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Cover Page Footnote

Carolyn Piazza is an associate professor of reading and language arts at Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida. Christine Jecko is currently in her third year of teaching pre-kindergarten in a private school in Addison, Texas.

Multiple Forms of Prewriting in Elementary Writing Lessons

Carolyn L. Piazza and Christine Jecko

First grader Daniel is absorbed, turning the pages of *Catch That Cat!*, a wordless picture book about an extraordinary feline who rescues her owner from a shipyard villain. When the teacher approaches Daniel and invites him to tell her the story, Daniel interprets and dramatizes the black and white drawings with nonverbal gestures and sound-making. Crouching like a cat and uttering the word “meow,” Daniel moves in and out of drama to elaborate the narrative and transform the sequence of pictures into words, as the teacher asks questions to frame what he observes and enacts.

In this glimpse of classroom life, Daniel and his teacher create a story narrative based on the visual images of a book. Proceeding from artwork to drama to narrative, Daniel goes deeply into the story, not just to write a description (the cat is small) or label inanimate objects (the cat; the boy), but to connect, through narrative, the moments and events of the story while bringing into play expressive literacies that go beyond print (e.g., art interpretation, role playing, sound making).

Daniel and the other first graders often express themselves by drawing on multiple literacies, the complex amalgam of communicative channels, symbols, and signs (Piazza 2; The New London Group 61). With many available options, they frame ideas from different perspectives and demonstrate their competence in a variety of ways.

In recent years, attempts have been made to integrate nonprint and extralinguistic (nonlanguage) literacies with language instruction.¹ This trend is often attributed to a greater emphasis on inquiry models and interactive methods, meaning as socially constructed, recognition of multiple intelligences, and value in expressing emotional and personal experiences through the visual and performing arts. Research in multiple literacies suggests, for instance, that when students respond to literature through drama, music, and even mathematics, they expand, enrich, and unravel potential meanings not otherwise possible (Alejandro 12; Eisner, “Role” 48; Short, Kauffman, and Kahn 160).

Just as readers benefit from multiple forms of expression, so too do writers, especially during prewriting, the part of the process that extends “from the time a

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¹ Consider, for example, Karen Ernst and Ruth Hubbard’s *New Entries of Learning by Writing and Drawing*, Claudia Cornett’s integration of literature with the arts, Carolyn Piazza’s teaching writing through the arts, and Kathy Short, Jerome Harste, and Carolyn Burke’s authoring cycles.

writer begins to perceive selectively certain features of his [sic] inner and/or outer environment with a view to writing about them—usually at the instigation of a stimulus—to the time when he first puts words or phrases on paper elucidating that perception” (Emig 39).

Most educators are familiar with typical prewriting strategies such as webs, clusters, maps, or outlines. However, perhaps less well-known, but used by many expert writers, are experiences that activate thinking through visual images (e.g., drawings and art), sensory channels (e.g., music, guided imagery), the subconscious (e.g., dreams) and intensified contemplation, (e.g., meditation) (Darnton; Moyers). An interest in various types of prewriting and their effects on a writing assignment is not new. Research in the 70s and 80s considered the impact of pictures (Golub and Frederick 168-69), auditory and tactile stimuli (Kafka 32), music (Donlan 116), and guided imagery (Mahoney 42) on fluency and quality of writing, but these studies were often “atheoretic” and told “nothing about the processes of writing or instruction, and little about the conditions conducive to better writing” (Hillocks 174). With today’s emphasis on diversity and culturally relevant instruction, multimodal prewriting resources can offer novel ways of perceiving, interpreting, and shaping writing.

This article reports the impact of nonlanguage prewriting invitations (creative visualization, art, music, dreams, and meditation) on the writing of students in first, second, and fourth grade. The idea of prewriting as “assisted invitations” was borrowed from Ann E. Berthoff (9) to capture the purposeful intent of framing writing with multisensory experiences rather than teaching a specific strategy. Before discussing these prewriting invitations, we outline classical and contemporary theories in which nonlanguage experiences are grounded.

Building A Framework For Multiple Forms of Prewriting

The five prewriting invitations that we identified for this study—creative visualization, art, music, dreams, and meditation—go beyond language to consider expression in all of its various forms. Three communicative theories overlap to offer a framework for tapping into this wider expanse of meanings.

