neglect the traditions of literary study during the nurturing process. Concepts such as setting, characterization, and plot development can be learned through the study of young adult literature as well as through classic works.\footnote{17}{William Evans, "A Comparison of the Effects of a Superior Junior Novel and Silas Marner on the Ability of 10th Grade Students to Read the Novel," doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 1961; Nathan Blount, "The Effect of Selected Junior Novels and Selected Adult Novels on Student Attitudes toward the 'Ideal' Novel," Journal of Educational Research 59 (December 1965): 179-182; Michael Angelotti, "A Comparison of Elements in the Written Free Responses of Eighth Graders to a Junior Novel and an Adult Novel," doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 1972.}

Obviously, a developmental K-12 literature program based on the three C's will not include a forced march through a set canon of works which every student must read at any given grade level. The teacher must in fact be familiar with a wide range of literature, from classics to currently popular materials. Equally important, the teacher must have the freedom and the insight to apply that knowledge in connecting the student with appropriate works, in further cultivating the student's responses, and in encouraging carryover into lifelong reading habits by suggesting materials for leisure reading.\footnote{18}{Denny Wolfe and the NCTE Standing Committee on Teacher Preparation and Certification, Guidelines for Preparation of Teachers of English and Language Arts (Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1986).}

I have already referred to literature as "vicarious experience"—that is, experience acquired not by direct interaction with the world but by imaginative entry into worlds created by others. Unfortunately, students today have their most frequent vicarious experiences through nonprint media—especially television, film, and popular song lyrics.

There is nothing inherently shabby in nonprint vicarious experiences. Some of the greatest expressions of the human spirit, from ancient times to the present, have been achieved through the nonprint medium of drama—and of course, drama is a long-established part of the English curriculum. Moreover, television sitcoms and feature films have some structural qualities that are found in drama, short stories, and novels. Popular songs have elements in common with folk ballads and lyric poetry. To some extent, there is overlap in the tools of analysis that can be applied to TV dramas, films, and narratives in print. But in America we are besieged and benumbed by television, and vicarious experiences of low quality are transmitted into our homes daily.

Nevertheless, I include both print and nonprint vicarious experiences in the content of the English curriculum (Figure 3.5). This is not to say that everything on television or every film is or should be an object of study. Again, the question is what should be eligible for inclusion. Nonprint media are included because the English teacher has an important stake in guiding students' understanding of the imaginative worlds presented in nonprint media.
Figure 3.5. The Range of Vicarious Experiences Eligible for Inclusion in the Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NONPRINT</th>
<th>PRINT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>CHILDREN'S LITERATURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LITERATURE FOR ADULTS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In complaining about the ill effects of TV on children, educators have largely ignored the potential for making positive use of its many flaws and few virtues. To begin with, reluctant readers are seldom reluctant viewers. A common experience exists for cultivation of taste through critical discussion and analysis of TV. Fran Lehr has summarized some of the complexities not usually recognized in discussions of the effects of television, noting that numerous possibilities for creative critiques of television have been insufficiently explored. Teachers might conduct in-class critical comparisons and analyses of popular shows; provide advance preparation for high-quality TV dramas; link popular television shows with popular literature that is a cut above the TV experience; apply appropriate terms from literary analysis in discussing television; and teach about stereotypes, slanted observation and reporting, sound inference, and logical argumentation. The student who comes to realize that characterization and exploration of issues in *Cagney and Lacey* are often more subtle than those elements in stock TV detective shows is better prepared to discuss character and theme in short stories by Hemingway and O. Henry. Facile discussions about the narcotic effects of television overlook the possibilities for development of a productive discussion of television within the English curriculum.

**Personal Experience as Content**

The content of the English curriculum was earlier described as *that which is to be processed*. Such a view of literary content differs from many traditional views in that it acknowledges a wide range of literary quality and includes nonprint media as part of the student’s vicarious experiences. A point was also made about connecting literature with the student’s personal experiences: if class discussion and writing focus wholly on vicarious experiences derived from literature, the links between literature and the student’s life experiences are neglected. Equally important is the fact that the student’s personal experiences can take on meaning through oral and written language in the classroom, even when those experiences are not linked with literature. It follows that much of the student’s store of personal experience is part of “that which is to be processed”—part of the content of the English program.

To some extent, Figure 3.6 depicts processes as well as content. The dotted lines between personal and vicarious experiences suggest a constant interaction between reader and text, as noted in the earlier discussion of schema and reader response theory. “Identification” and “fantasy” are included because they are mental activities vitally linked with vicarious ex-
Figure 3.6. The Interaction of Students’ Personal and Vicarious Experiences

Vicarious Experience

Nonprint

- Television
- Film
- Drama
- Others

Print

- Children’s Literature
- Young Adult Literature
- Literature for Adults

Personal Experience

Identification/Fantasy
experience.\textsuperscript{21} Through identification, we enter into print and nonprint vicarious experiences, connecting ourselves with the imagined people and events and with the ideas and feelings presented in stories, poems, films, and the like. Fantasy is a kind of internal vicarious event through which we imagine ourselves doing things we have not yet done, might do, or cannot do.

