the values that changed.

Topic 5

Topic 5 questioned the social ills portrayed in the story. It was designed to elicit responses based on topic D, social ills.

International response. When asked what were the causes of the social ills portrayed in the story, all of the international students named war as the only cause. The majority of the students indicated that mental instability was the social ill that developed as a result of the war. One student described how this social ill developed in Henry:

I think the cause for Henry's trauma is being in war and seeing to[o] much death. He was exposed to a side of reality that none of us would ever want to experience.

The remaining two students did not specify a particular social ill, but indicated that the

general ills depicted in the story were characteristic of the results of war. The breakdown of the social ills and their causes are displayed in the following table:

Table I

International Students' Views of the Social Ills and
Their Causes

<u>STUDENT</u>	<u>SOCIAL ILL(S)</u>		<u>CAUSE</u>
1	Mental Instability	→	War
2	Mental Instability	→	War
3	Mental Instability	→	War
4	Unspecified	→	War
5	Unspecified	→	War

The students were also asked what solutions to these problems were implied in the story and whether or not these solutions could work. One student stated that the family considered taking Henry to see a doctor, but they decided against it. The student indicated that taking Henry to a doctor might have been successful, since doctors are trained professionals. Another student suggested that government intervention might have been successful:

I think the government has to be responsible with the veterans and and the veterans' families. The government should give counselling not only to the veterans, but also to their families, to help them facing the post-war trauma. The government should give their handicapped veterans financial supports if they cannot find jobs because of their handicaps. I think these solutions can do much help for the veterans and their families.

Another student indicated that Lyman's solution was to take Henry's mind off of the war by reestablishing his interest in the red convertible. The student did not discuss the success of this solution.

The remaining two students did not discuss solutions or the success of the solutions presented.

U.S. response. When asked what were the causes of the social ills portrayed in the story, five of the U.S. students also named war as the cause. The remaining two students, however, each offered a different cause: poor family environment and greed, respectively.

Like the international students, the majority of the U.S. students indicated that mental instability was the social ill that developed as a result of the war. The U.S. students, however, did list three other social ills: three students listed war, two listed substance abuse, and one listed death. The relationship between the social ills and their

causes can be seen in the following table:

Table II

U.S. Students' Views of the Social Ills and Their Causes

<u>STUDENT</u>	<u>SOCIAL ILL(S)</u>		<u>CAUSE</u>
1	Mental Instability	→	War
	Death (Henry's)	→	War
	War	→	Unspecified
2	Mental Instability	→	War
	War	→	Unspecified
3	Mental Instability	→	War (Implied)
4	Mental Instability	→	War
	Other*	→	Poor Family Envrn.
5	Substance Abuse	→	War
6	War	→	Greed
7	Unspecified	→	Unspecified

*Including Substance Abuse

The students were also asked what solutions to these problems were implied in the story and whether or not these solutions could work. When asked the same question, the international students each listed a different solution to the problems. The majority of the U.S. students, however, all listed the same solution: professional medical help for Henry and his family. The opinions are varied on whether or not this

approach would have been successful. One student wrote:

This solution could have gone either way, helping Henry or making him worse. Under the circumstances, they probably made the correct choice [by not seeking professional help].

Another student indicated that the damage was too great to overcome in Henry's situation without professional help.

Three of the U.S. students also indicated that substance abuse was implied in the story as one of the solutions to Henry's problem. The students stated that this was not successful—it could not bring Henry back.

The U.S. students specified that there were also five other solutions to these problems implied in the story. One student mentioned that the family's solution to Henry's problem was for him to get better at home, without outside help. Based on the story's ending, the student indicated that this solution was not successful. Another student commented that the car was used as a way to bring the old Henry back. This student felt that sometimes this solution could work, but in Henry's case, the damage was too great to overcome without professional help. A third student mentioned that the government was implied as a solution, but that it offered no help. This student commented that the government still used Henry for war, even though they did not help him cope with the side effects upon his return. Another student stated that other than the war trauma, most of the problems in the story could have been avoided with a stronger family structure and values. And finally, one student noted that the entire

situation could have been avoided if Henry had stayed home:

The solution would be to stay "at home" or stay in a loving, caring environment that is not too concerned with the material world. If Henry didn't leave, he wouldn't have change[d]. These solutions will work only when we as a whole I mean the world realizes that we are all on the same side. Competition for money and power breeds death and destruction.

In addition to listing a solution within the context of the story, this student also extrapolated to offer a solution to the problem of war in a real-life context.

Overview. Overall, both groups of readers responded similarly to the social ills portrayed in the story. The majority of both groups named mental instability as the primary social ill caused by war. However, the U.S. students indicated a wider variety of interpretations by listing additional social ills and their causes. A large discrepancy appeared when students were asked what solutions to these problems were implied in the story. While each international student indicated a different answer, the majority of the U.S. students agreed that the solution was professional medical help for Henry and his family. This confirms the findings in Question Four where the U.S. students emphasized the value of medical help and believed it could bring healing to the Lamartine family. And lastly, one U.S. student generalized a solution to war beyond the specific context of the story.

Topic 6

This question asked subjects to discuss what the Lamartine family put their hope in. It was designed to elicit responses based on topic E, hope and healing.

International response. Two of the international students stated that the Lamartine family put its hope in the possibility that Henry would one day get better. One student said the family members placed their hope in the car. The two remaining students gave no response.

U.S. response. Unlike the international students, the majority of the U.S. students stated that the Lamartine family put its hope in the car. Three of the students commented that the family members put their hope in each other, one specifying that Lyman and Henry put their hope in each other, and another that Lyman put his hope in Henry. Like the international students, two indicated that the Lamartine family put its hope in the possibility that Henry would one day recover. Four other ideas were also presented, each by a different student: 1) in the beginning of the story, Lyman's hope was in money; 2) the family placed hope in freedom, living in the moment, and enjoying life; 3) after the war, Henry's hope was in the TV; and 4) the family put their hope in the government, but the government did not help Henry.

Overview. One similarity was noted between the responses of the two groups of readers. Each group stated that the Lamartine family put its hope in the possibility that Henry would one day recover. The majority of the U.S. students, however, believed that the Lamartine family put its hope in the red convertible. These interpretations are similar to those found in response to Question Six, Topic 4. In addition, the U.S. students again provided a broader interpretation of the text by examining other instances of hope expressed in the story.

Topic 7

Topic 7 was a three-part question that asked subjects to discuss the issue of healing expressed in the story. Like the previous question, it was designed to elicit responses based on topic E, hope and healing.

International response. The students were first asked to discuss what Lyman does to try to help bring healing to Henry and his family. Three of the international students gave the same response: Lyman used the red convertible to attract Henry's attention. By destroying Henry's love, Lyman hoped to jolt him out of his post-war state. Two of these students felt this attempt was mostly successful because Henry was, indeed, attracted to the car. One student wrote:

*He [Lyman] finally made Henry talk and express his feeling[s],
although finally he [Henry] choose a bad decision by suicide.*

The other student did not believe Lyman's attempt was successful, stating that Lyman did not realize that Henry was "a lost cause."

Two other strategies were also mentioned. One student said Lyman partially destroyed Henry's TV in an attempt to stop Henry from watching it so much. Another student mentioned that Lyman gave Henry extra attention to try to cheer him up. Both of these students felt these attempts were not successful in helping bring healing to Henry because Henry's condition was too severe. One student stated that Henry needed professional help, such as psychologists and/or mental health counselors.

When asked if Lyman was ignoring the reality of Henry's condition in hopes that life could once again become like it was before the war, only one international student responded. This student felt that Lyman was not ignoring the reality since "nothing is impossible."

Finally, the students were asked if they thought Henry and his family could be healed. All of the students who responded to this question, which was the majority, indicated that the Lamartine family could be healed. One student said it was possible because Henry had a psychological disorder, not a physical one. Another student said it was possible, if they wanted to be healed. A third student indicated that although there could be healing, the family could never be restored to pre-war condition:

I think Henry and his family cannot be in the same, good condition as it was before Henry went to war, but they can overcome their big problems and be in a better situation if they get some help from

the experts (e.g. psychologists) and never give up trying to give affection to Henry.

U.S. response. The students were first asked to discuss what Lyman does to try to help bring healing to Henry and his family. Unlike the international students, all of the U.S. students gave the same answer: Lyman destroyed Henry's red convertible to get Henry's mind on something else. In addition, all of the students indicated that this attempt was somewhat successful, but not entirely. The students stated it was successful in that Henry did open up; it was a distraction for Henry. However, Henry did not return to the person he was before the war. One student wrote:

He [Lyman] is somewhat successful, but it did not change Henry back to his old self. Henry was sure that he would never be healed, that is why he killed himself.

One student offered a different approach. This student stated that Lyman was somewhat successful in that when Henry does take his own life, Lyman knows why.

When asked if Lyman was ignoring the reality of Henry's condition in hopes that life could once again become like it was before the war, five of the U.S. students said yes, and only one no. The students who said yes listed several reasons: 1) that Lyman is not worried about the reality Henry is in, he just wants his old brother back, 2) Lyman thinks he sees the old Henry for a moment, but it was not real, 3) it will never be the same, and Henry kills himself, and 4) Henry is different now, and the

family needs to face the changes. In addition, one student described Lyman's perspective:

Lyman really wants Henry to return to how he was. I don't think he has yet realized that no matter what he does he can't change the past and make Henry into the person he was.

Finally, the students were asked if they thought Henry and his family could be healed. In contrast to the international students who all said yes, three of the U.S. students said no, one yes, and one maybe. One student said it was not possible that the Lamartine family could be healed because they lost Henry and all of their lives changed; the family could now see things more clearly. Another student commented:

Henry and [his] family may never be completely healed. The effects of war cannot be overstated. But the choice is theirs.

One student believed the Lamartine family could in fact be healed, but it would take time. Another expressed that maybe the family could be healed, but only with professional help.