The Art of Invention and Rohman’s Prewriting

The term “invention” reflects the classical notion of “ways of knowing,” while at the same time building on work which extends rhetorical contexts to studies of creativity and multiple forms of literacy. The early Greek philosophers were among the first to show interest in the “art of invention,” the rhetorical practice of exploring a subject and discovering a line of argument that would affect an audience. In classical rhetoric, the subject was not just a topic but rather a topic-as-a-method-of-inquiry (Lindemann 43). Strategies for dealing with topics, traditionally of an argumentative nature, considered use of opposites, various senses and meanings of an ambiguous term, selection of powerful and skillful words, and other persuasive techniques. A more contemporary rhetorical function placed the topic in new relationships with the audience to achieve a broader range of discourse aims. It was during the 60s with the advent of writing process approaches that the term “prewriting” was coined by D. Gordon Rohman whose work started a generation of writers moving beyond classical invention to creative inquiry techniques aimed at expressive and literary discourse. Although Rohman’s

broad conception of prewriting resonated with creativity, subjectivity, and simplicity (Young 16-18), the forms that inquiry took in classrooms were those in which verbal facility and logical aims dominated. By contrast, professional writers and creative people embraced multisensory sources for guidance and inspiration (Ghiselin).

Gardner's Multiple Intelligences

Howard Gardner's seminal work *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* offers another set of principles for framing inquiry beyond linguistic and logical dimensions. "Gardner's basic premise is that intelligence is a biologically given capacity that manifests itself in a variety of forms" (Eisner, "Commentary" 556). Eisner outlines Gardner's multiple intelligences as follows:

- Linguistic Intelligence: Using language strategies and words to maximize experience
- Logical-Mathematical Intelligence: Drawing on reasonable arguments and numerical symbols
- Music Intelligence: Perceiving rhythm and time with a melodic mind
- Spatial Intelligence: Thinking in pictures and images with the mind's eye
- Kinesthetic Intelligence: Moving the body and physical self through space
- Interpersonal Intelligence: Noticing others and connecting with the social world; understanding others' temperaments, meanings, and perspectives
- Intrapersonal Intelligence: Developing self-awareness and recognizing the range of emotions, habits, and actions that guide behavior
- Naturalist Intelligence: Working and exploring nature and natural events
- Spiritual Intelligence: Pondering the nature of existence and the existential life

For writers, these intelligences represent multiple ways of knowing and a broad spectrum of inquiry approaches that guide reason, stimulate memory, encourage intuition, and give rise to problem solving. Worth noting is the overlap of the musical, spatial, kinesthetic, and spiritual realms with Rohman's prewriting. The intelligences offer untapped resources to stretch writers' thinking in ways not often considered.

Peirce's Semiotics

Semiotics, the study of signs, is also relevant to multiple forms of prewriting. Charles Peirce, considered the father of modern semiotics, contends there are three ways to represent or express mental ideas (135). They may be iconic, that is, signs representing a picture or diagram and resembling that which they signify (e.g., a photograph), symbolic like those typically connected to speech and writing (e.g., words in a book), or indexical signs, those which are inherently linked in some way (e.g., smoke equals fire). Children and adults respond immediately to iconic messages because they appear almost tangible, a set of "summary images" or graphics that stand for a concept without defining it fully (Bruner 10-11). Iconic representations rely heavily on visual, perceptual, and sensory organization and invite children to examine image properties, or affect, to arrive at a gestalt before using linguistic categories (Bruner).

Words are symbolic signs and are challenging to readers and writers because they do not always resemble the signified but are arbitrarily agreed upon for

meaning (Barthes 35-53; Eco). For example, the word stop is used to signify the same directive as a red traffic light. On the other hand, indexical signs point out physical or actual relationships rather than arbitrary ones (symbols). In the case of smoke and fire, smoke is an index because it indicates and implicates fire by virtue of an “actual” connection between the smoke and itself. Peirce sees icons, symbols, and indices as interdependent rather than as separate forms of representation.

Almost two decades ago, Charles Suhor, a well-known English educator and researcher, discussed the importance of a semiotic-based curriculum. This curriculum considered photography to focus a writer’s perceptions and shape interpretations, dramatic enactments to organize experience, and nonverbal communication (movement, silence, sound) to carry human emotions and feelings. Suhor argued that these literacies were not simply a set of “frills” but a way of offering children new meaning-making systems and potential tools for thinking, introspection, inspiration, associations, and experimentation. The overlap of semiotics with Gardner’s multiple intelligences and Rohman’s prewriting is significant because it forms a conceptual framework for expanding invention tools to include multimodal forms of expression. Table 1 represents these multiple forms and shows how each literacy conveys its own special language and grammar. Although the focus of our study was nonlanguage prewriting experiences, we recognized spoken language (directions, questions, read-alouds) and interaction (teacher, student, text) as integral to transforming ideas into written language (symbols).

