BOLD VISIONS IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Anecdotes and Afterthoughts: Literature as a Teacher's Curriculum

Edward Podsiadlik III

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Anecdotes and Afterthoughts: Literature as a Teacher's Curriculum

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PREFACE

This book's journey is an exploration away from the *outer world* of teaching and into the *inner world* of spiritual, emotional, and oftentimes deeply personal realities, conflicts, and contradictions that lie beneath it. Integrating my life as an educator with excerpts from literature creates a variety of reflective entrypoints through which to explore the authentic intrinsic landscape that lies beneath the surface of teacher identity. It is a landscape embedded with a plethora of aspirations and fears, and vibrant with an assortment of values and contradictions.

This unique inquiry synthesizes literary analysis, autobiographical essay, and and imagination as it transcends an educator's exterior mask to explore the more authentic inner self beneath. Exploring the complexities and personal nature of educational practice in this way helps ascertain some of the the intangible values, truths, and struggles that inspire, nourish, sustain, and sometimes even threaten the intangible heart of an educator. Hopefully reading this portrayal of literature, which has been a source of educational insight and imagination for me, will be of use to other educators as they reflect on their own teaching.

My intention is not to ascertain linear knowledge, but to explore the underlying values, truths, and struggles that characterize the inner consciousness of one's teaching. This journey is not intended to categorize that which defines us as educators. Quite the opposite. It endeavors, instead, to unmask and meander through realities that are buried beneath externally-imposed constraints placed upon us. Each chapter transcends single dimensional perceptions of teaching and learning by constructing and reconstructing multiple realities that constitute the immeasureable possibilities of curriculum and instruction.

Integral to this exploration are works of literature that I have used as an urban public school teacher in the middle school classroom. As my students interact with the text, I too am simultaneously engaged at cognitive, emotional, and autobiographical levels. The primary literary works facilitating this journey are: *The Red Badge of Courage* (Stephen Crane, 1895), *Les Miserables* (Victor Hugo, 1862), and *American Idiot* (Billie Joe Armstrong, 2004); *Light in August* (William Faulkner, 1932), *Seinfeld* television scripts (1991-98), and *Frankenstein* (Mary Shelley, 1818); and *The Odyssey (*Homer*)*, *Night* (Elie Wiesel, 1960), and *The Souls of Black Folk* (W.E.B. DuBois, 1903).

Excerpts from these texts facilitate this reflective and aesthetic journey into the interior landscapes of an educator. Relevant literary analyses are used to transcend external forms and functions taking readers into multi-dimensional landscapes that more clearly portray the personal and intrinsic nature of teaching and learning. When delving beneath the exterior 'teacher mask,' a collage of images, anecdotes, reflections, aspirations, and fears is exposed that sheds light on an inner consciousness that underlies curriculum and instruction. Many of the moral, pedagogical, and personal challenges and contradictions that inform and define who I am as an

educator become illuminated. It is my hope that a wide spectrum of educators, from novice teachers to veterans, will similarly benefit from this demonstration of literature as a means of meaningful reflection and illumination on the personal and professional aspects of teaching and learning.

My intention is that this book will inspire educators to further reflect upon the intrinsic realities of what it means to be a teacher. As a resource for pre-service teachers or as a reflective exercise for veteran teachers, this journey is designed to inspire educators by providing a new pathway from which to better understand their own innate and intrinsic identities as teachers. Each chapter concludes with a list of questions that readers are encouraged to reflect upon individually and/or collectively. These pages for reflection are modeled after the "Recommendations for Reflection" that William H. Schubert (1986) employs in *Curriculum: Perspective, Paradigm, and Possibility*. The purposes of these questions are to further connect chapter contents to the personal and professional lives of readers and to encourage further introspection along autobiographical, aesthetic, and imaginative pathways.

This book's journey explores teacher identity unbound from deterministic restrictions of the physical world. Thus, I am freed to examine teaching and learning as a living embodiment of past lives, experiences and challenges as well as a harbinger of immeasurable future possibilities. It is in this spirit of creativity and imagination that each set of three chapters is followed by an imaginative discourse among three literary characters and/or authors from the preceding chapters and myself. Together, we further discuss issues and conflicts that arose within the chapters. The dialogue of the speakers is genuine in that it is taken directly from its original sources. The authentic words of the literature are re-imagined within the context of a conversation about realities, fears, aspirations, values, and conflicts that comprise an educator's identity. It is this spirit of daydreams and imagination that extends the possibilities of this journey far beyond the limitations of space and time.