Overview. A different trend was noted in the international responses to the first question in this topic. When asked to discuss what Lyman does to try to bring healing, the international students gave a wider variety of interpretations than the U.S. students. The U.S. students, on the other hand, all gave the same response: Lyman destroyed the car. This agrees with the U.S. responses in the previous topics, Question Six,

Topics 4 and 6, where the students discussed the importance of the red convertible in the story, ascribing to it high value. An additional contrast was also noted between the two groups of readers. All of the international students believed Henry and his family could be healed. However, the U.S. students discussed multiple options, indicating different perspectives on whether or not there could be healing.

Topic 8

The last topic on the protocol asked questions on the topics of social order and personal power. It was also designed to elicit responses based on topic F, social order and personal power.

International response. The students were asked how much personal power and control they thought the characters in the story have. Overall, the general international response indicated that the characters do not have a lot of power. One student stated that Lyman had no power or control over Henry, and vice versa. Another student said Henry was without power because he did not know that there was anything wrong with himself, while Lyman had some power since he had a little bit of knowledge. A third student remarked that Henry did not have much power, yet Lyman did. And one student felt that the brothers did, in fact, have power and control:

It seems that they can do whatever they want without asking their parents['] permission.

When asked if the amount of control the characters have is dependent on their ethnic group or social position, only two international students responded. One responded with a yes:

I think how one ethnic group sees family values can affect the amount of control over the other family members. As far as I know, in the East (Asia), people respect seniority and they must obey their older family members. But in the West (Western countries), every person can express their opinions without worrying about seniority.

The other student said no:

No, because they [the characters in the story] are all human and we are all people, individuals but not segregated.

In the discussion of ethnic groups and social position, none of the international students made a reference to the Native American Indian ethnic group.

U.S. response. The students were asked how much personal power and control they thought the characters in the story have. In contrast to the international responses, the general U.S. response indicated that the characters do have a lot of power. One student remarked that the brothers choose what to do with their lives and are not overly influenced by their environment. Another student supported this idea:

The two brothers have tons of power. They can just leave and buy a car and drive around the country in a second.

A third student added that Lyman and Henry can basically do what they want within their financial constraints. Another student said that Lyman has control because he is smart and lucky, while one more expressed that Lyman and Henry were not any different than other teenage boys. And finally, a student mentioned that Lyman thinks he is in control since he bought the TV and managed to get Henry to work on the car again. Despite the U.S. students' belief that the characters did have power and control, two students indicated that Henry lost his after the war; he lost his will and could not face life.

When asked if the amount of control the characters have is dependent on their ethnic group or social position, the U.S. students gave divided answers. Two students said yes, their ethnic background was the reason Henry and his family were treated differently. One student wrote:

Reservations don't exhibit the financial opportunity the rest of society do[es]. Basically, they have never had enough money to influence the government enough to help them.

One student indicated that the amount of control the Lamartine family had was not dependent on their ethnic group or social position:

I personally think that no matter what your ethnic group or social position is, you have just as much personal power and control that you allow yourself to have. Also I think that in many cases Native Americans that live on reservations are using their background as a cop-out to join society and the workforce.

The remaining two students said perhaps the amount of control the Lamartine family had was dependent on their ethnic group or social position. One of these students believed the reason Lyman and Henry could be mature and make their own decisions at a young age was possibly due to their ethnic group and culture. The other student supported this idea:

To a certain extent the amount of control could depend on their ethnic group or social position. It could be the reason Henry joined the army, because of a lack of opportunity and choices.

In the discussion of ethnic groups and social position, the majority of the U.S. students made a reference to and discussed the Native American Indian ethnic group. This was a large contrast to the international students, none of which mentioned Native Americans.

Overview. Overall, both groups of readers differently interpreted how much personal power and control they believed the characters displayed in the story. The general international response indicated that the characters did not have much power,

while the general U.S. response was just the opposite. Another predominant difference was noted. Unlike the majority of the U.S. students, none of the international students made any references to the Native American Indian ethnic group. These results are similar to those found in Question Six, Topic 1.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

This study was modeled after Sandra Tawake's reader-response study to Alan Duff's novel, *Once Were Warriors* (1995). As with Tawake, the research in this study was to explore the responses of two groups of readers in an attempt to reveal the range of interpretation the story is "capable of evoking from readers who approach it from different cultural backgrounds" (1995, p. 282). By comparing and contrasting readers' responses to Louise Erdrich's short story "The Red Convertible," this study uncovered both similarities and differences in the way readers relate to and interpret the literature text. In areas where the two studies could be compared, many of the results in this study were similar to those Tawake uncovered in her 1995 study, thus helping substantiate the results of both studies. In addition, this study reveals additional insight into the use of literature texts used in university level ESL classes in the United States.

Discussion of Results

As discussed in Chapter I, the rationale for this study stems from the need for ESL instructors to understand how the cultural backgrounds of their students influence how the students interpret the literature texts used in the ESL classroom. This study was born in response to this need, generating data to be examined using guiding

research questions. Since these questions are guiding, and not hypothesis generating, the answers to these questions are uncovered through a detailed discussion of the results. Integrated into this discussion is a reflection on how the results relate to the literature presented in Chapter II, with emphasis on how they relate to Tawake's 1995 study, after which this study was modeled.

Guiding Research Questions One and Two

As outlined in Chapter I, three guiding research questions were posed. The first two questions are as follows:

- 1) Based on their cultural backgrounds, how do the international students perceive and interpret the literature texts?

- 2) How do these interpretations compare to those of the native speakers of American English who have certain shared experiences as a result of being a U.S. citizen and/or similar cultural backgrounds as the author of the text?

The answers to these first two questions will be explored in the following discussion on the comparison to Tawake's study and the discussion of additional insights from this study. Guiding Research Question Three will be addressed in the next section, **Implications.**

Comparison to Tawake's Study

The text for Tawake's reader-response study was a novel about the native Maori of New Zealand, *Once Were Warriors*. Her study explored the responses of two groups of readers, "one group of Pacific-island readers living within a Pacific-island context and one group of non-Pacific-island readers living outside a Pacific-island context" (1995, p. 282). The text for this study, "The Red Convertible" by Louise Erdrich, is a piece of literature written by a native English speaking U.S. citizen. A story about a Native American Indian family in North Dakota, it is a typical sample of the kind of literature used to teach international students about United States culture. Like the subjects in Tawake's study, this study explored the responses of two groups of readers, one group of university students from the U.S. and one group of international university students from various countries outside of the U.S.

Reader response. The reader response in both studies was similar in two primary ways. First, just as both groups of Tawake's readers found the society depicted in the novel realistic and believable, both groups of readers in this study also found the story realistic and believable. Secondly, both groups of Tawake's readers and both groups of readers in this study approached the texts from different perspectives. Tawake discovered that the Pacific-island readers saw the Maori community in the novel as basically representative of Maori life in New Zealand. The focus of the non-Pacific-island readers was different. They generally viewed the Maori community

depicted in the story as similar to other "indigenous peoples from many parts of the globe who had been displaced by settlers or colonizers" (p. 284). Tawake concludes "these responses reveal that readers coming to the novel from different cultural and social backgrounds focus on and emphasize different interpretive stances—experience different degrees of personal engagement" (p. 285).

Like Tawake's two groups of readers, the U.S. and international readers in this study approached the text from different perspectives. Interestingly, however, the roles of the readers were reversed. It was the U.S. readers, those from the same country as the characters in the story, that indicated a broader interpretation of the story. They showed a greater level of engagement due to their personal experiences with United States culture, namely the effects of the Vietnam War and their understanding of the Native American Indian subculture. The U.S. students applied the story's themes beyond the specific context of the story, engaging in discussions about the war, the effects of the war, Native Americans, and reservations in the U.S. The focus of the international readers was different. They did not engage in discussions that were specific to either the Vietnam War or Native Americans. Consequently, in all but one instance, the international readers did not discuss the story's themes beyond the context of the story itself. This confirms Tawake's finding that readers coming from different cultural and social backgrounds do, in fact, focus on different interpretive stances, and therefore experience different levels of personal engagement (1995).

The responses of Tawake's non-Pacific island readers and this study's U.S.

readers are not less engaged, less real, or less intense because of their broader perspectives; their focus is different (Tawake, 1995). Tawake argues that, according to reader-response theory, neither of the two "orientations to Duff's novel should be critically approved more than the other, but both responses seem tied to the cultural and social identities of the two readers" (1995, p. 286). Likewise, the two orientations to Erdrich's short story also appear tied to the cultural and social identities of the two groups of readers; neither approach should be critically approved more than the other.

Visual images. The two groups of readers in this study—with roles reversed, as described in the previous section—responded similarly to Tawake's two groups of readers when asked to identify the visual images within the story. Tawake discovered that the Pacific-island readers visualized the specific people and place the text depicted, while the non-Pacific-island readers "made intermediary moves to extend the text beyond the specific to create their own imaginative landscape for the action" (1995, p. 286). Like the Pacific-island readers, the international readers pictured the literal interpretation of the text. Some of the U.S. readers, like the non-Pacific island readers, extended beyond the specific text by indicating a symbolic interpretation of the visual images, thus also creating their own imaginative landscape for the action.

One story: two faces. At the end of her study analysis, Tawake concludes that Duff's novel, "as it is read by readers from two different cultural backgrounds, is two

different novels" (1995, p. 295). The same could not be said of Erdrich's story, however, since both groups of readers similarly interpreted the text in many instances. On the other hand, it would be appropriate to classify the story as having *two faces*, a description used by Tawake, when read by the two groups. One face, as viewed by the international readers, depicted a family, especially two brothers, torn apart by the effects of war. The face seen by the U.S. readers was much more complicated. This face depicted the hope and freedom of two brothers, as symbolized by the red convertible, being ripped apart by the effects of the Vietnam War. Henry's mental condition, a result of the war, profoundly impacted the family. As Native Americans living on a reservation, finding appropriate help for Henry and his family was difficult. So, with all hope dead, Henry committed suicide.

