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Self-Made Writer: A Grounded Theory Investigation of Writing Development Without Writing Instruction in a Charlotte Mason Home School

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Self-Made Writer: A Grounded Theory Investigation of Writing Development Without
Writing Instruction in a Charlotte Mason Home School

by
Jennifer C. Spencer

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner-Webb University
2012

Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Jennifer C. Spencer under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Abstract

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The aim of this study was to explore how one adult who learned at home under the holistic methods of Charlotte Mason developed as a writer when this model eschews direct instruction in composition. The participant in the study developed exemplary writing skills despite the fact that the teaching methods of the parent did not conform to state standards, nor even to techniques typically accepted as best practices by such organizations as the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). As states across the nation are adopting and implementing the Common Core, which includes many standards that are developmentally inappropriate, this is a timely study that begs a fresh review of how children learn to write.

The researcher used grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to attempt to establish how this student learned to write well without conventional instruction in composition. Theoretical sampling of the student, his mother, and work samples from his school years, as well as a qualitative analysis of documents found on the Ambleside Online website, were used to formulate and propose a theory about elements that contributed to writing development in this context.

The resulting *Grounded Theory of Personal Integration* consists of three pieces: Immersion, Integration, and Expression. The subject was immersed in quality literature and an atmosphere that valued reading. He read copiously on a wide variety of subjects throughout his school years. Many skills such as spelling, language usage, and vocabulary were absorbed tacitly. The formal study of grammar, which took place in middle and high school, only made explicit the things he already knew implicitly through his reading. There were varying degrees to which he formed relationships with ideas, books, and authors. Some were merely appreciated, while others were fully integrated into his person as he chose to immerse himself further in the work of particular authors. The ideas and writing styles that were integrated emerged naturally in his expression in the form of creative play, oral composition, and, later, written composition.

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Chapter 1: Aim of the Study

Phenomenon of Interest

Deep in the mountains, in a quiet town, there lives a quiet family. Elizabeth, the mother, busily prepares the day's lessons for the two younger children. Charlie, the focus of this study, is no longer at home. Having just returned from a semester at Oxford, where he studied Renaissance Literature, he is now finishing his senior year at college. Three years ago he received a full scholarship to study English and Music. He has aspirations of becoming a novelist. The anomalous thing is that, although he is an excellent writer, Charlie never had a formal lesson in composition before he went to college. During his 12 years of learning at home, his mother adhered to holistic teaching practices, particularly those ideas and methods brought forth at the turn of the last century by British educator Charlotte Mason. In Mason's model, students are not assigned to write original compositions until they are around 14 years of age, and even then any lessons are informal with pointers about technique being given as needed (Mason, 1925a). The aim of this study was to explore how Charlie's writing skills developed under a model of education that discourages instruction in composition.

Perceived Justification for Studying the Phenomenon

Charlie learned to write well despite the fact that the methods his mother employed in teaching him run contrary to widely accepted ideas about best practices in writing instruction. In a joint position statement, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the International Reading Association (IRA) describe reading and writing acquisition as a developmental continuum through which children move at their own paces (1998). In the current educational paradigm, reading and writing are interdependent, with new discoveries in writing leading to improved

reading and new discoveries in reading leading to improved writing (National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, 2001). Thus, even preschool age children should have many models and opportunities in reading and writing. Children begin to write using scribbles and progress to using pictorial representations, then letters, then invented spelling, and finally conventional spelling. According to the position paper, writing should be a regular part of the school day in order to help young children develop phonemic awareness and to give them the understanding that writing serves a purpose: it carries a message to the reader (National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, 2001).

In contrast, Mason's model includes an early focus on listening to stories and oral language development through conversation and narration, or oral retelling, and leaves written composition until much later.