This synthesis of aesthetic, reflective, and imaginative components is worthy of inclusion in teacher and principal preparation programs. Pre-service and beginning teachers and administrators can deepen their understanding of teaching and learning by reflecting on the intrinsic realities that inform and define their identities as educators. Such reflection can help them better understand complexities and contradictions inherent in the field of education. School and district-wide professional development sessions would benefit from the cogitative and introspective nature of this kind of exploration. It could serve as a meaningful entryway for professionals to collectively and individually contemplate underlying tensions, dilemmas, and conflicts that quietly affect the quality and impact of their work.

My hope is that readers will be inspired by this personal journey. Perhaps some of the conflicts, tensions, and contradictions that I experienced will resonate with the lives (internal and external) of other educators. Perhaps some of the insights and epiphanies that I stumbled upon will speak to the experiences of others. I believe that the unique opportunities for introspection and reflection nurtured by this journey can serve to improve our understanding of curriculum and instruction.

I am hopeful that the liberating spirit of this book can help educators transcend the limitations and restrictions inherent in bureaucratic systems of teaching and learning. Each chapter is designed to increase the reader's capacity to explore, describe, and grapple with inner tensions that shape teaching and learning and are shaped by the unique experiences, thoughts, values, and hopes of each educator. Integrating personal experiences with the universality of literature offers a host of possibilities for further exploration, contemplation, and meaning making. The potential for insights, epiphanies, and revelations - collective and personal - is vast. It is my hope that the ideas, thoughts, and suggestions inherent in this book will ultimately lead to a deeper understanding of ourselves and of each other as together we persevere on our lifelong journey of teaching and learning.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to my friend, mentor, and advisor, William H. Schubert, who inspired, encouraged and supported my journeys into literature as curriculum.

The quoted material used throughout this book has been kept to a minimum rather than offered to anthologize. I used portions of diverse literature and selected quotes to illustrate points and to enhance personal reflection. Use here will not infringe on or affect the market for the original or for subsequent permissions sought from the copyright holder.

I thank my students. Our journeys together have been – and continue to be – both challenging and inspiring.

CHAPTER 1

PROLOGUE

What informs our identities as teachers? What defines us as educators? What interior realities, fears, and aspirations lie beneath our extrinsic concerns of quantitative assessments and bureaucratic demands? How can the spirit of our intrinsic identity as teachers be accessed when it is so often buried beneath the immediate physical, mental, and emotional demands of our profession? Where is the elusive talisman that can help us educators transcend the finite and measureable external landscape of teaching and learning? How can we educators move past the deterministic landscape and return to the interior realities that inspire, nourish, sustain, and challenge the intangible heart of our lives as educators?

These questions capture the tensions I experience as a teacher somehow trapped between reality and possibility. This book journeys away from the *outer world* of teaching and penetrates the *inner world* of spiritual, emotional, and personal values. It is a journey into the landscape of a teacher's heart and mind revealing the highly personal and oftentimes vulnerable nature of educational practice. Freed from the existential prison of impersonal measures and externally-imposed criteria, this journey meanders through the subjective realities of teacher identity. Using literature as its curriculum, each chapter constructs and reconstructs multiple realities that constitute and inspire the immeasurable possibilities intrinsically inherent to teaching and learning.

This book's layout embodies both reflective and imaginative perspectives. Maxine Greene (1965) strongly advocates using these modes of exploration as a means to experience what she calls the "existential innerness which escapes all formulas and sermons and cannot be realized by any public Dream" (p. 162). I have also been influenced by George Willis' and William H. Schubert's (1991) work that relies upon the arts as a source of reflective inquiry into the understanding of curriculum and instruction. I have been further inspired by the scholarship of Eliot Eisner (2002) that further legitimizes the relationship between the intellectual and the aesthetic. These are some of the pertinent influences that have inspired my using literature as an aesthetic tool for reflective practice.

Each of the nine literary texts sustaining this reflective and aesthetic journey are ones that I have used as a middle school teacher. One of my primary classroom goals is for students to understand that they are invited (and encouraged) to meander through the worlds which the authors have created. Through discussions and projects, the students (and I) are challenged to consider layers of philosophical and moral meanings embedded in the texts and to ascertain the potential relevance to our

own lives. As their teacher, I am simultaneously engaged in introspection as I reflect on the same books that are currently provoking my students.