Table 1 : Rohman’s Prewriting with Multiple Intelligences and Semiotics

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As Table 1 indicates, writers use a wide variety of meaning systems, beyond language, for generating ideas or redirecting thought. These lines of inquiry touch deep emotional reservoirs and inner-most thoughts along with reasoning and logic.

Prewriting Invitations In Writing Lessons

The present study considered a broad, exploratory question: Do nonlanguage prewriting invitations promote writing fluency and idea generation? The participants in this study were writers and their teachers in first, second, and fourth-grade classrooms who volunteered to experiment with one or more prewriting activities. Mr. Nolan, the teacher in Grade 1, conducted a creative visualization lesson with Matt, Danielle, Amber, and Daniel. Ms. Smith, the second-grade teacher, drew on art and music resources in lessons with Klay, Blake, Lindsay, Valeisha, and Alex. And Ms. Montgomery, the fourth-grade teacher, tried out dreamwork and meditation with Erik, Seth, Katie, and Aisha. Although each lesson was suitable for implementation with an entire class, a subgroup of 4-6 children was randomly selected for detailed observation. In each case, the students were part of an intact heterogeneous group who met regularly during the reading and language arts period.

Five lessons, in all, were conducted, each ranging from 15-30 minutes. The researchers selected the prewriting invitations, but the teachers developed and carried them out. During a lesson, the researchers observed and took field notes of classroom interactions and writer behaviors, particularly those occurring between prewriting and first drafts. First drafts and informal writings were analyzed for fluency as measured in T-units and mean number of words per T-unit (see numbers in parentheses). A T-unit, first identified by Kellogg Hunt, is defined as all independent clauses and their dependent clauses. Simple and complex sentences would be 1 T-unit; compound sentences, 2 T-units. Because the number and length of T-units did not provide the entire picture of children's competence, drafts were also examined for quality of ideas (content and word choice). These analyses, along with classroom observations, were verified by the teachers.

Beyond interest in the prewriting invitations, we were curious about the catalysts for changing nonverbal thoughts into words, that is, how writers bridged one literacy to another, say, from art or music to written language. To that end, we considered the concept of transmediation, a process of expressing ideas in one system and transforming them into another (Suhor 250-52).

Writing Lessons

The lessons that follow shed light on the potential for using certain prewriting invitations in classrooms. Because their implementation raised more questions than they answered, we are optimistic about their promise in future research.

Creative Visualization in First Grade Character Sketches

Creative visualization, sometimes referred to as "guided imagery," is an invention technique that invites writers to form impressions, concepts, or feelings by constructing images, not really visible, but played out as motion pictures of the mind. It involves intensified listening for descriptions, actions, and events to make associations or reinvent selective details in writing.

First grade teacher, Mr. Nolan, read aloud Jack Prelutsky's poem "The Creature in the Classroom" to a small group of students: Matt, Danielle, Amber, and Daniel. After listening to repeated readings of the poem, the children wrote character sketches of the creature. Prelutsky details how the creature invades the schoolroom, consuming everything in sight, but doesn't describe the creature.

Instead, he refers to it, 13 different times, as either “The Creature,” “The Thing,” or “It”.

Immediately after listening to the poem, Matt begins a written draft, leaving the observer to guess at the invisible transmediation process. In his six T-unit (4.6) text he writes: *It's a monster./ He is yellow and orange./ He came from the mirror./ He ate the mirror. And my dad./ I was mad/ and he swallowed my teacher.* While the words of the poem scaffold the visualization, the description of the creature is entirely Matt's own invention. Perhaps his constructed image originates from pictures seen previously on TV or in print.

Danielle also goes directly from the poem to writing, describing the physical characteristics of the creature in four T-units (4.2): *He is very tall /and he has spiky things. / Boogie monster and has toes./ He is whitish.* Like Matt, Danielle uses a vivid imagination to mediate between the poem (catalyst) and the draft.