Figure 3.6 indicates, then, that vicarious experiences can be processed not only as objects of formal study but also in relation to students' personal experiences. Students enter imaginatively into the authors' worlds for purposes ranging from literary analysis to sheer entertainment to testing their own views of reality.

But Figure 3.6 advances a much broader point: students' personal experiences are themselves an important part of the content of English. Through the processes of speaking and writing in the classroom, students give clearer shape to the unexamined experiences in their own lives, and they assign significance to those experiences in the very act of processing them. The idea of “connecting” comes into play in a new sense here. Not only are students linked with the minds and emotions of authors, they are also put in touch with their own ideas and feelings, because the processing of personal experiences through language gives clearer form to their impressions of the world.

This is not to say that every cranny of the student’s life and personal values should be drawn out in the classroom and made explicit through discussion and writing. Selectivity is obviously required, based on respect for the student’s privacy and on pedagogical and practical considerations. Regarding the latter, all content areas correctly taught will call for verbalization of some aspects of the student’s experience, because oral and written discourse are central processes that range across the curriculum.\textsuperscript{22}

But English is clearly the subject area in which major responsibility is assigned for helping students to be effective users of language. In the English classroom, the student’s exploration of thoughts and feelings through language is an end in itself. It must be practiced and modeled in large and small groups so students can become articulate in interpreting vicarious experience and in expressing their own experiences and inner states.


\textsuperscript{22}Christopher Thaiss, \textit{Language Across the Curriculum in the Elementary Grades} (Urbana, Ill.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and the National Council of Teachers of English, 1986); “Composing” and “Oral Discourse,” chapters in Robert Marzano et al., \textit{Dimensions of Thinking}, op. cit.
Information as Content

English programs have greatly overemphasized information. School versions of organized bodies of knowledge—miniaturizations of grammatical systems or the history of literature—are built into innumerable textbooks and curriculum guides. The weight of tradition, not an attempt to match content with learners or to apply research knowledge, is the rationale for such programs. (Hawthorne once said, "The past lies on us like the body of a dead giant.")

The information presented is often fragmented and isolated from actual use. Definitions and terminologies—from diphthongs to absolute phrases to nonrestrictive clauses—are abound in school grammar programs. Language textbooks, far from encouraging students to use language, are dominated by abstract definitions and follow-up drills that require identification of sentence parts or filling in blanks. In the literature program, students are expected to know (memorize) isolated information about authors' lives, particular works, literary movements, figures of speech, metric patterns, and the like. The textbook questions placed after literary selections rarely stress higher-order thinking skills or deal with students' responses to characters and plot.

Reactions against such programs have correctly resulted in recommendations for engaging students in the actual process of language-making. Yet it is clear that some information is essential, both in the study of literature as content and in the effective implementation of process-based instruction. Figure 3.7 suggests the place of information in English curriculums.

This final model suggests that students need information in order to discuss, and to gain deeper understanding of, their personal and vicarious experiences. I hasten to add that information can often be taught through inquiry methods rather than through assignment for memorization. Many literary concepts—narrative/lyric poetry, interior monologue, and point of view—are especially teachable through teacher-led inductive and deductive discussion. Certain concepts related to process instruction in oral and written language can be taught Socratically—transitional phrases, use of active/passive verbs, and methods for developing a point of argument. (Of course some information is taught most economically through direct methods. For example, the inductive teaching of metric patterns in poetry or a Socratic approach to studying the rules for quotation marks might be needlessly labored, and ultimately unrewarding for both teacher and student.)

In this model, information is primarily a tool rather than an end in itself. As an aspect of content, information is important insofar as it either helps teachers and students talk more readily about other aspects of content or makes discussion and implementation of processes easier and more fluid. In Figure 3.7, information "underlies" the English program and is not at the center of it. It is a relatively small yet essential support system for the exploration of personal and vicarious experiences through language.
Figure 3.7. The Place of Information in English Curriculums

INFORMATION ABOUT literature, nonprint media, language (grammar, semantics, pragmatics), composing (oral and written), etc.
By "relatively small" I do not mean minuscule. The area of literature alone includes a substantial body of concepts that students must know in order to respond richly to their readings. In broad strokes, the process might look like this. In primary grades, students reading a short story are asked to predict what might happen next, guess what a character might do, speculate about why characters acted as they did, and draw conclusions about the most important ideas in a story. From such discussions, the concepts of plot development, character development, motivation, and theme are formalized in the upper elementary and middle grades. By grade 10 or 11, a large array of short story concepts has been introduced and used comfortably in Socratic and response-based discussions.