“Composition” comes by Nature.—In fact, lessons on “*composition*” should follow the model of that famous essay on “Snakes in Ireland”—“There are none.” For children under nine, the question of composition resolves itself into that of narration, varied by some such simple exercise as to write a part and narrate a part, or write the whole account of a walk they have taken, a lesson they have studied, or of some simple matter that they know. Before they are ten, children who have been in the habit of using books will write good, vigorous English with ease and freedom; that is, if they have not been hampered by instructions. It is well for them not even to learn rules for the placing of full stops and capitals until they notice how these things occur in their books. Our business is to provide children with material in their lessons, and *leave the handling of such material to themselves*. If we would believe it, composition is as natural as jumping and

running to children who have been allowed due use of books. They should narrate in the first place, and they will compose, later readily enough; but they should not be taught “composition.” (Mason, 1925a, p. 247)

While this claim is not generally supported in the mainstream, there have been a few researchers who had similar ideas. One of these was Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, who is most known in the field of education for his ideas of scaffolding and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). However, Vygotsky also studied language development in children extensively. In *Thought and Language* (Vygotsky, 1962), he discussed his observation that there can be a “lag of as much as six or eight years between [the child’s] ‘linguistic age’ in speaking and in writing” (p. 98). His studies showed that writing is an activity much more complex than speaking. In writing, one has neither an interlocutor with whom to interact or guidance in the direction of the conversation. The writer must create the context and explain everything fully in order for the piece to be intelligible to a reader. This is a vague idea for young children, who do not yet see the value of such an activity (Vygotsky, 1962).

Secondly, written speech is not simply oral speech that has been written down. Written and oral speech differ greatly in function, structure, and difficulty.

In learning to write, the child must disengage himself from the sensory aspect of speech and replace words by images of words. Speech that is merely imagined and that requires symbolization of the sound image in written signs (i.e., a second degree of symbolization) naturally must be as much harder than oral speech for the child as algebra is harder than arithmetic. (Vygotsky, 1962, pp. 98-99)

This level of abstraction, according to Vygotsky (1962), does not begin to appear in children until around the age of 12. At the same time, Vygotsky rejected the Piagetian

notion that the teacher must wait until children show signs of readiness before beginning instruction. Instead, he argued that instruction could precede, and indeed guide, development. This is the idea behind the ZPD; in order to move him to the next developmental level, the teacher must help the child work just above the level at which he can work by himself, but the ZPD does have a definite floor and a definite ceiling. The floor is what the child can do independent of help; the ceiling is that which he cannot do even with help (Vygotsky, 1962).

Seventy years after Vygotsky (1962) first published his findings about language development, a pair of French researchers examined whether or not written language production was indeed more difficult than oral language production. Bourdin and Fayol (1994) performed a quasi-experimental study to test the cognitive load of oral and written tasks in children and adults. The study was based on serial recall of word lists in both oral and written modes. The researchers controlled for slowness of writing and difficulties with handwriting and spelling in order to prevent confounding variables. Assuming that there is a limit to the capacity of working memory, that each element of writing (e.g., letter formation, motor control, spelling, etc.) has a cognitive load, and that energy given to one element leaves less energy for others, these researchers found that writing is indeed a more difficult task than speaking. Oral recall remained superior to written recall up to about the age of 10. The researchers attributed this mostly to the fact that skills such as handwriting and spelling had yet to become automated before this age. Since these skills add to the cognitive load of writing in children, the mental capacity for organizing ideas is diminished. Older children and adults have had time for low-level skills to become automated, so their cognitive resources can be focused entirely on the ideas they are trying to convey (Bourdin & Fayol, 1994).

The findings of Vygotsky (1962) and Bourdin and Fayol (1994) may seem to lend some rudimentary support to Mason's model, but they do not speak so strongly as to significantly challenge the current paradigm, or even, in fact, to attract much attention. After all, even if writing is more difficult than speaking, it does not necessarily mean that writing should not be taught to young children. In fact, today's experts might argue that since writing is more difficult it actually requires *more* time in the curriculum. This issue has become a sticking point even among schools and home schools that incorporate Mason's other ideas. Susan Wise Bauer, well known in the home school community as a proponent of Classical Education and as the author of *The Well-Trained Mind* (Bauer & Wise, 2009), is one example. On her website she discussed her understanding of Mason's methods, including the use of great literature and nonfiction books with rich, literary language, and showed how they are similar in many ways to classical education. However, concerning Mason's teaching on writing instruction, she said:

In my experience, this method just doesn't work for many students; I've seen reams of wretched writing from children who have read plenty of good literature. Literature needs to be read and appreciated, but grammar and composition skills are quite different from literature; these skills need to be explicitly taught, or students will not know how to construct essays or how to use complex language to support their arguments. I also find that students who don't do plenty of short, skill-building assignments early on are completely lost when they arrive in junior high and are told to "write on subjects they are really interested in." They need careful instruction in the skill of building written arguments. (Bauer, n.d., "Composition and Grammar," para. 1)

Bauer (n.d.) stated above that Mason's method is not ideal for *many* students.

Charlie is apparently not counted in this group because he did thrive under Mason's model. He did not receive direct instruction in writing, and yet he learned to write well enough to be awarded an English scholarship. He also developed a love of writing that led to his desire to become a novelist. Perhaps there is something in his story, and that of his quiet family that lives in the quiet town in the mountains, that could give us fresh insight into how children develop as writers.

Phenomenon Discussed Within Specific Context

Qualitative research generally does not concern itself with broad generalizability, but rather with a thick, rich description of the phenomenon specific to the case and context, with limited generalizability to similar cases and contexts (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Therefore, it is important to situate Charlie for the reader. Charlie is the oldest of four children. The family lives in the Eastern United States. Charlie's parents, Elizabeth and Stan, made the decision to homeschool when Charlie was a toddler, and Elizabeth found the writings of Charlotte Mason to be suited to her beliefs about children and learning. At the time that Charlie started school, there was no Mason curriculum available, so she used *Sonlight*, a popular prepackaged home school curriculum, until he was seven. Then she worked with a group of mothers to develop a book list for people who were interested in using Mason's philosophy with their children at home. This book list became Ambleside Online (AO), a free online resource that strives to be as close as possible to the curriculum Mason used in her own schools. Charlie was homeschooled by his mother from that point all the way through high school using Mason's methods and the AO curriculum.

The context in which Charlie learned is unusual and important for two reasons. First, Charlie's education was consistently holistic throughout his school years. Since his

mother taught him, he did not change between teachers who favored whole language and those who preferred direct instruction, balanced literacy, or any other model. If he had, it would be difficult to determine which approach yielded which results. Second, he was unaffected by policy and legislative changes such as No Child Left Behind (2001), which required his peers in public schools to attain specific standards in writing at certain ages. By looking at Charlie's work samples and listening to accounts of his learning experiences first-hand, the layers of variables that can confound research on writing were peeled away to reveal a natural progression of writing development.

Assumptions and Biases Related to the Study of the Phenomenon

It is important in qualitative studies for the writer to disclose biases and assumptions in order to aid the reader in recognizing the lens through which the data and research have been viewed (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). I have studied the writings of Charlotte Mason for the last 8 years, gradually incorporating more and more of her ideas into my classroom. I recently founded a Mason school, of which I am the principal. I find her ideas to be largely in line with my own beliefs about children and learning. I also believe that her methods are generally supported in current mainstream research. Relevant to this study, a wide body of research (conducted from the 1980s onward) exists that supports the importance of narration, or retelling (see Brown & Cambourne, 1987; Goodman, 1982; Morrow, 1985 and 1986; Morrow, Gambrell, Kapinus, & Koskinen, 1986; Gambrell, Pfeiffer, & Wilson, 1985). Mason's views on play, outdoor education, grades, and conceptual math instruction are also generally supported by current research. However, before this study I had found very little support in the mainstream for her ideas about writing instruction. I have personally wrestled with the decision of whether or not to trust Mason about writing when trying to implement her model of education, since her

ideas run contrary to widely-accepted ideas. Prior to this study, I was not fully convinced of the verity of Mason's philosophy concerning this issue. At the same time, when I looked at data on child development I could see potential wisdom in Mason's approach. This study was important for me as the head of a Mason school because I am responsible for making decisions about curriculum and pedagogy. While I agreed with Mason on most things and enjoyed implementing the majority of her ideas at my school, I needed to take a critical look at the issue of writing instruction to be sure I was giving my students the best education I possibly could. I needed to be able to give solid reasons for either adhering to a method that is not supported by research or not adhering to a method that ought to be present in a true Mason school.