As I am teaching or reading literature, I continue learning from it as well. While my students interact with the text, so too am I engaged on multiple levels. This interaction between the literary and the personal serves to procure what Madeleine Grumet (1978) calls the means to "provide connective tissue between inner and outer experience" (p. 301). By consciously journeying into these intrinsic landscapes, I am endeavoring to bring to life the introspective capacity William Pinar (1978) describes as capable "to disclose more deeply one's psychic and intellectual investment in educational institutions" (p. 323). Thus, this book aims to paint a 'portraiture' of the metacognitive methods, processes and conflicts that embed the intrinsic nature of an educator (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997).

This curriculum, born out of my twenty years of classroom teaching, delves beneath one's metaphorical 'teacher mask' by critically contemplating the images, anecdotes, reflections, aspirations, and fears that lie underneath. Each chapter centers on what for me have been transformational texts on personal and professional levels. By using reflection and imagination to integrate personal experiences with literary excerpts, each chapter evolves into a multi-dimensional landscape that more deeply represents and reflects the intrinsic thoughts, ideas, values, and fears that the underlie one's teaching and learning.

In their support for this kind of curriculum theorizing that relies on art, education, and autobiography, Willis and Schubert (1991) note that the outcome of such research is often "challenge, risk, and change" (p. 11). Similarly, this book illuminates many of the moral, pedagogical, and personal challenges and contradictions I intrinsically struggle with as an educator. Integrating literature as it is taught in the classroom with how the same text is simultaneously resonating within my mind and heart stirs up waves of personal and professional struggles, contradictions, and conflicts.

John Dewey (1943) wrote that the convergence of art with personal experience has the potential to evoke emotional 'irritation' and 'transformation' through which "the attitudes of the self are informed with meaning" allowing the self to "become aware of itself" (p. 487). What does this convergence look like? What could we learn from it? In what ways could a journey into these realms of intrinsic 'irritation and transformation' enlighten us as educators and contribute to the scholarship of curriculum and instruction? These are the kinds of questions this book unapologetically explores.

The first set of chapters channel Henry Fleming, Jean Valjean, and St. Jimmy, protagonists of *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), *Les Miserables* (1862), and *American Idiot* (2004) respectively. My reflections of teaching these texts mingle with my personal musings of the words, images, and characters. When combined with autobiographical afterthoughts and aesthetic wonderings, an intrinsically personal, emotional, and psychological landscape emerges. The imaginative parallel between fictional protagonists and myself as educator brings to life what Jerome Bruner (2004) calls the 'landscape of consciousness' (p. 698). What Bruner refers

to as 'autobiography as psychic geography' (p. 703) emerges as a re-working of an inner reality which I propose defines and informs an edcucator's. In this way, these chapters aim to fulfill Maxine Greene's (1995) ambition of utilizing the meaning-making capacity of the arts as a means "for perspective, for perceiving alternative ways of transcending and of being in the world, for refusing the automatism that overwelms choice" (p. 142).

The second triad of chapters focuses specifically on literary dialogue. The goal of these chapters is to further use autobiography and imaginative literature, as Janet Miller (1998) proposes, "to disrupt rather than to reinforce static versions of our 'selves' and our work as educators" (p. 151). Excerpts of dialogue from three William Faulkner novels I've used in the classroom become catalysts to explore the capacity of words to define, shape, or destroy our beliefs and values on real and surreal levels. To further transcend the literal use of language into an intangible realm of contradiction and incongruity, I use sequences of dialogue from diverse *Seinfeld* scripts. Finally, dialogue excerpts from Mary Shelley's (1818) *Frankenstein* are used to penetrate the surface meaning of words to unveil often conflicting internal intentions or attitudes. Thus, literary dialogue is used to facilitate a journey from the real to the surreal, from the literal to the contradictory and incongruous, and from a surface view to an intrinsic vision. In this way, I frame a landscape reflective of the kinds of interior realities, fears, aspirations, and conflicts that lie within an educator's heart, mind, and soul.