Tawake's analysis of results. The purpose of Tawake's study was to examine Duff's controversial novel by exploring the responses of two groups of readers. This approach was an attempt to reveal insight into the novel by identifying various responses to and understanding of the characters and issues presented. In addition, Tawake wanted to reveal "a range of interpretation the work is capable of evoking from readers who approach it from different cultural backgrounds" (1995, p. 282). The approach to this study was identical to Tawake's; however, the purposes of the two studies were somewhat different. Nevertheless, many of the discoveries in this study matched Tawake's findings. Tawake writes, "by comparing and contrasting readers'

responses, I uncover differences in the ways readers from different cultures relate to the literary work, differences in the values they attach to behavior, and differences in their understanding of the novel's themes and significance" (p. 282). These exact differences were also uncovered in this study. These findings are explored in the following section.

Additional Insights from this Study

As described in Chapter III, three levels of interpretations were elicited through the reader-response style questionnaire: literal, interpretive, and thematic. The questions generated interpretations concerning the topics of family, values, behaviors, social ills, hope/healing, social order/personal power, visual images, personal engagement, and themes/significance. Upon comparing and contrasting the results of the study, both similarities and differences were found in how the readers from different cultures related to the story, in the values the readers attached to the behavior of the characters, and in what the readers believed the story's themes and significance to be.

Similar interpretations of topics. Most of the topics under investigation generated a similar, initial response from the majority of both the U.S. and international students. These topics include family, social ills, visual images, personal engagement, themes/significance, and behaviors. While the overall, general response to these topics was similar, some differences were also present. These differences are addressed in the next section, along with the remaining topics under investigation.

Both groups of readers, generally speaking, maintained parallel views of the first topic, family. They emphasized the importance of Lyman and Henry's close relationship, while indicating that the brothers were slightly disconnected from the rest of the family. The social ills portrayed in the story were also viewed similarly. The majority of both groups of readers regarded mental instability as the primary social ill caused by war. When interpreting the visual images in the story, the majority of both the U.S. and international readers selected the literal meaning of the story's title. Both groups of readers also became personally engaged in the story, finding it realistic and believable. When asked to discuss the story's themes and significance, the two groups indicated themes that directly addressed war and its consequences, and as such, were generalizations that revealed situations specific to the story. The response to the final topic, behaviors, was more complicated. The overall response was similar, both the U.S. and international students agreed on their views of Henry's post-war behaviors. Likewise, they also similarly rated the appropriateness of the characters' actions in the story. However, differences were noted in the values that were attached to the behaviors. These differences will be addressed in the next section.

These findings support arguments for teaching culture and literature together in the classroom. One argument contends that literature is universal; it connects across cultures with themes like love, death, parents, and family. Consequently, "literary works may transcend any particular place or time or may link students with their immediate culture and enable them to participate in its development" (Pugh, 1989, p.

321). A large number of similar responses from both the U.S. and international readers indicate that this piece of literature is in fact universal. Though the text is part of the canon of U.S. literature, the international students, like the U.S. students, were able to understand and identify with the major themes and issues presented in the story. Consequently, "The Red Convertible" did transcend the particular place and time, allowing the international students to form a link with the immediate culture surrounding them. With this insight, the international students could possibly find their identities as members of a larger world community with shared values, "rather than as separate individuals with only their own problems to solve" (Pugh, 1989, p. 321).

Different interpretations of topics. The remaining topics under investigation generated different responses between the U.S. and international readers. These topics include values (and specifically the values attached to behavior), hope/healing, and social order/personal power.

As discussed in the previous section, the response to the topic of behaviors was complex. Though the overall response to the behaviors of the characters was similar, differences were noted in the values that were attached to the behaviors. The primary difference appeared when addressing the solution to Henry's mental condition. The fact that Henry's family did not take him to see a doctor was not an issue of concern for the international students. The U.S. students, on the other hand, indicated this action was not appropriate; they valued the importance of professional medical help in bringing

healing. This reveals a difference in the value the international and U.S. students attached to the behavior. Other discrepancies were also noted when addressing the topic of values. What the characters in the story valued most was seen differently by both groups of readers. The U.S. students viewed the red convertible as the most important value, while the international students indicated the characters placed more importance on the value of enjoying life.

The data generated another interesting insight into the students' views on the characters' behaviors. Question Four asked students to rate the appropriateness of the characters' actions in the story. The standard deviations for the international and U.S. responses to Question Four were calculated to determine if any patterns existed. The data revealed that in all but one category, the international standard deviations were greater than the U.S. standard deviations. This finding confirms what would be expected: since the international students are from a variety of cultural backgrounds, it is more likely that there would be less agreement on what would be considered appropriate for each behavior. Likewise, it is more likely that the U.S. students would be in closer agreement. It is reasonable to conclude that the U.S. students were in closer agreement due to their shared cultural values and beliefs. This helps confirm that the U.S. responses are in fact an appropriate measurement against which the international responses can be compared and contrasted, since the U.S. responses are a more homogenous sample.

The topic of hope/healing also revealed differences in the U.S. and international

reader responses. The U.S. students believed that professional medical help could bring both hope and healing to Henry and his family, while the international students, for the most part, believed it could not. While both groups of readers believed that the Lamartine family put its hope in the possibility that Henry would one day recover, the U.S. readers believed that the family put its hope in the red convertible. In addition, the two groups of readers did not agree on whether or not Henry could actually be healed.

The final topic that revealed primary differences was social order/personal power. The general international response indicated that the characters did not have much personal power and control, while the general U.S. response was just the opposite. Another predominant difference was noted. Unlike the majority of the U.S. students, none of the international students made any references to the Native American Indian ethnic group. Since the U.S. students are from the same country as the characters in the story, they have more exposure to this particular subculture. It is likely that this enabled the U.S. students to demonstrate a broader interpretation of the social order and personal power of the Native Americans depicted in the story.

These findings also support arguments for teaching culture and literature together in the classroom. Even though literature carries universal themes that transcend culture, culture is also inevitably expressed in literature. Consequently, as the international students experienced U.S. culture through the eyes of the story's characters, it most likely helped them understand the culture in a new way (Povey,

1984; Tawake, 1993). Though the "world" depicted in "The Red Convertible" was not real, it offered a realistic context in which characters from different social backgrounds could be portrayed. This "world" helped give the international students an idea of the codes and preoccupations that structure the real U.S. society (Collie & Slater, 1987). In addition, literature also shows how the present culture has come to be what it is. With the issues of post-Vietnam war culture and Native American society, "The Red Convertible" helped provide the international students with a historical perspective of the U.S. (Alcorn, 1991). The international students showed a lower level of engagement in two areas of the text: 1) in the areas of personal encounters with the effects of the Vietnam War, and 2) with their understanding of the Native American Indian subculture. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the international students have had limited exposure to these cultural issues. Thus, "The Red Convertible" most likely provided the students with new insight into U.S. culture and history, supporting Tawake's claim that "a reader may come to know a great deal about the cultures represented in the literature" (1993, p. 325).

Different interpretations of the text. Three primary differences were noted between the U.S. and international students' interpretations of the text. The first difference appeared in the students' understanding and use of the symbolism in the story. For example, some of the U.S. students were able to identify the red convertible as a symbol of hope and freedom. However, none of the international students

indicated a symbolic interpretation of the car. The second difference emerged after examining the students' overall methods of interpreting the text. In seven out of the twelve questions on the protocol, the U.S. students indicated a broader and more developed interpretation than did the international students. For example, the U.S. students often indicated a larger variety of responses for each question. They also engaged in longer discussions, expounding on the story's major issues and themes. On only one question did the international students indicate a broader and more developed interpretation than the U.S. students. And a final difference, the international students tended to indicate interpretations of the text within the context of the story. The U.S. students, on the other hand, often generalized the issues and concepts beyond the story's context, commenting on ideas related to human nature, family, solutions to war, and life in general.

The cause for these striking differences of text interpretations may lie in the realm of literature pedagogy within the United States. It is common for U.S. teachers of literature to emphasize the interpretation of symbolism within a text. Broad interpretations of the text's themes and significance are also important, as well as generalizing the text's concepts beyond the context of the story and into the "real world." Perhaps this is an approach to reading which the international students have had limited exposure to in their cultures. It is also possible that the international students were responding to the text as inexperienced readers. Regardless, the data support the notion that the international students in this study were not as familiar with

this method of interpreting the text, especially in comparison to the U.S. students.

An Alternate Interpretation of Results

Upon review of the results, it is possible that some educators might draw alternate conclusions about whether or not to use literature as a medium to expose international students to culture. One such argument indicates that literature cannot teach culture because it requires some previous knowledge of culture. This previous knowledge is needed as a framework upon which the new cultural insights can be added as students read the literature. While this observation may be true, it creates a dilemma. What should educators teach first? This situation establishes a perfect context to make decisions about which aspects of culture to teach and how to teach them in the international language classroom. The results of this study have been analyzed under the premise that students cannot construct a cultural framework without having first been exposed to the culture. Consequently, a medium is needed to expose students to the culture. This study argues that literature is in fact an appropriate instrument for doing so.

Threats to the Validity of the Results

This study has attempted to accurately examine how the cultural backgrounds of international students influence their interpretations of the literature they read in class. However, it is important to consider some of the possible threats to the validity

of the research results.

The demographic information generated by the questionnaire highlights some of these threats. Upon review of the demographic data, it was determined that the U.S. and international groups were an appropriate match. Both groups of students were of similar age and educational level, and in all but one instance, had been residing in the U.S. for similar periods of time. It is important to note, however, the differences in the sex of the students. Eighty percent of the international students were male, while 71% of the U.S. students were female. It is possible that some of the differences noted between the two groups of readers could be sex-related, not culturally-related. For example, Question Four asked students to rate the appropriateness of the characters' actions in the story. Interestingly, the international students identified several extreme behaviors (drinking, drugs, and a costly, unplanned purchase) as much more appropriate behaviors than did the U.S. students. While not wanting to stereotype sex-related behaviors, it is important to note that this difference may have been sex-related.