In studies of this kind, the researcher should approach the subject with *deliberate naïveté*, which means to begin with a completely open mind and without any preconceived ideas about what the findings might show (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Obviously, I could not go back and un-know what I have studied for the last 8 years about Charlotte Mason and her work, nor could I un-experience things I have experienced during my 15 years as a classroom teacher. From the beginning, my intuition told me Mason's emphasis on wide reading of great books would emerge as a major contributor to Charlie's development as a writer, although I was unsure exactly how. As the late literary critic, professor, and novelist John Gardner (1983) said, anyone who wishes to write well must not only practice the craft, though that is certainly necessary; he asserted that the best writers have had vast life experiences, and that no one can write well without having done wide, deep, and thoughtful reading in a fairly wide range of fields (Gardner, 1983). Author Jessica Page Morrell seemed to agree that reading is the very "foundation for writing" (p. 12), but Gardner went further to say that the *quality* of what is read is just

as important as the *quantity*, because “all great writing is in a sense imitation of great writing” (Gardner, 1983, p. 11). Therefore, students should be continually steeped in excellent models of great writing while also being given ample time and opportunity to practice the techniques of the craft. The AO curriculum that Charlie’s mother used is full of such excellent models of great writing. As for practicing the craft, I believed that narration might have given Charlie this practice when writing was not part of his school day, and delaying creative writing might have given him the time to build up the life experiences that gave him something worthwhile to say.

I also predicted that narration was going to be crucial because of the well-documented importance of oral language development. In 1976, Walter Loban published a 13-year longitudinal study of language development in children. He followed a group of 221 students from kindergarten through twelfth grade to try to identify predictable stages of language development and to find the differences between students who knew how to use language effectively and those who did not. What he found was that students’ writing abilities depended largely upon their abilities to use oral language. In other words, students who can speak well tend to be better writers than those who cannot speak well. Moreover, he found that students with strong oral language skills performed better across all subject areas, not just in the language arts (Loban, 1976).

The belief that wide reading and narration would emerge as important themes in this study was substantiated early in the interviews with Elizabeth and Charlie. Further investigation, however, yielded surprising insights into other important factors that contributed to Charlie’s development as a writer.

Method of Inquiry

The aim of this study was to explore how Charlie, who was taught at home using

Charlotte Mason's model of education, developed as a writer when Mason's model eschews direct instruction in composition and severely limits creative writing tasks even in middle and high school. Using the method of grounded theory as developed by Corbin and Strauss (2008), I developed a theory about writing development in this context that is grounded in evidence obtained through qualitative interviews with Charlie and his mother, through qualitative document analysis of information found on Ambleside Online, and through examination of writing samples that were kept throughout Charlie's school years.

Relevance for the Field of Education

Since the 1980s there has been a tug-of-war between those who push to get children to learn and perform more complex skills at younger ages and those who argue for developmentally appropriate practice (Alliance for Childhood, 2005). The rationale for those who promote raising standards is that early instruction can help alleviate the achievement gap between economically advantaged and disadvantaged students (International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998). For writing, this means that the earlier students begin to write, the further along the continuum of writing development they can progress during their school years. However, this trend of pushing down the academic curriculum to younger ages has often led to skills-based practices in preschool, kindergarten, and the primary grades that some experts view as developmentally inappropriate (International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998). In response, the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (2001) stated that "Dramatic changes in what children are expected to do upon entry and in kindergarten have resulted in well-intentioned interventions which are

often inequitable, ineffective, and wasteful of limited public resources” (p. 2).

Even if early childhood specialists in some state departments of education are concerned about these changes in expectation for young children, public school teachers are still constrained by the academic standards given to them (International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998). In North Carolina, where I teach, these standards include specific goals and objectives in writing original compositions—including spelling, grammar, and mechanics—even in kindergarten (North Carolina State Board of Education, 2004). The new Common Core Standards contain similar requirements for kindergarten children (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011).