The last set of chapters focuses on literary metaphors that both inform and define a teacher's identity. While my students are interacting with the conflicts, challenges and monsters that Odysseus faces in Homer's *Odyssey*, I am simultaneously facing my own professional and personal fears and obstacles. As my students and I read Elie Wiesel's (1960) *Night*, metaphorical words, symbols, gestures, and thoughts resonate deeply – albeit differently for my students than for myself. How a teacher experiences the memoir on a personal level cannot be entirely separated from how it is presented to students in a classroom setting. Similarly, as students struggle with the political, economic, and moral injustices described by W.E.B. DuBois (1903) in *The Souls of Black Folk*, as an educator and as a person one is challenged to make some sense of personal incidents wherein integrity has been attacked and intrinsic values undermined based upon externals including race, gender, ethnicity, and religion.

The unique process of introspection utilized throughout this book is designed to craft an understanding of how and why lessons are designed, delivered, and received in particular ways. This course of reflection models the use of aesthetic and autobiographical means in a way that merges the professional act of teaching with the personal identity of the educator. Consequently, a better understanding of the complexity of curriculum and instruction emerges. My broader hope is that this journey will inspire other educators to further reflect upon the intrinsic realities of what it means to be a teacher. Each chapter provides alternate pathways through which educators can better understand their own innate and intrinsic teacher identities. To this end, a collection of thought-provoking questions included after

each chapter are intended to provoke further introspection and discourse – both individually and collectively.

To clarify, this book is based primarily on works of literature in the most traditional sense. In fact, each chapter in this study is in itself a 'review of literature.' It is ironic that most reviews of literature in journal articles and other academic works do not actually contain literature in the literary sense of classic novels, poetry, and drama. The importance of using words, characters, images, and dialogue from literature to reflect on and to better ascertain a sense of teacher identity, purpose, struggles, and accomplishments is critical to each chapter of this exploration. But literary analysis and personal reflection are not the only components used in this search to ascertain the intrinsic elements and values that both define and inform one's teacher's identity. The intersection of literature and imagination plays a crucial role. Wolfgang Iser (1976) describes this interplay in this way:

> The literary text activates our own faculties, enabling us to recreate the world it presents. The product of this creative activity is what we might call the virtual dimension of the text, which endows it with its reality. This virtual dimension is not the text itself, nor is it the imagination of the reader: it is the coming together of text and imagination. (p. 1222)

It is this spirit that I have included three chapters of original discourse that specifically draw upon imagination and creativity. Authentic words of literary characters and their authors are re-imagined within surreal conversations that further explore an educator's intrinsic realities, fears, and aspirations. Using imaginative discourse as an additional mode of inquiry is inspired by Virginia Woolf's (1929) *A Room of One's Own*: "Yet it is in our idleness, in our dreams, that the submerged truth sometimes comes to the top" (p. 31). The daydream-like nature of these chapters evokes William Schubert's (2009a) use of what he calls a 'dreamland portal':

> Daydreams are not mere excursions of fancy; they are the seeds of revolutionary ideas and the courage to live such ideas. Daydreams are the license to strive for social justice - profound stimuli to the human spirit...Thus I advocate for daydreaming to be recognized as a viable epistemological base, at least sometimes. (p. 6)

It is this landscape of daydreams and imagination that extends the possibilities of this book's journey far beyond limitations of space and time. While exploring teacher identity unbound from deterministic restrictions of science, one is freed to examine oneself as a living embodiment of past lives, experiences and challenges as well as a harbinger of immeasurable future possibilities. In this way, this book uses literature, autobiography, and imagination to capture a glimpse of an intrinsic identity that is at once past, present, *and* future; personal *and* public; and private *and* universal.

Interpreting and reinterpreting one's perspectives and life experiences in order to better understand the intrinsic nature of teaching and learning demand reflection and introspection that transcends linear and deterministic boundaries of thought and

possibility. Jerome Bruner (*Life as Narrative*, 2004) demonstrates how pieces of literature can become 'experimental autobiography' (p. 709) to the extent in which others can use the 'structuring experience' (p. 708) of the text as a tool to 'interpret and reinterpret' their own lives, values, and choices. Inspired by these ideas, these chapters reflect and build upon my dual passion for teaching and learning and for literature and language. It is through the aesthetics of literature that each chapter of this book explores a deeper understanding of an educator's work and world.