It is also important to note the differences in the geographical backgrounds of the two groups of students. At least 40% of the international students classified themselves as urban, and 0% as rural. On the other hand, 29% of the U.S. students classified themselves as rural, and 0% as urban. It is possible that some of the differences noted between the two groups of readers could be related to their geographical backgrounds, and not specifically to their culture.

The demographic information generated by the questionnaire highlights another

possible threat to the validity of the results. One of the international students, who identified her native country as Canada, had been living in the U.S. for twelve years. It is highly likely that this student had previously attended an educational institution in the United States, and thus been exposed to both U.S. teaching methods and culture.

A final threat to the validity of the results originates with the U.S. students. Consistently the U.S. readers gave broader and more extensive interpretations of the text than did the international students. While this is most likely due to the differences in cultural backgrounds, it is possible that the U.S. students' English language ability somewhat influenced the interpretations. As native English speakers, the U.S. students have a better understanding of the English language, including a larger vocabulary and more experience writing in the language. Thus, it is likely that the U.S. responses would be better developed than those of the international students. It is important to note, however, that two of the international students were Canadian. Though it is not known if these students were native English speakers, it is possible. If they were, then up to 40% of the international students spoke English as a first language. Disregarding cultural factors, these Canadian students would then have had the same English language ability as the U.S. students. It is also important to note that even though the U.S. readers consistently gave broader and more extensive interpretations of the text than did the international students, there were seven U.S. students responding to the text and only five international students. Consequently, the U.S. readers had a wider student base from which to draw interpretations.

Strengths of the Study Design

Despite the threats to validity, several aspects of the study design enhanced the validity of the results. Designed with both closed and open-ended questions, the questionnaire produced a large amount of rich data that could easily be descriptively analyzed, despite the limited number of responses. Similar results generated across the questionnaire also helped to establish the validity of the measure. In multiple instances, the same response appeared as an answer to more than one question. And finally, in areas where the two studies could be compared, many of the results in this study were similar to those Tawake uncovered in her 1995 study, thus helping substantiate the results of both studies.

IMPLICATIONS

Implications for ESL Instruction

This examination of the responses from students of varying cultural backgrounds has produced a pool of rich data. Even though this data cannot be generalized to large populations, it still holds implications for teachers of international students, especially teachers of English as a Second Language.

Guiding Research Question Three

The answer to the third guiding research question posed in Chapter I, "What

implication will these findings have for ESL instructors?" will be explored in the following discussion on the implications for ESL curriculum development and teacher training.

Curriculum Development

The research results of this study have several implications for curriculum development in the ESL classroom. One implication involves the choice of literature texts used to teach U.S. culture. In the discussion of the results, it was noted that several of the topics under investigation generated different responses between the U.S. and international readers. These topics included values (and specifically values attached to behaviors), hope/healing, and social order/personal power. The U.S. students interpreted these values represented in the story through their own cultural lenses, which were different than the lenses used by the international students. If international students are to increase their knowledge of U.S. culture, they need to understand how the U.S. citizens view these concepts. Therefore, the selection of literature texts should be guided by this insight; ESL instructors should consider selecting texts that develop the concepts of values, hope, healing, social order, and personal power as portrayed in U.S. culture.

Another implication for curriculum development in the ESL classroom involves how instructors should approach teaching the literature texts. As previously stated, the U.S. students approached interpreting the text differently in three primary ways: in

their use of symbolism, in indicating broader and more developed interpretations, and in generalizing the issues and concepts in the text beyond the story's context. Since it is common for teachers of literature in the U.S. to emphasize these types of interpretations, international students studying in U.S. colleges and universities should be familiar with these methods. Therefore, the teaching methods of ESL educators using literature in their classrooms should be guided by this reality.

The final implication for curriculum development in the ESL classroom also involves how instructors should approach teaching the literature texts. As previously noted, the international students did not engage in discussions about the Vietnam War, or about the Native American Indian subculture. It is reasonable to conclude that the international students have had limited exposure to these cultural issues. When the reader has had limited or no knowledge and experience with the target culture's life and values, the interpretation of the text is likely to be only superficial (Tawake, 1993). Therefore, if the international students are to fully engage in, experience, and learn about the culture represented in the literature text, they need a framework upon which to build. ESL educators, then, need to familiarize students with the major cultural issues and concepts expressed in the text, perhaps by providing a preliminary context prior to the reading.

Teacher Training in Literature

These implications in curriculum development should also guide the approach

to teacher training in literature. ESL teacher-education programs should focus on teaching interpretive skills, as well as how to select appropriate literature texts. These texts should represent a wide variety of U.S. cultural issues and concepts. In addition, "curriculum materials should be developed that incorporate a study of the values and priorities of the cultures represented in the literature" (Tawake, 1995, p. 296).

Implications for Scholarly Understanding

The results of this study also have implications for scholarly understanding in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). In Chapter II, a lack of related research was noted in two primary areas. This study has attempted to address these areas by expanding the existing research, and thus the scholarly understanding in the field.

The first area was a lack of related research and information on how to teach U.S. culture through literature. The research results in this study do not indicate that literature can *teach* culture to international students. The results do, however, demonstrate that literature can *expose* international students to culture. Consequently, this study has provided insight into how ESL teachers can approach teaching U.S. literature, both in interpretation and application. This study has also added to the limited research on using literature to expose ESL students to the existence of various subcultures in the United States.

The second area was a lack of related literature and research on the reader and

the reader's process of creating meaning from a text. While this study does not confirm that U.S. literature can be used to acculturate international students, it does demonstrate the importance of reader-response theory. The data results indicate that students from different backgrounds, beliefs, and assumptions produced multiple meanings and interpretations of the story (Ali, 1994; Chase & Hynd 1987; Spiegel, 1998). Consequently, what the readers brought with them to the text did help determine the experience they had with the literature (Tawake, 1993). This supports the major claim of reader-response theory: the reader makes meaning, not the text.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Changing the Research Methodology

In light of the study's weaknesses, changes in the research design are recommended. The first change involves the demographic backgrounds of the subjects. It is recommended that the questionnaire ask students to identify their first language, as well as their native country. As previously mentioned, two of the international students in this study identified Canada as their native country. It is unknown whether or not English was their first language; therefore, the results could only be generalized to international students and not specifically to ESL students. It is also recommended that a closer demographic match be made between the two groups of readers, particularly in the areas of sex and geographical backgrounds. The second change in the research

design would be to administer the questionnaire to more students. A larger sample would allow for the research results to be statistically analyzed, as was planned in the original design of this study, thus providing additional insight to the descriptive analysis.

Recommendations for Further Research

Despite the contribution this study has made to the literature, the need for further research in the areas of both using literature to teach culture and in the reader's response to the text are still needed. Similar studies are recommended in order to shed additional light on these areas, as well as to help validate the accuracy of the results found in this study. A similar study could test the international students' understanding of the U.S. cultural issues presented in the text prior to the reading, and again after the reading. These findings could then be compared and contrasted to identify if, in fact, the students obtained additional insight into the target culture as a result of reading the text. Another approach would be to compare and contrast responses from two groups of readers, one group consisting of U.S. students and the other of students from a homogeneous culture. The implications of the study would then be more specifically tailored to meet the needs of these international students. A final study idea would be to compare and contrast the responses from groups of native English speakers, with each group from a different culture. This would help eliminate the influence of language proficiency, thus allowing for a more accurate interpretation of the influence

of the cultural backgrounds.

SUMMARY

This study was a detailed descriptive investigation into the different interpretations and perceptions that are evoked by readers of United States literature, based on their cultural backgrounds and experience. The study uncovered similarities and differences in the way readers from the U.S. and from various countries outside of the U.S. relate to and interpret a literature text. These findings have implications for both reader-response theory and for research on using culture and literature together in the language classroom. The findings also have implications for curriculum development and teacher training in the field of TESOL.

As educators, it is important to remember that using literature in the classroom goes beyond the pedagogical insights generated and supported by this study. Stories, through both the spoken and written word, have for centuries played a role in the world's cultures. Stories are engaging, reflective; they can personally touch and change the lives of those who listen. Literature, as such, "preeminently reflects in depth and quality some aspect of the human experience" (Pugh, 1989, p. 321); and this experience transcends culture. For these qualities alone, literature should not be forgotten in the language classroom. As in the words of one of the United States' most celebrated authors:

No wonder that Alexander carried the Iliad with him
on his expeditions in a precious casket.
A written word is the choicest of relics.
It is something at once more intimate with us and
more universal than any other work of art.
It is the work of art nearest to life itself.
It may be translated into every language, and not only be read
but actually breathed from all human lips;—
not be represented on canvas or in marble only,
but be carved out of the breath of life itself. . .
Books are the treasured wealth of the world and
the fit inheritance of generations and nations.

Henry David Thoreau
from *Walden*

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APPENDIX A

SHORT STORY

"The Red Convertible" by Louise Erdrich

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152 NATIVE AMERICANS: RECLAIMING THE PAST

THE RED CONVERTIBLE

Louise Erdrich

Of Chippewa and German-American descent, Louise Erdrich grew up on a reservation in North Dakota where her grandfather had been tribal chair and where her father taught. She studied at Dartmouth College and Johns Hopkins University and has published prize-winning poetry and fiction. Her writing has been praised for "conveying unflinchingly the funkiness, humor, and great unspoken sadness of the Indian reservations, and a people exiled to a no-man's-land between two worlds" (Peter Matthiessen). Her best-selling Love Medicine (1984) was a series of intermeshing stories about the lives of two reservation families. In the following example, the narrator tells the story of a brother who went to serve in Vietnam and was never the same after his return. Erdrich continued exploring the histories of the fictional families in these stories in Beet Queen (1986) and Tracks (1988).