Amber, on the other hand, approaches drafting via a drawing that is quite complete: a wall clock with all its numbers, a monster eating with one hand and holding a ruler in the other, a teacher shouting “out,” and frightened students standing on top of their desks. Amber sees, in her mind's eye, not just the creature but the entire scene. Her mind images and drawing become the transmediating vehicles between Prelutsky's poem and the written descriptive piece. The drawing, however, is far more detailed than her draft of six T-units (3.6): *He gobbled up the blackboard./ He was fat./ He has hair./ He has blue. /He get the homework./ He get the apples.*

The creative visualization assignment is difficult for Daniel, who is unable to get started writing or drawing. Hence, Mr. Nolan asks three questions: What does the creature eat; is it fat or skinny; what color is the creature? Although the questions mediate written description, Daniel sees them as requests for correct answers and completes a draft that represents a simple response: *he eats toes. / he is fat./ he is red.* (three T-units, 3.0). It is quite likely that if more questions had been asked, the length of Daniel's text would have equaled those in his group.

In these examples, children move from words (poem) to written description by means of visual imagery, prior knowledge, questions, and/or drawing. Whether the transmediation from oral to written was influenced by a linguistic catalyst (the poem) remains a mystery. We do know, however, that relative to the other prewriting invitations, the poem offered no substantial advantage.

Art and Role Play in Second Grade Story Writing

It is common for children to rehearse writing through drawings. But viewing an art print, illustration, or photograph is another inspirational channel. For instance, children find narrative in art (e.g., through color, shape, size, texture, relationships, point of view) and use it as a prompt or model for writing (Dyson, “Negotiating” 356; Siegel 455-56).

Ms. Smith conducts a small group writing lesson with five second graders—Klay, Blake, Lindsay, Valeisha, and Alex—using an art print for inventing and sustaining a character role. The art print titled *If Balloons Were Wishes* by Kathryn Freeman portrays a park scene in which familiar activities seem to come alive: grown-ups are holding the hands of small children, an adult and child are riding a two-seat bicycle, people are walking dogs, a young girl is feeding some pigeons, a young boy is skateboarding, and a man, surrounded by children, is holding a bunch of balloons. Perhaps the most striking and attractive aspect of the piece is a child being carried off by a balloon that is floating above a small pond. With

this, the scene takes on an imaginary quality.

Students assume the role of a character or “thing” in the painting. A few questions are given as a guide for viewing the art print:

- What are you looking at?
- What are you thinking? Doing?
- Who or what is around you? What are they doing?
- What are you feeling?
- If you are talking, what are you saying? If someone is talking to you, what are they saying?
- What do you hear?

Immediately after answering the questions with one or two words, Klay begins to write, becoming the skateboarder and sustaining an invented voice with first person, “I.” With four T-units (8.2), he answers two of the questions and quickly ends the piece. *I am skateboarding on the sidewalk./ I saw this kid float up with a balloon./ And then I said he is definitely nuts./ And they are going to eat when they get home.* Although he fulfills the task, neither the art print nor the questions seem to inspire an engaging text.

Blake, on the other hand, answers all the questions but incorporates only one of them before making a connection between the art print and a social studies topic, the solar system. *I am a dog who is thirsty./ I see a kid riding a balloon./ I barked at him./ He went so close to the sun he went out of earth's atmosphere./ His balloon popped./ He started to float to Mercury.* In his six T-unit draft (6.6), he adds sophisticated vocabulary, such as atmosphere, balloon, and Mercury, copied from the word wall.

Lindsay considers sensory questions about what she “sees,” “hears,” and “does” to create a rich twenty-two T-unit draft (5.8) in her role as a dog taking a walk in the park.

Once I went to the park. / There were lots of people. / My owner took me for a walk./ On the way we saw a lot of birds. / We heard lots of sounds./ there was a pond and a bench./ We sat on the bench/ and saw a fish pop up./ We had a picnic there, /we had jelly sandwiches./ After we had our sandwiches we walked some more./ On the way we saw a icecream stand icecream 10 cents./ We bought some. / I got vanilla with sprinkles. / Then my owner went to get popcorn./ I snuck off./ I walked around./ Then I saw something I never saw before. A plane./ It was so big./ Then my owner found me/ and we went home/ and had tea and biscuits.

Her action sequence, from start to finish is filled with details such as *jelly sandwiches, sprinkles on vanilla icecream, 10 cents, and biscuits*. Short and long sentences bring a pleasant flow to the work, and the spellings of complex words show remarkable skill (*sorinkills*/sprinkles; *venla* for vanilla; *picknick* for picnic). For Lindsay, the artwork and questions provide an exploratory and kinesthetic space to identify a personal experience and enter the draft.