Exploring the intrinsic landscape of an educator's identity through an aesthetic lens opens up worlds of thoughts, ideas, dreams, hopes, values, and memories. Memories, you ask? How can something as fragile, esoteric, and deeply personal as a memory be critical to the immediate demands of daily teaching and learning? Again, I propose that we turn to literature as a portal to better understand the transcendental and transformational nature that underlies these external functions. Consider, if you will, Virginia Woolf's (*Orlando*, 1928) provocative evocation:

> Memory is the seamstress, and a capricious one at that. Memory runs her needle in and out, up and down, hither and thither. We know not what comes next, or what follows after. Thus, the most ordinary movement in the world, such as sitting down at a table and pulling the inkstand towards one, may agitate a thousand odd, disconnected fragments, now bright, now dim, hanging and bobbing and dipping and flaunting, like the underlinen of a family of fourteen on a line in a gale of wind. Instead of being a single, downright, bluff piece of work of which no man need feel ashamed, our commonest deeds are set about with a fluttering and flickering of wings, a rising and falling of lights. (pp. 78-79)

By transcending physical limitations of time and space in this way, immediacy is restored to the values, memories, traditions, and histories that make us who we are. We become exposed again to the intrinsic realites that inspire, nourish, sustain, inform, and define the educators we perhaps were meant to be. As our teacher identities evolve, are we being true to our values, to our vision, and to our authentic selves? I do not believe that the answers to these inquiries lie in quantitative data, assessment scores, or standardized curricular manuals. Instead, I propose that it is qualitative and aesthetic inquiry which can transform external thinking into more intrinsic ways of knowing, being, and becoming. I am reminded here of the eloquent articulation Elizabeth Vallance (1991) offers on this matter:

> Aesthetic inquiry offers a perspective on curriculum research that traditional research methods assiduously avoid. In every case it offers a perspective that at best complements the perceptions of the situation gleaned from other sources…. [and] assists educators in seeing more clearly what they are dealing with - seeing what they may really be reacting to and why. (p. 169)

When I began my journey of pursuing literature as a teacher's curriculum, I was inspired, supported, and intrigued by the perspective put forth by George Willis and

A. J. Allen (1978) in which they articulated a distinction between the inward and outer world of an educator:

> We live within an external environment that we are experiencing immediately, but we also live within an inward world in which we constitute meaning by ultimately experiencing experience….The objects, processes, and structures of the external world may or may not be regarded as fixed, but all phenomenological methods attempt to take seriously the individual's own particular perceptions of them and his own process of moving from the surface level of experiencing to the deep level of experiencing experience. (pp. 34-35)

This in turn lead me to a deeper understanding of the wise fox at the conclusion of Antoine Saint-Exupery's (1943) *The Little Prince*:

> And now here is my secret, a very simple secret. It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.' 'What is essential is invisible to the eye,' the little prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember (p. 21).

It is in this spirit that I have embraced using literature as my curriculum. I do not mean curriculum in the traditional sense of content and subject matter. Instead, I am referring to an intrinsic curriculum of self, of identity, and of the values, aspirations, and conflicts that comprise the inner authenticity of a teacher's being. My hope is that you the reader will be similarly inspired on personal and professional levels.

Just as Virginia Woolf (1929) proposed that "Fiction here is likely to contain more truth than fact" (p. 4), literature has served me as a provacative and challenging means by which to better understand, appreciate, and further inspire my growth and development towards becoming the teacher I am meant to be. It is my honor to now share these experiences with others as we journey together towards a deeper understanding of ourselves and of each other. May the opportunities for insights, epiphanies, and revelations along the way enhance and deepen our personal and professional odysseys of teaching and learning.

CHAPTER 2

CHARACTER AS DOPPELGANGER

The Red Badge of Courage, Stephen Crane

Henry Fleming is my doppelganger. He is a young man determined to live by his personal values and ideals as he confronts a variety of conflicts and challenges. Like Henry, as an educator I have always tried not only to uphold my personal values and ideals, but also to infuse them into my instructional work. Although to some the fact that Henry Fleming is from the 19th Century might disqualify him as my doppelganger, I adhere to a broader definition of the concept as characterized by James Hillman (1996):

> Someone walks the earth who is your twin, your alter ego, your shadow, another you, another likeness, who sometimes seems to be close by your side and is your other self. When you talk to yourself, scold yourself, stop yourself up, perhaps you are addressing your doppelganger, not out there like a twin in another city but within your own room. (pp. 179-180)

Of this challenge to explore one's 'own room,' my thoughts turn to Virginia Woolf (1929) who remarked that only within one's own room can an individual "illuminate your own soul with its profundities and its shallows, and its vanities and its generosities" (p. 90) as it is "in our idleness, in our dreams, that the submerged truth sometimes comes to the top" (p. 31). Whether I'm exploring *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) with a class of eighth graders or reading it alone, I sense author Stephen Crane holding up a mirror to my identity – as an educator, an individual, and as a member of a larger humanity. In this way, the novel focuses less on external features and functions, and more as a magical looking-glass capable of transporting me (and my students) into alternate realms of existence, self-awareness, and, if we're lucky, illumination.