Lyman Lamartine

I was the first one to drive a convertible on my reservation. And of course it was red, a red Olds. I owned that car along with my brother Henry Junior. We owned it together until his boots filled with water on a windy night and he bought out my share. Now Henry owns the whole car, and his younger brother Lyman (that's myself), Lyman walks everywhere he goes.

How did I earn enough money to buy my share in the first place? My one talent was I could always make money. I had a touch for it, unusual in a Chippewa. From the first I was different that way, and everyone recognized it. I was the only kid they let in the American Legion Hall to shine shoes, for example, and one Christmas I sold spiritual bouquets for the mission door to door. The nuns let me keep a percentage. Once I started, it seemed the more money I made the easier the money came. Everyone encouraged it. When I was fifteen I got a job washing dishes at the Joliet Caf , and that was where my first big break happened.

It wasn't long before I was promoted to busing tables, and then the short-order cook quit and I was hired to take her place. No sooner than you know it I was managing the Joliet. The rest is history. I went on managing. I soon became part owner, and of course there was no stopping me then. It wasn't long before the whole thing was mine.

After I'd owned the Joliet for one year, it blew over in the worst tornado ever seen around here. The whole operation was smashed to bits. A total loss. The fryalator was up in a tree, the grill torn in half like it was paper. I was only sixteen. I had it all in my mother's name, and I lost it quick, but before I lost it I had every one of my relatives, and their relatives, to dinner, and I also bought that red Olds I mentioned, along with Henry.

The first time we saw it! I'll tell you when we first saw it. We had gotten a ride up to Winnipeg, and both of us had money. Don't ask me why, because we never mentioned a car or anything, we just had all our money. Mine was cash, a big bankroll from the Joliet's insurance. Henry had two checks—a week's extra pay for being laid off, and his regular check from the Jewel Bearing Plant. 5

We were walking down Portage anyway, seeing the sights, when we saw it. There it was, parked, large as life. Really as if it was alive. I thought of the word *repose*, because the car wasn't simply stopped, parked, or whatever. That car reposed, calm and gleaming, a FOR SALE sign in its left front window. Then, before we had thought it over at all, the car belonged to us and our pockets were empty. We had just enough money for gas back home.

We went places in that car, me and Henry. We took off driving all one whole summer. We started off toward the Little Knife River and Mandaree in Fort Berthold and then we found ourselves down in Wakpala somehow, and then suddenly we were over in Montana on the Rocky Boy, and yet the summer was not even half over. Some people hang on to details when they travel, but we didn't let them bother us and just lived our everyday lives here to there.

I do remember this one place with willows. I remember I laid under those trees and it was comfortable. So comfortable. The branches bent down all around me like a tent or a stable. And quiet, it was quiet, even though there was a powwow close enough so I could see it going on. The air was not too still, not too windy either. When the dust rises up and hangs in the air around the dancers like that, I feel good. Henry was asleep with his arms thrown wide. Later on, he woke up and we started driving again. We were somewhere in Montana, or maybe on the Blood Reserve—it could have been anywhere. Anyway it was where we met the girl.

All her hair was in buns around her ears, that's the first thing I noticed about her. She was posed alongside the road with her arm out, so we stopped. That girl was short, so short her lumber shirt looked comical on her, like a nightgown. She had jeans on and fancy moccasins and she carried a little suitcase.

"Hop on in," says Henry. So she climbs in between us. 10

"We'll take you home," I says. "Where do you live?"

"Chicken," she says.

"Where the hell's that?" I ask her.

"Alaska."

"Okay," says Henry, and we drive. 15

We got up there and never wanted to leave. The sun doesn't truly set there in summer, and the night is more a soft dusk. You might doze off, sometimes, but before you know it you're up again, like an animal in nature. You never feel like you have to sleep hard or put away the world. And things would grow up there. One day just dirt or moss, the next day flowers and

long grass. The girl's name was Susy. Her family really took to us. They fed us and put us up. We had our own tent to live in by their house, and the kids would be in and out of there all day and night. They couldn't get over me and Henry being brothers, we looked so different. We told them we knew we had the same mother, anyway.

One night Susy came in to visit us. We sat around in the tent talking of this and that. The season was changing. It was getting darker by that time, and the cold was even getting just a little mean. I told her it was time for us to go. She stood up on a chair.

"You never seen my hair," Susy said.

That was true. She was standing on a chair, but still, when she unclipped her buns the hair reached all the way to the ground. Our eyes opened. You couldn't tell how much hair she had when it was rolled up so neatly. Then my brother Henry did something funny. He went up to the chair and said, "Jump on my shoulders." So she did that, and her hair reached down past his waist, and he started twirling, this way and that, so her hair was flung out from side to side.

"I always wondered what it was like to have long pretty hair," Henry says. Well we laughed. It was a funny sight, the way he did it. The next morning we got up and took leave of those people. 20

On to greener pastures, as they say. It was down through Spokane and across Idaho then Montana and very soon we were racing the weather right along under the Canadian border through Columbus, Des Lacs, and then we were in Bottineau County and soon home. We'd made most of the trip, that summer, without putting up the car hood at all. We got home just in time, it turned out, for the army to remember Henry had signed up to join it.

I don't wonder that the army was so glad to get my brother that they turned him into a Marine. He was built like a brick outhouse anyway. We liked to tease him that they really wanted him for his Indian nose. He had a nose big and sharp as a hatchet, like the nose on Red Tomahawk, the Indian who killed Sitting Bull, whose profile is on signs all along the North Dakota highways. Henry went off to training camp, came home once during Christmas, then the next thing you know we got an overseas letter from him. It was 1970, and he said he was stationed up in the northern hill country. Whereabouts I did not know. He wasn't such a hot letter writer, and only got off two before the enemy caught him. I could never keep it straight, which direction those good Vietnam soldiers were from.

I wrote him back several times, even though I didn't know if those letters would get through. I kept him informed all about the car. Most of the time I had it up on blocks in the yard or half taken apart, because that long trip did a hard job on it under the hood.

I always had good luck with numbers, and never worried about the draft myself. I never even had to think about what my number was. But Henry was never lucky in the same way as me. It was at least three years

before Henry came home. By then I guess the whole war was solved in the government's mind, but for him it would keep on going. In those years I'd put his car into almost perfect shape. I always thought of it as his car while he was gone, even though when he left he said, "Now it's yours," and threw me his key.

"Thanks for the extra key," I'd said. "I'll put it up in your drawer just in case I need it." He laughed. 25

When he came home, though, Henry was very different, and I'll say this: the change was no good. You could hardly expect him to change for the better, I know. But he was quiet, so quiet, and never comfortable sitting still anywhere but always up and moving around. I thought back to times we'd sat still for whole afternoons, never moving a muscle, just shifting our weight along the ground, talking to whoever sat with us, watching things. He'd always had a joke, then, too, and now you couldn't get him to laugh, or when he did it was more the sound of a man choking, a sound that stopped up the throats of other people around him. They got to leaving him alone most of the time, and I didn't blame them. It was a fact: Henry was jumpy and mean.

I'd bought a color TV set for my mom and the rest of us while Henry was away. Money still came very easy. I was sorry I'd ever bought it though, because of Henry. I was also sorry I'd bought color, because with black-and-white the pictures seem older and farther away. But what are you going to do? He sat in front of it, watching it, and that was the only time he was completely still. But it was the kind of stillness that you see in a rabbit when it freezes and before it will bolt. He was not easy. He sat in his chair gripping the armrests with all his might, as if the chair itself was moving at a high speed and if he let go at all he would rocket forward and maybe crash right through the set.

Once I was in the room watching TV with Henry and I heard his teeth click at something. I looked over, and he'd bitten through his lip. Blood was going down his chin. I tell you right then I wanted to smash that tube to pieces. I went over to it but Henry must have known what I was up to. He rushed from his chair and shoved me out of the way, against the wall. I told myself he didn't know what he was doing.

My mom came in, turned the set off real quiet, and told us she had made something for supper. So we went and sat down. There was still blood going down Henry's chin, but he didn't notice it and no one said anything, even though every time he took a bite of his bread his blood fell onto it until he was eating his own blood mixed in with the food.

While Henry was not around we talked about what was going to happen to him. There were no Indian doctors on the reservation, and my mom couldn't come around to trusting the old man, Moses Pillager, because he courted her long ago and was jealous of her husbands. He might take 30

revenge through her son. We were afraid that if we brought Henry to a regular hospital they would keep him.

"They don't fix them in those places," Mom said; "they just give them drugs."

"We wouldn't get him there in the first place," I agreed, "so let's just forget about it."

Then I thought about the car.

Henry had not even looked at the car since he'd gotten home, though like I said, it was in tip-top condition and ready to drive. I thought the car might bring the old Henry back somehow. So I bided my time and waited for my chance to interest him in the vehicle.

One night Henry was off somewhere. I took myself a hammer. I went out to that car and I did a number on its underside. Whacked it up. Bent the tail pipe double. Ripped the muffler loose. By the time I was done with the car it looked worse than any typical Indian car that has been driven all its life on reservation roads, which they always say are like government promises—full of holes. It just about hurt me, I'll tell you that! I threw dirt in the carburetor and I ripped all the electric tape off the seats. I made it look just as beat up as I could. Then I sat back and waited for Henry to find it.

Still, it took him over a month. That was all right, because it was just getting warm enough, not melting, but warm enough to work outside.

"Lyman," he says, walking in one day, "that red car looks like shit."

"Well it's old," I says, "You got to expect that."

"No way!" says Henry. "That car's a classic! But you went and ran the piss right out of it, Lyman, and you know it don't deserve that. I kept that care in A-one shape. You don't remember. You're too young. But when I left, that car was running like a watch. Now I don't even know if I can get it to start again, let alone get it anywhere near its old condition."

"Well you try," I said, like I was getting mad, "but I say it's a piece of junk."

Then I walked out before he could realize I knew he'd strung together more than six words at once.