To be sure, it is important for teachers and curriculum developers to ponder appropriate points for formal and informal introduction of concepts of fiction such as plot, subplot, character, setting, theme, conflict, irony, point of view, symbol, allegory, genre, and myth, to name just a few. It is equally important to attend to the methods of instruction and to the form and content of curriculum guides and testing programs. Pressure for coverage of concepts can force dust-dry memorization of definitions and misuse of direct instruction techniques (for example, the Madeline Hunter model) that militate against higher-order thinking and authentic student response to literature.

Traditionalists frequently present the rationale for information-heavy K-12 English curriculums in terms of providing a liberal education, rich in knowledge that every educated person should possess. They point out that much knowledge—for example, the Latin and Germanic roots of much of our language—is worth knowing for its own sake. But, as noted earlier, such curriculums at elementary and secondary levels have been manifestly ineffective in producing adults who enjoy reading and who write with skill and verve. I believe survey courses in British literature and the study of grammatical systems and history of language have their place at the college level. There, larger numbers of students have matured sufficiently to deal with the sensibility of Keats or the intricate functions of absolute phrases in cumulative sentences. Our primary mission in elementary and secondary schools is to produce students who speak, listen, read, and write not only capably but with a joy that will have profound impact on their personal habits and will carry over to later phases of their lives.

The model of content in Figure 3.7, then, urges an essential information base that is culturally enriching in itself and utilitarian in relation to process instruction. Those who would deny such a component in the English curriculum take their positions ideologically; there is no research basis for doing so. But again, they are in part reacting against a sad history of factmongering in elementary and secondary English programs.

Teachers and curriculum developers should indeed guard against the persisting tendency to consider English as a conglomerate of facts about literature, grammar, and composition.
Further Implications for Practitioners

I have presented a view of the content of the English curriculum but must conclude with a reaffirmation of the process-content relationship. My view of content, especially the dimension of personal experience, does not make sense unless content is understood in relation to process. Again, the content of English represented in Figure 3.7 is "that which is to be processed."

English as a subject has identifiable content, but the goals of K-12 instruction require the selection of appropriate materials and the processing of those materials via oral and written language. Adapting the 1966 Dartmouth Conference idea, I see English as the ordering of personal and vicarious experience through language. The central job of the English teacher is to elicit from students language that helps them to shape and give meaning to their individual experiences and the experiences of others—others whom they meet in the real world and in the imagined worlds of literature.

Information is an essential but limited aspect of the study of English. Within a far narrower range than was previously thought—a range that still lacks precise definition—there is a body of information that can illuminate the broader content of English and lubricate process instruction. By contrast, the range of usable content in the literature program is wider than was once specified, embracing study of some great works but emphasizing literary experiences that will engage students' interests, cultivate their responses, and promote lifelong habits of reading.

This view has many implications for curriculum developers, inservice leaders, and school principals. My inferences go beyond the models presented above, so I will combine candor with citations of references that support and amplify the six extrapolations that follow.

1. We should challenge the assumption that content need not be specified on one hand, and that complex processes cannot possibly be parcelled out into charts, grade levels, and textbooks on the other. In the real world, scope and sequence charts, curriculum guides, and textbooks are part of the furniture of curriculum development and implementation. Granted, the best teachers can apply their knowledge of processes in the classroom without nudges and prescriptions from the district office or the adopted textbooks. But few teachers can work in this manner, and most benefit from good instructional materials and guidance from peers and other professionals in the district.

2. Curriculum guides and scope and sequence charts can deal with English content and processes without overspecifying and oversimplifying,

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but few actually do so. In dealing with content, the simplistic tendency is to chop formal grammar concepts into segments and assign them to grade levels, and to list literary works by grade level and attach related concepts to those works. In dealing with processes, the tendency is to set grade level mastery standards for various oral and written forms. But mastery approaches, as Benjamin Bloom has noted, are inappropriate for teaching and learning complex processes like written and oral language. The erratic, developmental nature of such processes places them in a different category from declarative knowledge and skills that can be cultivated in a "building block" manner.\(^\text{25}\)

A sound scope and sequence array for composition and oral language would take into account theoretical and research literature and practice on aspects of language such as students' sense of genre, awareness of audience, syntactic growth, dialects, communicative competence, spelling, and the like. Applying such knowledge, curriculum developers might appropriately set ballpark expectations that students will demonstrate growth in various aspects of oral and written language at various grade levels. But objectives such as mastery of the five-paragraph theme in grade 8 or elimination of dangling participles by grade 11 (besides being naïve) breed a formalism that hinders genuine process instruction.