In an educational climate fraught with pressures for children to do more at earlier ages, perhaps Charlie can provide us with insights toward a calming liberation in writing instruction. The aim of this study was to explore how this non-traditional student learned to write well when he received very little direct instruction in writing. It is hoped that the study will add a fresh perspective on writing development that could help policymakers and curriculum designers balance the desire for academic rigor with the child’s need for developmentally appropriate practice.

Overview of Chapters

This paper is organized according to the model outlined by Munhall and Chenail (2008) in their book, *Qualitative Research Proposals and Reports: A Guide*. After this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 contains a detailed discussion of the evolution of the present study, including the rationale, the historical context, the experiential context, and Mason’s context. While many studies place the Review of Literature in Chapter 2, being steeped in the literature prior to the onset of a qualitative, exploratory study is

discouraged because of the possibility that preconceived ideas could be forced on the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Munhall & Chenail, 2008). Saving the literature review until after the onset of data collection allows the researcher to follow the data where it leads, since there is no way to know prior to data collection which areas of research will be relevant (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Chapter 3 is comprised of the general and applied methods that were used in this study. The section on the general methods includes a theoretical and historical introduction to grounded theory, qualitative interviews, and qualitative document analysis, as well as the rationale for using them in this study. The section on the applied methods chronicles the procedure actually used in carrying out the study. This section is followed by the definitions of terms associated with the research methods and with Mason's model of literacy education.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. These are organized into themes, concepts, dimensions, and conditions, and brought together under a unifying theory. The findings are then compared with the extant literature. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the results and implications for the field of education, as well as a critique of the theory presented. Finally, the appendices contain all supporting documents, the informed consent form, and communications.

Chapter 2: Evolution of the Study

Rationale

The personal value of this study for me, as the principal of a Charlotte Mason school, was that it gave me insight into exactly *how* Mason's holistic methods produce good writers. Prior to the study, I had simply been told (by mothers who have used it) that it *does* produce good writers and asked to trust the methods. But to my mind this equated to experimenting with a group of children, whom I have been given the responsibility of educating, by not giving them instruction in writing and then waiting to see whether they thrive or flounder. This, of course, would have been unethical. At the beginning, I hoped that studying Charlie's writing development through interviews and examination of his work would give me enough insight to either feel comfortable with a trial implementation of Mason's model at my school, to have sound reasons for rejecting her ideas about writing as outdated, or to find some middle ground.

The wider value of this study entailed the tension between rising standards and developmentally appropriate practice. In 1946, Gesell and Ilg published *The Child from Five to Ten*. After spending several years observing thousands of children as they came through their pediatric clinic, these researchers outlined some general characteristics of children at each age. They described the 5-year-old as a "great talker" (p. 66) who likes to play, to observe, and to explore, but the authors cautioned that, "parents who would now insist on systematic thorough drill in fundamentals...might easily disturb the process of acculturation in the name of downright education. The child is not ready for such rigorousness" (Gesell & Ilg, 1946, p. 379). In fact, the authors suggested that children are generally not ready even for all-day attendance at school until around 7 years of age. They went on to say that, while most children will begin to learn to read at age six,

writing is very laborious until around the age of eight because of weak muscle control. Even then, the child tires quickly and may wish to dictate part of the story to an adult. Gesell and Ilg (1946) noted that most children cannot write for a sustained period of time without fatigue until they are around 9 or 10 years of age. By this time, many of the lower-level skills for writing (e.g., muscle control, letter formation, and penmanship) have been automated. They also suggested, like Vygotsky (1962), that writing ability lags behind speech throughout the elementary grades (Gesell & Ilg, 1946).