After that I thought he'd freeze himself to death working on that car. He was out there all day, and at night he rigged up a little lamp, ran a cord out the window, and had himself some light to see by while he worked. He was better than he had been before, but that's still not saying much. It was easier for him to do the things the rest of us did. He ate more slowly and didn't jump up and down during the meal to get this or that or look out the window. I put my hand in the back of the TV set, I admit, and fiddled around with it good, so that it was almost impossible now to get a clear picture. He didn't look at it very often anyway. He was always out with that car or going off to get parts for it. By the time it was really melting outside, he had it fixed.

I had been feeling down in the dumps about Henry around this time. We had always been together before. Henry and Lyman. But he was such a loner now that I didn't know how to take it. So I jumped at the chance one day when Henry seemed friendly. It's not that he smiled or anything. He just said, "Let's take that old shitbox for a spin." Just the way he said it made me think he could be coming around.

We went out to the car. It was spring. The sun was shining very bright. My only sister, Bonita, who was just eleven years old, came out and made us stand together for a picture. Henry leaned his elbow on the red car's windshield, and he took his other arm and put it over my shoulder, very carefully, as though it was heavy for him to lift and he didn't want to bring the weight down all at once.

"Smile," Bonita said, and he did.

45

That picture. I never look at it anymore. A few months ago, I don't know why, I got his picture out and tacked it on the wall. I felt good about Henry at the time, close to him. I felt good having his picture on the wall, until one night when I was looking at television. I was a little drunk and stoned. I looked up at the wall and Henry was staring at me. I don't know what it was, but his smile had changed, or maybe it was gone. All I know is I couldn't stay in the same room with that picture. I was shaking. I got up, closed the door, and went into the kitchen. A little later my friend Ray came over and we both went back into that room. We put the picture in a brown bag, folded the bag over and over tightly, then put it way back in a closet.

I still see that picture now, as if it tugs at me, whenever I pass that closet door. The picture is very clear in my mind. It was so sunny that day Henry had to squint against the glare. Or maybe the camera Bonita held flashed like a mirror, blinding him, before she snapped the picture. My face is right out in the sun, big and round. But he might have drawn back, because the shadows on his face are deep as holes. There are two shadows curved like little hooks around the ends of his smile, as if to frame it and try to keep it there—that one, first smile that looked like it might have hurt his face. He has his field jacket on and the worn-in clothes he'd come back in and kept wearing ever since. After Bonita took the picture, she went into the house and we got into the car. There was a full cooler in the trunk. We started off, east, toward Pembina and the Red River because Henry said he wanted to see the high water.

The trip over there was beautiful. When everything starts changing, drying up, clearing off, you feel like your whole life is starting. Henry felt it, too. The top was down and the car hummed like a top. He'd really put it back in shape, even the tape on the seats was very carefully put down and glued back in layers. It's not that he smiled again or even joked, but his face

looked to me as if it was clear, more peaceful. It looked as though he wasn't thinking of anything in particular except the bare fields and windbreaks and houses we were passing.

The river was high and full of winter trash when we got there. The sun was still out, but it was colder by the river. There were still little clumps of dirty snow here and there on the banks. The water hadn't gone over the banks yet, but it would, you could tell. It was just at its limit, hard swollen, glossy like an old gray scar. We made ourselves a fire, and we sat down and watched the current go. As I watched it I felt something squeezing inside me and tightening and trying to let go all at the same time. I knew I was not just feeling it myself; I knew I was feeling what Henry was going through at that moment. Except that I couldn't stand it, the closing and opening. I jumped to my feet. I took Henry by the shoulders and I started shaking him. "Wake up," I says, "wake up, wake up, wake up!" I didn't know what had come over me. I sat down beside him again.

His face was totally white and hard. Then it broke, like stones break all 50
of a sudden when water boils up inside them.

"I know it," he says. "I know it. I can't help it. It's no use."

We start talking. He said he knew what I'd done with the car. It was obvious it had been whacked out of shape and not just neglected. He said he wanted to give the car to me for good now, it was no use. He said he'd fixed it just to give it back and I should take it.

"No way," I says. "I don't want it."

"That's okay," he says, "you take it."

"I don't want it, though," I says back to him, and then to empha- 55
size, just to emphasize, you understand, I touch his shoulder. He slaps my hand off.

"Take that car," he says.

"No," I say. "Make me," I say, and then he grabs my jacket and rips the arm loose. That jacket is a class act, suede with tags and zippers. I push Henry backwards, off the log. He jumps up and bowls me over. We go down in a clinch and come up swinging hard, for all we're worth, with our fists. He socks my jaw so hard I feel like it swings loose. Then I'm at his rib cage and land a good one under his chin so his head snaps back. He's dazzled. He looks at me and I look at him and then his eyes are full of tears and blood and at first I think he's crying. But no, he's laughing. "Ha! Ha!" he says. "Ha! Ha! Take good care of it."

"Okay," I says. "Okay, no problem. Ha! Ha!"

I can't help it, and I start laughing, too. My face feels fat and strange, and after a while I get a beer from the cooler in the trunk, and when I hand it to Henry he takes his shirt and wipes my germs off. "Hoof-and-mouth disease," he says. For some reason this cracks me up, and so we're really laughing for a while, and then we drink all the rest of the beers one by one and throw them in the river and see how far, how fast, the current takes them before they fill up and sink.

"You want to go on back?" I ask after a while. "Maybe we could snag 60
a couple nice Kashpaw girls."

He says nothing. But I can tell his mood is turning again.

"They're all crazy, the girls up here, every damn one of them."

"You're crazy too," I say, to jolly him up. "Crazy Lamartine boys!"

He looks as though he will take this wrong at first. His face twists, then
clears, and he jumps up on his feet. "That's right!" he says. "Crazier 'n hell.
Crazy Indians!"

I think it's the old Henry again. He throws off his jacket and starts 65
springing his legs up from the knees like a fancy dancer. He's down doing
something between a grass dance and a bunny hop, no kind of dance I ever
saw before, but neither has anyone else on all this green growing earth. He's
wild. He wants to pitch whoopee! He's up and at me and all over. All this
time I'm laughing so hard, so hard my belly is getting tied up in a knot.

"Got to cool me off!" he shouts all of a sudden. Then he runs over to
the river and jumps in.

There's boards and other things in the current. It's so high. No sound
comes from the river after the splash he makes, so I run right over. I look
around. It's getting dark. I see he's halfway across the water already, and I
know he didn't swim there but the current took him. It's far. I hear his voice,
though, very clearly across it.

"My boots are filling," he says.

He says this in a normal voice, like he just noticed and he doesn't know
what to think of it. Then he's gone. A branch comes by. Another branch.
And I go in.

By the time I get out of the river, off the snag I pulled myself onto, the 70
sun is down. I walk back to the car, turn on the high beams, and drive it up
the bank. I put it in first gear and then I take my foot off the clutch. I get
out, close the door, and watch it plow softly into the water. The headlights
reach in as they go down, searching, still lighted even after the water swirls
over the back end. I wait. The wires short out. It is all finally dark. And then
there is only the water, the sound of it going and running and going and
running and running.

APPENDIX B
RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

(The questionnaire has been modified from its original format to meet the margin requirements.)

QUESTIONNAIRE

Based on the short story, "The Red Convertible," by Louise Erdrich

PART I

Please fill in the following demographic information:

1. What is your native country?

2. How long have you lived in the United States?

For numbers 3-6, please check only one box for each.

3. Are you a natural born U.S. citizen?

yes no

4. What is your age group?

under 20 20-24 25-29
 30-39 40-49 50+

5. What is your sex?

male female

6. How would you *best* describe yourself?

urban rural
 suburban

7. How much higher education (college, university) have you completed?

For number 8, please check all boxes that apply to you.

8. Which of the following diplomas or degrees have you earned?

high school diploma bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.)
 master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc.) Ph.D
 other (specify: _____)

PART II

Please answer the following questions in response to Louise Erdrich's short story, "The Red Convertible." You may refer back to the story as you answer the questions. Please complete the questionnaire on your own.

1. The following quotations reveal some of the major themes and issues in the story. Put **L** before those quotations associated with Lyman, **H** before quotations associated with Henry, and **B** before quotations associated with both Lyman and Henry.

- _____ "They couldn't get over me and Henry being brothers, we looked so different. We told them we had the same mother, anyway." (p. 154)
- _____ "My one talent was I could make money. I had a touch for it, unusual in a Chippewa." (p. 152)
- _____ "I thought the car might bring the old Henry back somehow . . . I made it look just as beat up as I could . . . He [Henry] was out there all day, and at night . . . By the time it was really melting outside, he had it fixed." (p. 156)
- _____ "When he came home, though, Henry was very different . . . he was . . . so quiet, and never comfortable sitting still anywhere . . . He sat in front of it [the TV], watching it, and that was the only time he was completely still." (p. 155)
- _____ "We were somewhere in Montana, or maybe on the Blood Reserve--it could have been anywhere . . . We . . . just lived our everyday lives here to there." (p. 153)
- _____ "We met the girl . . . She was posted alongside the road with her arm out, so we stopped." (p. 153)
- _____ "I was a little drunk and stoned." (p. 157)
- _____ "before we thought it over at all, the car belonged to us and our pockets were empty." (p. 153)
- _____ "We got home just in time . . . for the army to remember Henry had signed up to join it." (p. 154)
- _____ After he came back from the war, "Henry was jumpy and mean." (p. 155)
- _____ "We go down in a clinch and come up swinging hard, for all we're worth, with our fists . . . at first I think he's crying. But no, he's laughing . . . I can't help it, and I start laughing, too." (p. 158)
- _____ "he runs to the river and jumps in . . . 'My boots are filling,' he says . . . Then he's gone." (p. 159)
- _____ "There were no Indian doctors on the reservation . . . we were afraid that if we brought Henry to a regular hospital they would keep him." (p. 156)
- _____ "I guess the whole war was solved in the government's mind, but for him [Henry] it would keep on going." (p. 155)
- _____ "We drink all the rest of the beers one by one." (p. 158)
- _____ "it seemed the more money I made the easier the money came . . . it wasn't long before the whole thing was mine [the Joliet Café] . . . I was only sixteen." (p. 152)

2. What pictures, associations come to mind when you read the title of the story? (check one)

- a shiny red car
 a burial site
 a symbol of hope and freedom
 other specify: _____

3. What is wrong with Henry after he returns from the war? Put a check mark next to the symptoms/actions/situations of Henry's condition or next to the things he says that reveal the state of his heart and mind.