3. The content of K-12 English curriculums should not include extensive study of grammatical forms, traditional or otherwise. The study of grammar is at best a liberal arts pursuit, not unlike the study of musical forms. As such, it merits comparatively low priority in elementary and secondary programs. The main language goals of pre-college English are fundamentally the process goals of improving speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Productive content instruction in grammar plugs into language process instruction. It is highly selective, focused on actual problems as revealed in students' speaking and writing, and it is frankly prescriptive in attacking and solving those problems. Moreover, the appropriate point for diagnosis of usage and mechanical problems in writing is at the late editing stage in the writing process.

Grammar instruction that bypasses the study of terminology in favor of sentence manipulation is also useful. A solid body of research has emerged dealing with sentence combining. Sentence manipulation materials, along with diagnosis and prescription, are among numerous accessible alternatives to an annual forced march through the parts of speech and other grammatical definitions and rules.\(^\text{26}\)


4. Curriculums that define the content of literature in terms of lists of works to be studied by every student do not serve the goal of producing lifelong readers and learners. Lists can be helpful if presented as illustrations of types of materials usable with students at various levels. Such lists are particularly apt when teachers are charged with the responsibility to cultivate their students' intellectual growth and aesthetic standards as well as their pleasure in reading.

For example, a Brevard County, Florida, curriculum guide for American Literature presents "a sampler of ideas and activities," stressing "individual teacher freedom" and both process and content in the composition component of the program. A statewide California guide does not require particular works but provides criteria for evaluating instructional materials. The teacher is expected to build upon students' interests and strengths while developing their critical and analytical abilities. 27

It follows that we should question curriculums that use terms like "rigor," "high standards," and "core curriculum" to mask lack of adequate attention to differences among students and the psychology of the learner. (The Paideia Proposal is one such program, I believe.) Worse, "cultural literacy" has emerged as a new wedge to assure that elementary and high school students are exposed to a list of surface meanings of elements in our cultural heritage, whether the students internalize core values and understandings or not. 28

5. To assure adequate process instruction in language, teachers at all levels should be encouraged, even mandated, to make extensive use of class discussion in large and small groups. This means that training in group techniques and in whole-class discussion beyond recitation and Socratic questioning will be needed by many teachers. Research has solidly demonstrated the value of classroom interaction of various kinds—inquiry teaching, scaffolding, reciprocal teaching, cooperative learning. 29 Yet many teachers are still uncomfortable in the role of discussion leader or orchestrator of classroom groups.

Whole-class discussion can be teacher-led but should not be formulaic or focused mainly on content. Routine "checking for comprehension," for example, generates an atmosphere of recitation rather than exchange of ideas. Students' understanding or misunderstanding of content in literature can be detected in responses to "thought questions" that encourage them


29Anne Di Pardo and Sarah W. Freedman, Historical Overview: Groups in the Writing Classroom, Technical Report No. 4, Center for the Study of Writing (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California, 1987); Marzano et al., op.cit.
to state ideas in their own language and to embed their knowledge of basic information in discussions of real issues.

The valuing of small-group discussion by curriculum leaders, school principals, and teachers implies that "noisy" classrooms must be perceived as a desirable outcome of English instruction and not as a sure indication of poor discipline. As a Virginia Department of Education guide for group learning notes, noise that reflects purposeful discussion of content is a sign of enthusiasm about the act of learning. More importantly, it is prima facie evidence of successful process instruction.\(^{30}\)

6. Testing students' knowledge of content is important, but evaluation of student progress in English can never be reduced solely to content testing. Students "know" English when they "do" English well—stating significant ideas clearly in discussions, writing (and revising) with power and grace, reading with insight and enjoyment.

Regarding evaluation of language processes, external tests of writing that call for actual writing samples are useful in determining the abilities of groups of students; but an external test is never a legitimate measure of an individual student's language growth. Only teachers can truly monitor such growth as they provide multiple opportunities for speaking and writing and note each student's oral and written performance. Evaluation of language processes is partly impressionistic, partly quantifiable, and certainly based on patterns revealed through long-term observation rather than by a "final" examination, internal or external, of speaking and writing abilities.\(^{31}\)

External testing programs that involve writing samples can spark composition instruction where it has been neglected. Testing tends to drive instruction, so tests of actual writing are clearly more beneficial than "language tests" in which students generate no language.\(^{32}\) But many important aspects of language process instruction (e.g., students' discussion skills) beyond the capacity of external testing programs, so it is essential that administrators, supervisors, and inservice leaders support process instruction in other ways.

In the final analysis, students "do" English when they carry processes and content beyond the classroom and continue to grapple with more complex materials and ideas. The English curriculum is successful only when students read, speak, and write well in the worlds they inhabit after their K-12 educational experiences.

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