Valeisha incorporates the viewing questions as dialogue to scaffold her thoughts as she begins her narrative. Like Lindsay, personal interests and values mediate the draft while multi-syllabic words in invented spelling (*butifull*/beautiful; *meracole*/miracle) help produce a detailed storyline of forty-nine T-units (6.0).

What are you looking at asked the little girl asked?/ I am looking at a lot of kids./ What are you thinking about?/ Who is around you?/ There are little kids around me. / What are they doing? / Well, they are asking for a balloon. / Someone has put something in the balloons./ It was a kind of thing in the air./ Everybody had starred at it /then rain came down/ and everybody did not have a umbrella/ but the balloon man did./ It wasn't just rainy/ but a bird and something./ It can't be God, because God is even brighter then that./ It was a beautiful cloud/ and a sparkle with a twinkle. / A beautiful rainbow appeared./ It was a gift of God./ Another one./ I want you to go to the people/ and give them a balloon / Why asked the little boy?/ Because, I want you to. /Ok. Said the boy./ So he went./ And want the dog to have this balloon/ so he can pop it./ Everybody had wondered why he was doing this./ He got up on a chair/ and put all of the balloons /and a miracle had happened./ It was so pretty./ Birds had sung/ and dogs barked. / What are you feeling./ I am feeling voices, air, and Jesus./ I am asking questions to little kids like you./ They are saying what will I do./ What do you hear./ I hear voices and skateboards./ You can have a balloon/ but I want you to keep a hold on to it./ And here is one for you./ I want you to keep a hold to it./ I want you to fly with yours./ And then the balloon will pop./ Then I will give you another.

If Valeisha finds a way cleverly to include the questions to pursue her own topic, Alex simply gives them cursory attention as he assumes the role of partial omnipotent narrator, looking at the skateboarder rather than becoming the skateboarder himself: *One day a boy skateboarding./He did a trick./It was so cool./then he did it again/ And he did it./Then he went home.* Of the five children, Alex is the only one who is unable to enter the picture and see the world from another's point of view. His six T-unit draft (4.3) is as long as the other boys but it falls short of fulfilling the task.

If it is true that role-taking occurs at a very early age with pretend play (e.g., using brooms as horses or role-playing fire fighters and doctors), then the reinventing of role play for purposes of fiction takes practice and developmental readiness (Jorgensen 70-71). Inventing character descriptions and role-taking are essential strategies to practice. However, in the context of prewriting, these strategies might have been more effectively framed as idea "seeds" for future writing.

In the art invitation, the girls (22 and 49 T-units) clearly outperform the boys (4 and 6 T-units) in terms of fluency. For Klay and Alex, the art print inspires few ideas, and the questions, intended as a mediating device for transferring visual images to a draft, instead, frame the activity as an academic exercise. On the other hand, the girls and Blake view the questions and art print as an opportunity to free associate and make connections. Blake draws on the social studies unit he is studying, Lindsay unleashes a personal experience that parallels the one in the art print, and Valeisha changes the guiding questions into dialogue for conveying her personal and moral message. Not only do these students use the art print to stimulate ideas, but they also draw on their experiences to mediate the writing. They are, at once, personalizing the draft and fulfilling the assignment, or what Anne Dyson refers to as "doing school" ("Learning" 258-60).

Music and Inventing Story Plot with Second Graders

Another communicative medium for exploring the world of happenings and feelings is music. Children draw on sounds, rhythms, or harmonies to explore free associations, moods, or ideas. Music, although unfolding in actual time, transcends single sounds to assemble whole ideas and evoke spatial and kinesthetic communication. Music inspires story scenes and characters or serves as a prompt for an entire story line.

The same group of second graders, Klay, Lindsay, Blake, Valeisha, and Alex, listened to music to discover topics and content for writing. Because this group participated in both the art and music experience, we were able to compare responses to different prewriting invitations. The piece chosen for this activity was *Ride of the Valkyries* by Richard Wagner. The score starts off very softly and then builds to an allegro pitch. Its crescendo makes use of the brass section of the orchestra, resulting in a bold and spirited effect. Because of this, it invites the listener to imagine scenes and events. Students jot down words and sentences, draw pictures, or just scribble movements on the blank page. The piece is played several times as the children freely associate.