- he has no father
 he does not have a job
 he witnessed too much death and destruction during the war
 he lost the freedom he once had when he used to drive his car wherever he wanted
 he drinks too much
 "he was quiet . . . and never comfortable sitting still anywhere." (p. 155)
 he wouldn't laugh, and "when he did it was more the sound of a man choking." (p. 155)
 "Henry was jumpy and mean." (p. 155)
 he watches too much TV
 "he'd bitten through his lip. Blood was going down his chin." (p. 155)
 When Lyman went to turn the TV off, Henry "rushed from his chair and shoved me [Lyman] out of the way, against the wall." (p. 155)
 he "took his other arm and put it over my [Lyman's] shoulder, very carefully, as though it was heavy for him to lift and he didn't want to bring the weight down all at once." (p. 157)
 "that one, first smile that looked like it might have hurt his face." (p. 157)
 he always wears the same clothes
 "I [Henry] know it. I can't help it. It's no use." (p. 158)
 he doesn't want to be touched: "He [Henry] slaps my [Lyman's] hand off." (p. 158)
 he fights too much
 "'That's right!' he [Henry] says. 'Crazier 'n hell. Crazy Indians.'" (p. 159)

4. The following includes actions of characters in the story. Judge the appropriateness of each of the following actions on a scale of 1-5. 1 = least appropriate, 5 = most appropriate.

- Henry physically fights with his brother, Lyman.
 Henry and Lyman travel by themselves across the country in their car.
 Susy, the girl from Alaska, hitchhikes alone, far from home.
 Lyman and Henry get drunk and take drugs.
 On the spur of the moment, Henry and Lyman spend all of their money on the car.
 Henry volunteers to join the army.
 Henry is mean to his family members after he returns from the war.
 Lyman destroys the car he loves to try to bring the old Henry back.
 Henry jumps into the river.
 Lyman puts the car into the river.
 Henry's family does not take him to see a doctor.
 Lyman owned his own business when he was 16 years old.

5. Check one or more generalizations given below that you feel the story will support. If you believe none of the generalizations given below are supported by the story, write a generalization that states what you believe the story reveals about life, human nature, or the specific situation the story deals with.

- _____ One's youth, characterized by laughter and fun, is forever lost once the realities of the real world are known.
- _____ War irrevocably changes people for the worse.
- _____ Restoration cannot come about through destruction.
- _____ Government decisions can cause people to lose freedom and control.
- _____ War not only changes the veteran, it can change family members and breakdown the family structure.
- _____ Poor economic conditions, drug and alcohol abuse, suicide, and inadequate health facilities on Native American Indian reservations in the U.S. are partially a result of the government's unfaithful promises.
- _____ Young people value and dream of owning their own car because it brings freedom and control.
- _____ Other: _____

6. Please write on the following topics, using the space provided.

TOPIC 1

Do you think the story is realistic? sentimental? believable? melodramatic? propagandistic? imaginative?

What is your response to the story? What do you perceive as the theme (the ideas about life/reality the story supports)?

TOPIC 2

Choose one character from the story who interests or intrigues you and discuss your feelings and thoughts about this character. (For example: What strengths and weaknesses does the character have? What motivates or animates the character? What is the nature of the character's conflicts in the story? What kind of resolution does the character seek?)

TOPIC 3

Discuss the ideas about the role of family and the importance of family relationships you find expressed in the story. In responding to this topic, you might consider who is a part of the family, plus the brothers' relationships with their mother and father(s).

TOPIC 4

What do the characters in the story value* most? Does what they value change after the war? If so, How? Why does it change? (*Value: to consider with respect to worth, excellence, usefulness, or importance; to regard or esteem highly.)

TOPIC 5

What are the causes of the social ills (war, alcohol and drug abuse, mental instability, etc.) portrayed in the story? What solutions, if any, to these problems are implied in the story? Do you believe these solutions can work? Why or why not?

TOPIC 6

What do Henry, Lyman, and their family put their hope in?

TOPIC 7

Discuss what Lyman does to try to help bring healing to Henry and his family. Is he successful? Why or why not? Is Lyman ignoring the reality of Henry's condition in hopes that life can once again become like it was before the war? Why or why not? Do you think Henry and his family can be healed? Why or why not?

TOPIC 8

How much personal power and control do you think the characters in the story have? (Especially consider Lyman and Henry.) Is the amount of control they have dependent on their ethnic group or social position? Why or why not?

APPENDIX C

**KEY TO
PART II OF QUESTIONNAIRE**

QUESTIONNAIRE KEY

Based on the short story, "The Red Convertible," by Louise Erdrich

- A. Family
- B. Values
- C. Behaviors
- D. Social Ills
- E. Hope / Healing
- F. Social Order / Personal Power
- G. Visual Images
- H. Personal Engagement
- I. Themes / Significance

PART II

Please answer the following questions in response to Louise Erdrich's short story, "The Red Convertible." You may refer back to the story as you answer the questions. Please complete the questionnaire on your own.

LEVEL ONE (Literal)

1. The following quotations reveal some of the major themes and issues in the story. Put **L** before those quotations associated with Lyman, **H** before quotations associated with Henry, and **B** before quotations associated with both Lyman and Henry.

(A)

 B "They couldn't get over me and Henry being brothers, we looked so different. We told them we had the same mother, anyway." (p. 154)

(B)

 L "My one talent was I could make money. I had a touch for it, unusual in a Chippewa." (p. 152)

 B "I thought the car might bring the old Henry back somehow . . . I made it look just as beat up as I could . . . He [Henry] was out there all day, and at night . . . By the time it was really melting outside, he had it fixed." (p. 156)

 H "When he came home, though, Henry was very different . . . he was . . . so quiet, and never comfortable sitting still anywhere . . . He sat in front of it [the TV], watching it, and that was the only time he was completely still." (p. 155)

(C)

 B "We were somewhere in Montana, or maybe on the Blood Reserve--it could have been anywhere . . . We . . . just lived our everyday lives here to there." (p. 153)

- B "We met the girl . . . She was posted alongside the road with her arm out, so we stopped." (p. 153)
- L "I was a little drunk and stoned." (p. 157)
- B "before we thought it over at all, the car belonged to us and our pockets were empty." (p.153)
- B "We got home just in time . . . for the army to remember Henry had signed up to join it." (p. 154)
- H After he came back from the war, "Henry was jumpy and mean." (p. 155)
- B "We go down in a clinch and come up swinging hard, for all we're worth, with our fists. . . at first I think he's crying. But no, he's laughing . . . I can't help it, and I start laughing, too." (p. 158)
- H "he runs to the river and jumps in . . . 'My boots are filling,' he says . . . Then he's gone." (p. 159)
- (D)
- B "There were no Indian doctors on the reservation . . . we were afraid that if we brought Henry to a regular hospital they would keep him." (p. 156)
- B "I guess the whole war was solved in the government's mind, but for him [Henry] it would keep on going." (p. 155)
- (E)
- B "We drink all the rest of the beers one by one." (p. 158)
- (F)
- L "it seemed the more money I made the easier the money came . . . it wasn't long before the whole thing was mine [the Joliet Café] . . . I was only sixteen." (p. 152)

LEVEL TWO (Interpretive)

(G) 2. What pictures, associations come to mind when you read the title of the story? (check one)

 a shiny red car

 a burial site

 a symbol of hope and freedom

 other specify: _____

(A-F) 3. What is wrong with Henry after he returns from the war? Put a check mark next to the symptoms/actions/situations of Henry's condition or next to the things he says that reveal the state of his heart and mind.

- _____ he has no father
- _____ he does not have a job
- _____ he witnessed too much death and destruction during the war
- _____ he lost the freedom he once had when he used to drive his car wherever he wanted
- _____ he drinks too much
- _____ "he was quiet . . . and never comfortable sitting still anywhere." (p. 155)
- _____ he wouldn't laugh, and "when he did it was more the sound of a man choking." (p. 155)
- _____ "Henry was jumpy and mean." (p. 155)
- _____ he watches too much TV
- _____ "he'd bitten through his lip. Blood was going down his chin." (p. 155)
- _____ When Lyman went to turn the TV off, Henry "rushed from his chair and shoved me [Lyman] out of the way, against the wall." (p. 155)
- _____ he "took his other arm and put it over my [Lyman's] shoulder, very carefully, as though it was heavy for him to lift and he didn't want to bring the weight down all at once." (p. 157)
- _____ "that one, first smile that looked like it might have hurt his face." (p. 157)
- _____ he always wears the same clothes
- _____ "I [Henry] know it. I can't help it. It's no use." (p. 158)
- _____ he doesn't want to be touched: "He [Henry] slaps my [Lyman's] hand off." (p. 158)
- _____ he fights too much
- _____ "'That's right!' he [Henry] says. 'Crazier 'n hell. Crazy Indians.'" (p. 159)

4. The following includes actions of characters in the story. Judge the appropriateness of each of the following actions on a scale of 1-5. 1 = least appropriate, 5 = most appropriate.

- A,C Henry physically fights with his brother, Lyman.
- C Henry and Lyman travel by themselves across the country in their car.
- C Susy, the girl from Alaska, hitchhikes alone, far from home.
- C Lyman and Henry get drunk and take drugs.
- C On the spur of the moment, Henry and Lyman spend all of their money on the car.
- C Henry volunteers to join the army.
- C Henry is mean to his family members after he returns from the war.
- C Lyman destroys the car he loves to try to bring the old Henry back.
- C Henry jumps into the river.
- C Lyman puts the car into the river.
- D,C Henry's family does not take him to see a doctor.
- C Lyman owned his own business when he was 16 years old.