The work of Gesell and Ilg (1946) is still respected among child developmentalists. In 2007, Chip Wood published *Yardsticks*, in which he built upon their seminal work by observing today's children. In the book, Wood calls attention to the fact that 5-year-olds still are not ready for an overly-academic school day. Most children this age are not ready for early reading instruction or paper-and-pencil tasks (Wood, 2007). Yet the new Common Core Standards include direct instruction in reading, phonics, spelling, story analysis, and writing in kindergarten. Whereas Wood (2007) observes that typical first graders are able to write through drawings using some spelling strategies, the Common Core Standards have first graders writing opinion pieces with a beginning, middle, and end as well as writing informative texts on a topic using supportive details and closures and subject-verb agreement. And while Wood (2007) has noted that even third graders are still easily frustrated by writing tasks, the Common Core Standards indicate that these students should be able to write stories with narrators, characters, and dialogue, and that they should use standard conventions of English grammar, spelling, and usage. Wood (2007), like Vygotsky (1962), indicated that children do not begin to be able to think abstractly until around the age of 11 or 12. But the Common Core Standards begin requiring students to master abstract concepts such as

analysis, theme, and inferences much earlier.

In comparing the characteristics of typical children at various ages with the standards by which they are being taught, I could not help but see evidence of push-down. It was difficult for me to see why such a push-down is necessary, since a correlational study conducted in 2005 found that students in more developmentally appropriate classrooms score as high or higher than peers in less developmentally appropriate classrooms (Lay, 2005). Though there were some confounding variables, such as shared planning time and good planning and management skills, the conclusion of the researchers was that, even though teachers are sometimes afraid to implement developmentally appropriate practices when stakes are so high, it seems that this fear is needless. Further, if the push-down curriculum does not produce better test scores, it makes more sense to provide children with instruction that is developmentally appropriate (Lay, 2005).

However, some researchers, such as Lisa Goldstein (2008) of Santa Clara University in California, do not seem to feel any tension at all between the new expectations and the ideas of developmentally appropriate practice in the early school years. In fact, Goldstein claimed that teaching the standards *is* developmentally appropriate practice. Her rationale was that in the past an important aspect of development has been largely ignored. While early childhood advocates have stressed the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development of young children, they have left out sociopolitical development. According to Goldstein (2008), the fact that the No Child Left Behind (2001) law has deemed standards as sociopolitically appropriate for young children to learn *makes* those standards developmentally appropriate.

Ruminating about child development, standards, and Goldstein's (2008) article, I

began to look for research on writing development. The studies I found were mostly about how to get students to write more, to write better, or to get more enjoyment from writing. No one was asking whether those were the most appropriate, or most important, goals in the first place. I also found several papers about dealing with writing aversion and writing anxiety, and there were several more on remediating poor writing skills at the college level (see Ballinger, 2009; The National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003; Negretti, 2009; Shami, 1999). In light of Mason's ideas, I began to wonder if it was possible that such an emphasis on early writing, if it is indeed developmentally inappropriate, could *lead* to aversion, anxiety, and poor writing skills. I decided to take a look at the history of writing instruction and situate its evolution within its theoretical and sociopolitical contexts in an attempt to gain insight.

Historical Context

Writing, particularly in English, has not always enjoyed its current state of importance in the school curriculum. In a technical report published by the National Center for the Study of Writing, Geraldine Joncich Clifford (1987) outlined the history of writing instruction in America as follows: Before the 1750s, English was not considered an appropriate school subject at all. At the height of the Enlightenment Period, boys belonging to the ruling class were educated in Latin and Greek in their Classical schools. Benjamin Franklin seems to be one of the first people to recommend instruction in writing, mostly through narration (retelling) of what was being read, in 1749. While reading was considered important for those interested in a career in religion or politics, writing was typically viewed in relation to its usefulness in economic endeavors. In fact, the word *writing* meant simply penmanship until much later. Instruction in writing in the early 1800s consisted of penmanship and writing contracts, invoices, and receipts, which

were more copying than composing, though older children did write letters and essays (Clifford, 1987).

Clifford (1987) went on to say that in the 1830s and 1840s, while America was in the throes of a transition between an agrarian and industrial society, Horace Mann began to urge high schools to include the teaching of English grammar and its application in composition. At that time, only 7% of eligible students attended high school. By the 1850s, literacy rates were increasing in communities that had embraced industrialization, although even into the 1880s most children left school before the eighth grade to go to work. After the Civil War, students were still learning to write invoices and the like in school. However, with the increase in availability of books, spelling was becoming standardized. This meant that schools had to begin including lessons in spelling. The 1870 census shows that even then, 50% more people could read than could write (Clifford, 1987).