Not surprising, the boys respond with pictures and words about armies and war (Dyson, "Ninjas" 227–29). Klay hears trumpets in the piece and associates this with men in battle. He states: *Me and my friends were in a battle./ And it was dark and raining./ But we were tough because we were army men./ And the guys behind us were playing trumpets./ We were all dressed in blue./ We would be shooting guns.* His draft, six T-units (7.0) in length, is longer than the one based on the art print, and, because there is not a set of mediating questions, the resulting draft is more coherent with feeling and details.

Blake's twelve T-unit (4.2) draft, based on music, shows a great deal of imagination and specificity. *A army had come./ Everybody rushed in there homes except the soldiers./ One of them said ready our men./ He did as commanded./ Then the enemy came./ There were more bad than good./ Then guns fired./ They good people won./ Everybody went home./ We won/ they cried./ The battle is over.*

Even though there are fewer words per T-unit, Blake's story is cohesive, focused, and uses advanced vocabulary such as *commanded*, *enemy*, and *soldiers*. Blake also attempts difficult spellings such as *eminey/enemy*, *camandid/ commanded*, and *ecsept/except*.

Unlike Blake, Alex does not describe men in battle, but writes a nine T-unit draft (5.0) about a competitive horse race. *One day I was at a horserace./ Number 25 was in the lead./ And it was in the 2 round./ They where running fast./ There was music playing/ it was a rap./ We were going for number 14./ And number 14 won./ Then we left./* Although not much longer than his art-inspired piece, this draft develops a scene and is imbued with voice.

If the music conjures up war and competition for the boys, it evokes personal experiences and emotional content for the girls. Lindsay describes an event in which she is nervous about skating in front of crowds of people. In her short eleven T-unit piece (6.0) with accompanying drawing, she produces a snapshot of her skating experience. *Once I went to skate./ Coach told me I had to skate in front of people./ My mom and dad and my friend would be there./ The time had come./ I was nervous./ The person called my name./ I was up./ At first I heard music,/ when I was done I heard people cheer./ I was glad./ I also saw my favorite*

colors blue and white. Although the average words per T-unit is equal to her earlier piece, she writes only half as much.

Valeisha, on the other hand, writes as prolifically as she did in the previous art-based draft, this time making detailed sketches and writing a twenty-three T-unit (7.3) account of the tragic period of slavery. Slaves are *being whipped* and this, she says, reminds her *of the whipping of Jesus*. She relays that *over half of the slaves died and God doesn't like it because we are his creation*. In her story, people fight with swords to free the slaves while a man *plays a trumpet and people cheer*. Again, she reiterates her moral theme, and again she manages to use the prewriting invitation to suit her sustained topic of interest. Her detailed sketches and experiences provide a transmediating avenue for the fluent draft she develops.

Overall, the music had a direct influence on the students' writing topics and content. Because the music prewriting invitation was open-ended, without a specific teacher task associated with it, the students were able to incorporate their own personal interests and experiences. While fewer words were written than in the art invited draft, the content was noticeably more authentic and heart-felt. Drawings, personal experience, and social knowledge further mediated the music. Whereas the boys wrote more during the music than during the art print activities, the girls wrote less. The nature of the musical piece and the images it evoked (action and combat) may have favored the boys over the girls.

Dreamwork with Fourth Graders

In contemporary life, daydreams and reveries often go unnoticed or are dismissed as irrelevant. Yet they can open up the intrapersonal realm of human desires, fears, goals, and relationships to promote a type of incubation and pondering encoded in spatial, kinesthetic, and symbolic form.

Two boys (Erik and Seth) and two girls (Katie and Aisha) participated in an activity that built on dreams as the resource for invention. Ms. Montgomery shared the Native American legend of the Dreamcatcher, a spirit who catches in a web all the bad dreams that occur during the night, allowing the good dreams to fly away to reach the sleeping person. Ancestors of Native American made dreamcatchers from twigs or pieces of jute, twisted into a circle and hung over places where they slept. The students prepared for the writing session by making dreamcatchers. Because the students recorded dreams outside of school, the transmediation process was not observed. However, Erik, Seth, and Aisha brought in snippets of paper from their dreamcatchers. A simple line from each student's dreamcatcher offers examples.