LEVEL THREE (Thematic)

(I) 5. Check one or more generalizations given below that you feel the story will support. If you believe none of the generalizations given below are supported by the story, write a generalization that states what you believe the story reveals about life, human nature, or the specific situation the story deals with.

- _____ One's youth, characterized by laughter and fun, is forever lost once the realities of the real world are known.
- _____ War irrevocably changes people for the worse.
- _____ Restoration cannot come about through destruction.
- _____ Government decisions can cause people to lose freedom and control.
- _____ War not only changes the veteran, it can change family members and breakdown the family structure.
- _____ Poor economic conditions, drug and alcohol abuse, suicide, and inadequate health facilities on Native American Indian reservations in the U.S. are partially a result of the government's unfaithful promises.
- _____ Young people value and dream of owning their own car because it brings freedom and control.
- _____ Other: _____

6. Please write on the following topics, using the space provided.

(H, I) TOPIC 1

Do you think the story is realistic? sentimental? believable? melodramatic? propagandistic? imaginative?

What is your response to the story? What do you perceive as the theme (the ideas about life/reality the story supports)?

(A-I) TOPIC 2

Choose one character from the story who interests or intrigues you and discuss your feelings and thoughts about this character. (For example: What strengths and weaknesses does the character have? What motivates or animates the character? What is the nature of the character's conflicts in the story? What kind of resolution does the character seek?)

(A) TOPIC 3

Discuss the ideas about the role of family and the importance of family relationships you find expressed in the story. In responding to this topic, you might consider who is a part of the family, plus the brothers' relationships with their mother and father(s).

(B) TOPIC 4

What do the characters in the story value* most? Does what they value change after the war? If so, How? Why does it change? (*Value: to consider with respect to worth, excellence, usefulness, or importance; to regard or esteem highly.)

(D) TOPIC 5

What are the causes of the social ills (war, alcohol and drug abuse, mental instability, etc.) portrayed in the story? What solutions, if any, to these problems are implied in the story? Do you believe these solutions can work? Why or why not?

(E) TOPIC 6

What do Henry, Lyman, and their family put their hope in?

(E) TOPIC 7

Discuss what Lyman does to try to help bring healing to Henry and his family. Is he successful? Why or why not? Is Lyman ignoring the reality of Henry's condition in hopes that life can once again become like it was before the war? Why or why not? Do you think Henry and his family can be healed? Why or why not?

(F) TOPIC 8

How much personal power and control do you think the characters in the story have? (Especially consider Lyman and Henry.) Is the amount of control they have dependent on their ethnic group or social position? Why or why not?

APPENDIX D
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

(This consent form has been modified from its original format to meet the margin requirements.)

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, _____ (your name), agree to take part in this research project on *The Influence of Cultural Backgrounds on the Interpretations of Literature Texts Used in the Writing Classroom*.

I understand that the study involves reading the short story "The Red Convertible" by Louis Erdrich, completing a questionnaire based on the story, and returning it to the researcher, Ms. Barbara J. Gates, within one week.

I understand that, because of this study, there will be no personal risks or hazards. The only inconvenience will be the time it takes for me to complete the study.

Ms. Gates has told me that the purpose of the study is to learn how students' cultural backgrounds influence their interpretations of the literature texts they read in their writing classrooms. These findings are intended to help instructors determine what kind of American English literature texts to select for use in their classrooms and how they should approach teaching those texts.

I may not receive any direct benefit from taking part in this study, but the study may help to increase knowledge that may help others in the future.

Ms. Gates (phone: 503-244-3075) has offered to answer any questions I have about the study and what I am expected to do.

Ms. Gates has promised that my name will not appear on any data she is collecting; therefore, my name will be anonymous.

I understand that I do not have to take part in this study, and that this will not affect my course grade or my relationship with the University of Portland. I understand that I may also withdraw from this study at any time without affecting my course grade or my relationship with the University of Portland.

I have read and understand the above information and agree to take part in this study.

Date: _____ Signature: _____

If you have concerns or problems about your participation in this study, please contact either the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, Cramer 111, Portland State University, (503) 725-8182, or Barbara Gates at 6525 SW Locust St., Tigard, OR (503) 244-3075.

APPENDIX E

DATA FOR QUESTION FOUR

Raw Data for Question Four

(1 = least appropriate, 5 = most appropriate)

Response*	International	U.S.
a	4 4 5 3 1	3 4 1 3 3 4 3
b	5 3 1 1 4	3 5 2 4 4 4 3
c	3 2 3 1 2	1 2 1 1 1 3 1
d	1 3 2 1 5	1 2 1 1 1 1 1
e	5 5 5 1 5	3 4 4 2 2 3 3
f	4 3 5 4 1	4 5 3 3 4 4 3
g	3 4 3 1 2	4 4 1 2 2 3 5
h	3 5 5 1 3	5 5 4 4 5 4 1
i	5 4 5 1 2	4 5 4 1 5 3 3
j	2 2 5 1 5	5 5 2 4 3 4 1
k	5 2 5 5 3	2 2 1 1 2 3 4
l	5 3 5 3 2	2 2 4 3 4 4 2

*The following indicates which letter corresponds to which response:

a = Henry physically fights with his brother, Lyman.

b = Henry and Lyman travel by themselves across the country in their car.

c = Susy, the girl from Alaska, hitchhikes alone, far from home.

d = Lyman and Henry get drunk and take drugs.

e = On the spur of the moment, Henry and Lyman spend all of their money on the car.

f = Henry volunteers to join the army.

g = Henry is mean to his family members after he returns from the war.

h = Lyman destroys the car he loves to try to bring the old Henry back.

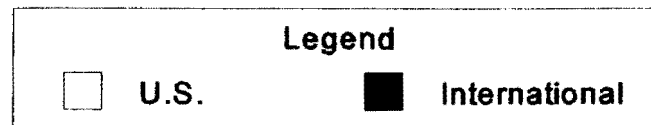
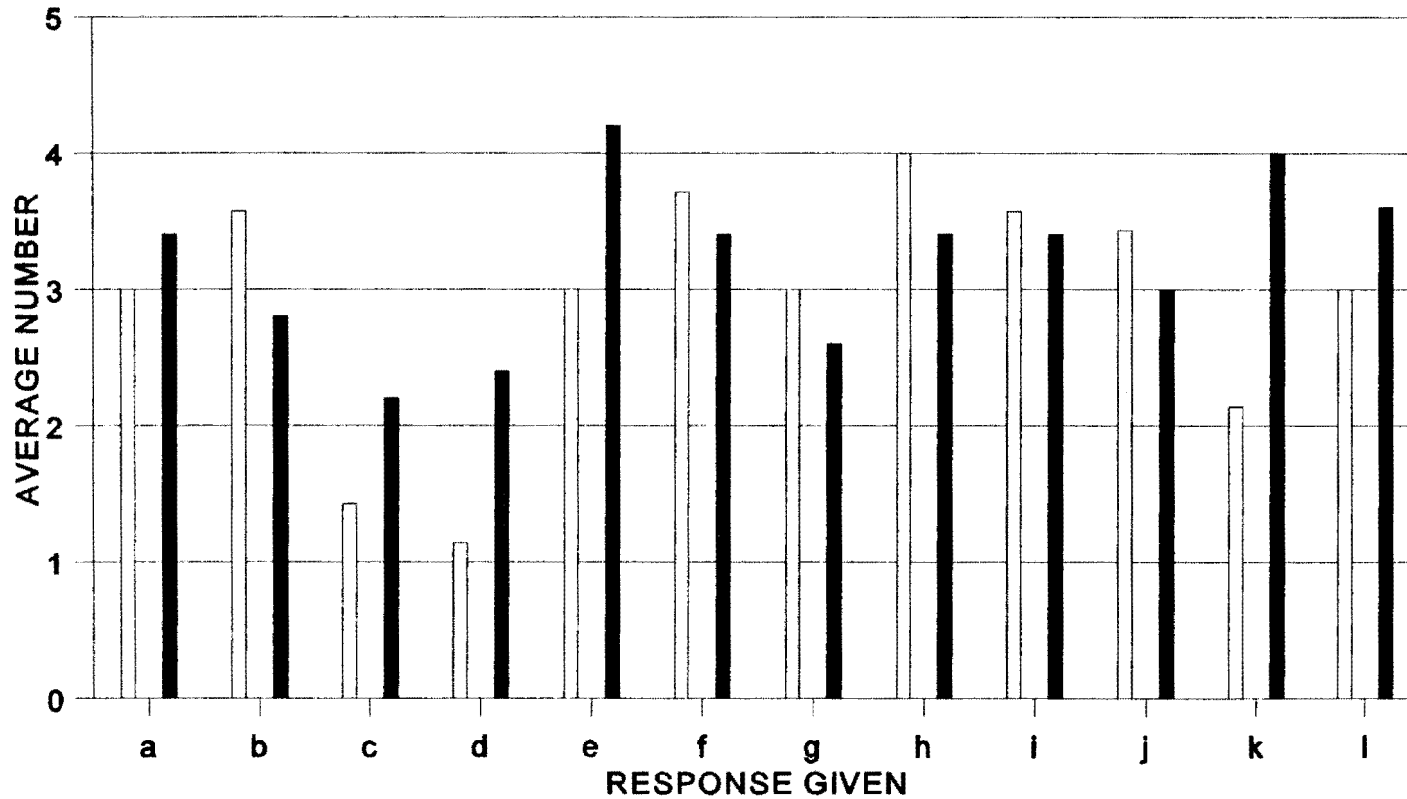
i = Henry jumps into the river.

j = Lyman puts the car into the river.

k = Henry's family does not take him to see a doctor.

l = Lyman owned his own business when he was 16 years old.

Averages for Question 4



Standard Deviations for Question 4