With the Industrial Revolution came a significant change in the culture of school. Before, slates and quills had limited how much students could write. When paper and pens became plentiful and cheap, it freed teachers to allow students to write more. Also, it became less expensive to print books. In the 1880s, the ubiquity of the new paperback book caused a debate among educators over whether it was better to read *intensively* or *extensively*. But as important as the products were that emerged from the fires of industry, even more significant were the ideas. Two of the most influential ideas to come out of the Industrial Revolution were *standardization* and *scientific management*. Grade levels, specialization of separate subjects, and uniform textbooks became manifestations of the industrial mentality in schools. Publishers began to create workbooks for the different subjects, including writing skills, in an effort to teacher-proof the curriculum.

America was moving from being primarily an oral society to being more print-oriented. In response, the National Education Association's (NEA) Committee of Ten declared reading and writing to be of equal importance in 1894 (Clifford, 1987).

Colleges underwent significant changes during this time. In 1895, university students began to demand that English become part of the curriculum proper. Colleges began to include specialized programs geared toward specific careers instead of focusing on the liberal arts. Entrance requirements began to relax, and Freshman Composition became a standard course. Colleges started to put pressure on high schools to include more literary classics, spelling, grammar, and writing in the curriculum. This began a struggle for identity as high schools had to decide whether they were going to be more in line with colleges or with elementary schools. In response to the increasing influence of colleges on high schools, the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) was born in 1911 (Clifford, 1987).

Just as standardization was taking root in schools, another idea emerged out of the fledgling field of psychology—*human developmentalism*. During the Progressive era of the 1920s and 1930s, people like John Dewey and Jean Piaget argued for a more child-centered school environment. Literacy strategies like Language Experience, wherein students are given texts with controlled vocabulary, were introduced. Until then, composition had been reserved for older children whose penmanship and spelling had become automated. The Language Experience approach brought composition down into early childhood classrooms, although not everyone was pleased with the caliber of writing from very young children.

Because of the parallel movement to limit children's reading vocabulary to commonly encountered and well understood words, the experience chart method

did produce “stories” that sounded no more like children’s natural language than did their basal series. Imitating the style of first grade texts, teachers helped children compose their own dry-as-dust *reading material*: “We went to the park. We saw the big trees. We had fun.” (Clifford, 1987, pp. 40-41)

The child-centered pedagogy of the progressive movement was widely accepted almost without argument well into the 1950s. The Language Arts began to be reintegrated, children were writing from their own interests, and holistic assessments were commonplace. In 1956, most students were graduating from high school and the NCTE was urging even more integrated and holistic practices in the secondary schools. It was at this moment that Russia shocked the world by successfully launching Sputnik. In response, the NCTE almost immediately called for a back-to-basics movement in 1957. A standardized test was even developed for writing, although critics insisted that it measured little more than spelling, punctuation, and usage. Not everyone thought this was the best course, however. In the 1960s, Purdue University started Project English, which promoted the use of literature as a springboard for writing, since research was emerging that showed that good readers are more likely to do creative writing (Clifford, 1987).

The late 1960s were, of course, a time of turbulence and liberation. During the Civil Rights movement, people began to argue for the validity of non-standard English. For some, equity became more important than excellence. In the Postmodern Age, self-expression was paramount. Even the NCTE returned to their previous stance of favoring imaginative and creative writing (Clifford, 1987).

Perhaps in reaction to the extreme freethinking culture of the late 1960s, the 1970s ushered in a more austere time in education. SAT scores had fallen steadily from

1963 onward (Ravitch, 2010). Behavioral objectives became the new normal. The Language Arts were atomized into discreet, measureable skills. A new emphasis on reading skills, in particular, led to the neglect of the other areas of language. Then in the 1980s, student writing was first tested by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and was found deficient (Clifford, 1987).