Erik: *Playing baseball. Winning a baseball game. Me and Bryan. We won.*

Seth: *I think my dog dreams about being a person so he can get into the refrigerator.*

Aisha: *I dream of being a winner someday. I dream of winning at swimming. Doing New York model contracts, running, fishing, horseback riding, saving animals.*

In class, when given time to elaborate on these ideas, Erik writes a fifty-eight T-unit draft (9.1) about baseball, Seth writes a forty-two T-unit draft (12.6) about his golden retriever, and Aisha talks about her swim team in a thirty-seven T-unit (11.3) draft. In all three cases, the drafts represent personal narratives that are fluent, detailed, and imprinted with voice. An excerpt from Erik's baseball draft in which he talks about the coach and his position playing left field serves to illustrate.

Our first game started./ To start off with my coaches were pretty strict./ I tried to ignore them./ I got up to bat/ and the coach was being nice then by saying “come on watch the ball”. / Well I struck out./ And the coach was mad/ and yelled at me. / Then it was time for us to take the field./ I played left field./ A person got up to bat / and hit it to left field where I was./ It went high in the air./ I took a few steps back /and caught it./ Everybody was screaming and yelling.

Although Erik, Seth, and Aisha talk about actual experiences, Katie chooses to write a 26-word statement about a bad dream: *I dreamed there were a bunch of monsters and creepy animals hiding in my room. Every time I turned off my lights they would attack me.* She chooses not to write about this further.

In all but one instance, the dream invitation inspired, and provided a means for, topic selection and ideas. Because it elicited personal experiences and, in turn, directed the narratives, the drafts were remarkably fluent and substantially rich in both number of T-units and mean words per T unit. It would seem that the informal dream “snippets” were prewriting in the true sense of the word.

Meditation in Fourth Grade Journal Writing

As was the case with second graders, we followed the same fourth grade group in the meditation prewriting experience. Meditation is a silencing of the self for ultimate concentration and focus. Although often associated with Eastern religions and spiritual enlightenment, meditation draws on experience, feelings, and inner solitude. For example, writers such as Ray Bradbury and Natalie Goldberg have adopted Zen principles to promote the hidden potential of the human mind and release the power of synergy and extreme watchfulness. Stretching, breathing, physical movements, or music also elicit a state of receptivity, establish mood, or bring out ideas from the subconscious (Oates 170-71; Walker). Meditation, it seems, integrates all of the intelligences—through feeling and body essence—into an experience that is harmonized and unified all at once (Caudwell 17-42).

Ms. Montgomery provides many kinesthetic/spatial opportunities. Her schedule regularly permits interludes in which students stand up and stretch, or do cross-lateral movements and deep breathing to increase oxygen flow. During a relaxation exercise, Erik, Seth, Aisha, and Katie sit quietly and let their minds wander as meditative music plays softly in the background. A couple of students close their eyes, put their heads on their desks, and relax while the music, soft and soothing—in adagio—plays on. The CD recording, *Surf Sounds*, is filled with sounds from the ocean. After a minute of listening, the students do a five-minute freewrite. Erik simply reports an association created by the music: *The music made me think of my friends./ I have a friend that died in 1999./ His name was Ryan./ He was my best friend. /We would play a lot together./ We would play tag./ He loved to play tag./ I had a lot of friends/ but they moved away./ I miss my friends.* The draft, which is ten T-units long (5.4), focuses exclusively on the topic of friends.

Seth picks up on the theme of the music—sounds of water—and drafts a verbal brainstorming list about his personal trip to Abacos Island in the Bahamas. He likes to go there for many reasons (boat rides, play in the beaches snorkeling, swimming, fishing, laying on the sand, enjoying the sun and breathing fresh air). Even though he has written only four T-units (14.7), each sentence has many

words. Aisha connects the sounds of water with the general topic of nature and writes her thoughts in a poem of four T-units (7.0). *Pitter patter goes the feet of a little animal./ Whish goes an animal over head./ Crack goes the snap of a branch./ Rustle goes leaves in my path.*

Katie writes a thirteen T-unit (10.1) draft on feelings evoked by the soft music: *The music makes me feel peaceful, calm, and tired. It makes me want to waltz around the room or play in the sand at the beach [. . .]. The music makes me think of a beautiful flower meadow with me prancing around like a unicorn.* Her brainstorming of free associations inspires dreamy images that come to her as snapshots rather than as a cohesive topic.