FINDING THE PATH TO THE THRESHOLD OF TRANSFORMATION

When Henry skedaddles after a frightened squirrel into the depths of a forest, he enters into the deepest realms of nature that metaphorically represent the innermost terrain of his human nature, the very essence of his being. If my students and I are on a quest to ascertain a better understanding of our world, and ourselves there are more meaningful answers to be found on this intrinsic path than can be gleamed from external resources such as curriculum guides or test prep books. To this end, I am indebted to educator Leo Buscaglia (1982) who inspires me with his reflections on teaching:

> If you want to find life you've got to look inside you…. Trips outside of you are worthless. They are what lead off into the forest where you are going to be lost. If you want answers for you, the answers are inside, not outside. (p. 70)

As an educator, I have come to articulate a personal vision of teaching and learning that values the growth and development of one's inner consciousness, values, and spirit. By taking this journey with Henry - *as Henry* - my students and I reconstruct a sense of who we are as individuals, as teacher and students, and as members of the larger community of humanity. As the mind, identity, and spirit of Henry change and evolve throughout the text, Crane's words, images, and metaphors linguistically weave together pieces of imagination and reality with the potential to transform the consciousness of the reader. These are the intrinsic transformations of mind and spirit that are of a nature to evoke and inspire illuminations and epiphanies.

Consider Crane's images of nature. Collectively, they serve as a metaphorical Greek chorus and establish a dynamic pattern of consciousness that progresses as such: from metaphysical support ("he [the youth] lay down in the grass. The blades pressed tenderly against his cheeks" p. 16); to anger ("the branches, pushing against him, threatened to throw him over upon it [a corpse]" p. 46); to fear ("the youth stared at the land in front of him. Its foliage now seemed to veil powers and horrors" p. 99); to consternation ("Yellow flames leaped toward it [the troops] from many directions. The forest made a tremendous objection" p. 100); to grief ("There was much blood upon the grass blades" p. 122); to condemnation ("As he marched along the little branch-hung roadway among his prattling companions a vision of cruelty brooded over him. It clung near him always and darkened his views of his deeds" p. 126).

By metaphorically portraying nature as an emotional compass, Crane extends the narrative experience beyond static story telling as he blends realism (the military events Henry encounters) with naturalism (the organic presence and responsiveness of nature). As impediments that separate humanity from nature are eliminated, an uncommonly unified vision of a singular *human nature* is presented. The value of this holistic portrait is universal and timeless. Crane pulls us away the mechanical to the natural, from the immediate to the infinite. On this critical point, I am reminded of educator Barry Sanders (2009) who warns that too great a focus on human matters of the here and now, without consideration of the simultaneous nature of our inner humanity, will result in a metaphorical disappearance of the human being!

If classroom teaching and learning rely too heavily on scripted lesson plans, quantitative assessment data, and other mechanically derived resources and means, I fear that we might be facing a similar danger of creating a metaphorical disappearance of teachers and students! Thus, the urgency and immediacy of reclaiming our human nature and our potential for being and becoming is heightened. Using literature as our curriculum (as Crane demonstrates with his use of nature as a major character) reminds us of the transcendental difference between a human specimen and a human being; and between human physiology and human nature. Sanders specifically cites

several authors whose works preserve the finite consciousness of our humanness as it is enveloped within the infinite consciousness of our larger humanity:

> Henry James and Henry David Thoreau both use *human being* with great frequency. Twain uses *human being* in almost every one of his books and short stories. I count some sixty occurrences in Ralph Waldo Emerson's essays of the word *human being*, which makes absolute sense, for that's precisely his main subject – the sentient, spiritual, and vibrant human being. (p. 242)

The images and values embedded in *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) defy the absolute nature of tangible facts and the limitations of mechanical initiatives such as scripted lesson plans and skills-based instruction and assessment. Instead, the text serves as a meaningful meditation on the intrinsic nature of one's values, beliefs, and authentic identity. For educators (and all human beings), the text has the potential to forge a unique pedagogical path toward self-enlightenment.Henry's intrinsic experience (and ours) begins when Henry deserts the regimented path prescribed by the army commandos, and we, I suggest, turn away from a similarly prescribed path dictated by curriculum commanders:

> The youth went again into the deep thickets. The brushed branches made a noise that drowned the sounds of cannon. He walked on, going from obscurity into promises of a greater obscurity. At length he reached a place where the high, arching boughs made a chapel. He softly pushed the green doors aside and entered. Pine needles were a gentle brown carpet. There was a religious half-light. (p. 46)

At this moment, Henry has turned away from an imposed military protocol. He has retreated from what promised to be his first opportunity to demonstrate patriotism and valor in battle; his first chance to earn a red badge of honor and heroism. *Or has he?* He has not entered into the external forest wherein, Leo Buscaglia (1982) warned, a person could get lost. Instead, as Crane portrays this moment, Henry has turned away from cannon fire into a religious half light; away from deep thicket onto a gentle carpet of pine needles; and away from the battle field into the arching boughs of a chapel.

No longer a member of an army of soldiers carrying bundles as it heads toward the lips of a riverbank, he now is an individual spectator noticing an "army of ants" (p. 46) carrying bundles along the "lips of a corpse" (p. 46). His finite consciousness of binaries (right *or* wrong, good *or* bad, north [union] *or* south [confederate], dead *or* alive) is transformed to a new level of consciousness:

> He was being looked at by a dead man who was seated with his back against a column like tree. The corpse was dressed in a uniform that once had been blue, but now was faded to a melancholy shade of green. The eyes, staring at the youth, had changed to the dull hue to be seen on the side of a dead fish. (p. 46)

As a corpse surreally stares at Henry, Henry's former mechanical reality (defined by only two possibilities - dead or alive) has suddenly been extended into a reality wherein dead and alive exist simultaneously.

Roland Barthes (1967) asserts that when literature is used as a reflective tool, it triggers an embodied self-feeling which in turn allows for more introspective and empathic reading and understanding. In Barthesian terms, the reader initially identifies with the role of the protagonist, then unconsciously adopts the lens of the creator (the author), and finally reconstructs an experience based on his or her own human relationships and cultural contexts. Barthes qualified this phenomenon as movement from *identity* to *adoption*.

Henry's *identity* as soldier, indoctrinated with military protocol and patriotic dogma, now must *adopt* to a heightened sense that transcends one-dimensional dogma and rules. Initially, Henry is turned to stone: either he returns to a one-dimensional consciousness (dead *or* alive) or he adapts to this reality of two dimensions (dead *and* alive), and enters the final stage of embodiment Barthes' *reconstruction*. A reconstructed reality would indicate that an episode of transformation and epiphany has occurred.

But as Henry and the corpse exchange this long look, it is Henry who shrieks and turns away; Crane emphatically tells us that Henry *retreats*. In Barthesian terms Henry has now retreated twice: first from his military (binary) identity and now from the two-dimensional reality that he refuses to adopt. Thus, Henry's chance at what Barthes called reconstruction or epiphany is delayed.

As I read and teach this initial stage of Henry's journey, I also reflect on the extent to which I am operating out of a Barthesean level of identity, wherein my instruction serves mostly to perpetuate surface identities of my students and myself. If my instruction is geared toward noticing the answers and behaviors I have been 'trained' or taught to look for (i.e. *correct* answers and *appropriate* behaviors), then, like Henry, I am blinding myself from seeing a much larger, more meaningful reality both in myself and in my students.

In this way, *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) teaches me to ask questions that challenge dogmas, biases, and ideologies that threaten to block or restrain paths to higher levels of consciousness and humanity. As a teacher (and a person), how often, like Henry, do I respond to immediate external stimuli rather than using my journey as teacher to develop a deeper sense of possibility and understanding for my students and myself? Like Henry, my complacency is disrupted as more questions emerge: How often do I lead students on paths that (although not intentionally) perpetuate identities defined by curriculum guides, political agendas, and stereotypes (economic, racial, or ethnic in nature)? To what extent am I using rich texts to empower students to travel beyond surfaces and facades into deeper, more meaningful arenas of awareness, reflection, and thought? How willing am I to lead students, like Henry, into "deep thickets" and into a "religious half light" of individual and communal self-awareness? These questions prod and vex me much like the branches and brambles of deep thickets prickled Henry.