Each of the students proceeds from meditation to the written draft in different ways. Aisha and Seth begin with themes evoked from the kind of music selected (nature, the Bahamas), while Seth and Katie brainstorm in lists and associations. Erik draws on the melancholy sounds and the mood of the music to think about a specific incident—his deceased friend—Katie uses the soft music to inspire disparate images of many kinds. The students take what they hear and translate thoughts and feelings into words, disregarding the meditative intent of quiet concentration. In each case, the music conjures up personal experiences through associations, content, and topics. Only Seth and Katie use informal writing (lists and associations) before drafting their narratives.

Lessons Learned

This article presents an array of prewriting invitations that collectively represents multiple ways of knowing and thinking. To be sure, these invitations encouraged children to take compositional risks, spell difficult words, and pursue personal themes. However, the function of each prewriting invitation, as framed by the teacher and interpreted by the student, affected fluency. The invitations to creative visualization and art work, for example, were highly structured, with teacher questioning playing an important role. Questions were essential for first grader Daniel in getting words on paper and for second grader Valeisha for shuttling between the art work and the draft. However, when students perceived prewriting as a way of demonstrating writing competence rather than generating ideas, they often wrote fewer words (e.g., Alex's description of the art work). As they adapted the task to fit their interests and experiences (e.g., Valeisha's moral message and Blake's solar system link), the number of words increased. These findings suggest to us the following lesson.

Lesson #1: Fluency appears to be contingent not only on what prewriting invitations are used but also on how they are used. If prewriting is done in the service of finding personal topics and purposes and if questioning is presented and interpreted as a way to direct attention to new ideas rather than as a perceived call for correct answers, students will, in all likelihood, write longer and more engaging drafts.

Finding topics and expanding subject matter were the purposes of the music invitation. Music was probably the only prewriting experience in which all the students moved directly from sound to a topic. The music conjured up war and competition for the boys and social activity and emotional content for the girls. Compared to the art print, the music motivated the boys to write more T-units even though they actually wrote fewer words per T-unit. While all the children

favored this prewriting invitation, wrote more cohesively, and demonstrated personal voice, the music selected may have inadvertently advantaged one gender over the other or may have directed the nature of the subject matter in gender-specific ways. Two implications seem pertinent to the music invitation:

Lesson #2: Music appears to speak directly to writers, fostering fluency without intervention or direction. As such, it is ideal for inspiring ideas and fostering writer commitment and ownership.

Lesson #3: Music choices should increase the potential for a wide array of topics and associations. It is wise to sample many types and styles of music, keeping in mind the preferences of both boys and girls.

Music inadvertently played a key role in the meditation experience. Although students in the fourth grade class were given time to engage in introspection and reflection, the music playing in the background significantly affected their thoughts. The students invented a serious topic, a poem, a series of images, and a thematic topic based on the music, and these different forms may have accounted for the wide range of T-units (4 to 13) and words per T-unit (5.4 to 14.7). The lesson learned here is as follows:

Lesson #4: In many writing classes, students are not given enough quiet time just to think. If meditation were incorporated into the writing lesson prior to free writing, students might learn to treasure this space and time as many expert writers do.

As for the dreamwork invitation, fourth graders easily captured and recorded personal experiences and fleeting thoughts. Yet, unlike the other invitations in this study in which ideas led directly to a first draft, the dream memory served merely as a trigger for developing and expanding a delayed draft of the students choosing. Once again, this brings up an important lesson about the function of prewriting.

Lesson #5: If, across grade levels, we consider the words children write not as drafts but as “captured moments, insights, or ideas” made visible through writing, then we heighten the potential for building on these to enrich future work.

As we have shown in this article, the prewriting invitations appear to foster fluency along developmental lines (as evidenced by numbers of T-units and mean words per T-unit). However, whether the more influential factors in student responses were due to the type of invitation, the age of the student, the function of prewriting, or the teacher’s instruction could not be ascertained. In addition, there were no definitive explanations for a student’s transmediation process. Each was quite personal and depended on the nature of the prewriting experience, its purpose, and the preferences of the writers involved. Sometimes children advanced directly from one medium to the other, without providing a visible transfer mechanism, while at other times, picture drawing, visual images, personal experiences, and informal writing appeared to bridge one literacy to another. In future observations, individual writers will need to be followed over many tasks, on many occasions, to discover the specific bridges that they need to make the transition from nonlanguage symbols to print. Finally, it should be mentioned that noticeably absent in this process was interaction among peers. This, we believe, had less to do with the writers and more to do with the fact that three adults hovered over the small groups during the lessons. ☐

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