In 1984, 1 year after the Ronald Reagan administration published *A Nation at Risk*, the field of language education changed significantly as research emerged showing that writing supported reading. All of a sudden, the writing of very young children was legitimized, including their scribbles, drawings, and phonetic spellings (Clifford, 1987). Writing was soon given a prominent place in the school day in early grades—one that it frequently still enjoys today.

In 1988, the year after Clifford published the article that has been so extensively discussed in this chapter, E. D. Hirsch published a book called *Cultural Literacy*. In this work, and its 1996 follow-up, *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them*, Hirsch argued that there is a common body of knowledge that belongs to all American children. This body of knowledge, including literature, mathematics, the sciences, art, history, and music, had been kept in the ruling class for far too long. In order to have a truly democratic society, he asserted, this body of knowledge should be explicitly taught to every child. Thus, the Core Knowledge Sequence (2010) was born. This sequence included a list of very specific topics and attainments (i.e., standards) that every child should master, published in a series of books for children in kindergarten through Grade 8, with titles such as, *What Your First Grader Needs To Know: Fundamentals of a Good First Grade Education* (Hirsch, 1998). Hirsch argued for a common curriculum across the country because America was such a mobile society. According to him, children of

families who moved should be able to pick up in a new school where they left off in their previous school so that no gaps in knowledge occurred (Hirsch, 1996). Today, over 1,000 schools use Hirsch's Core Knowledge Sequence (Ravitch, 2010). The writing section of the Core Knowledge Sequence (2010) includes discreet skills in grammar and composition in the primary grades. While it states that children in first grade should be able to write stories and opinion pieces with a beginning, middle, and end, it also acknowledges developmental characteristics of the writing of young children that are so widely accepted today, such as invented spelling (Core Knowledge, 2010).

While Hirsch was campaigning privately for a national curriculum in the 1990s, there were also those within the public sector who were arguing for a common set of standards. In 1991 and 1992, the United States Department of Education gave grant money to organizations and individuals to attempt to develop voluntary national standards in the content areas (Ravitch, 2010). This effort ceased when the history standards were lambasted by key political figures for their liberal bias. The media firestorm that followed led politicians to distance themselves from the topic. According to Ravitch (2010), even President Bill Clinton, who had campaigned on the promise of developing national standards and assessments, disowned them. Instead, his Goals 2000 program used federal dollars to fund development of standards in each state. These standards did not, however, contain very much specificity about what students should be learning (Ravitch, 2010).

This brings us to one of the most influential and controversial pieces of educational legislation in history—No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the bipartisan law that was passed in 2001 during the presidency of George W. Bush. Bush built upon Clinton's Goals 2000 program by allowing each state to develop its own standards and choose the

test it would use to measure its progress. The target of the law was for every student to be proficient in English and math by 2014. Schools that failed to make adequate progress would be subject to “increasingly onerous sanctions” (Ravitch, 2010, p. 21). The result was that states did develop standards in the content areas, although in many states these standards remained rather vague and nonspecific (Ravitch, 2010). The law had significant political implications, as well:

NCLB introduced a new definition of school reform that was applauded by Democrats and Republicans alike. In this new era, school reform was characterized as accountability, high-stakes testing, data-driven decision making, choice, charter schools, privatization, deregulation, merit pay, and competition among schools. Whatever could not be measured did not count. (Ravitch, 2010, p. 21)

Ravitch (2010) went on to explain that, with the passing of NCLB, the strategy for education in America shifted from curriculum development to testing and accountability. Since most everyone could agree that basic skills were important even when they could not agree on appropriate content for subjects like history, only reading and math scores were taken into consideration (Ravitch, 2010). Critics argued that subjects like literature, history, writing, and the arts were frequently squeezed out in a narrowing of the curriculum to solely the subjects that were tested (Kohn, 2004). The NEA stated that, while the intentions of the law were good, the punitive nature and overreliance on test scores were actually undermining those goals (Packer, 2007).

After vigorous debate, NCLB was reauthorized by the Obama administration, and Race to the Top (RttT), a competitive grant program, was added. The NEA’s response was less than laudatory:

What is being proposed is simply tweaking the current top-down, federally mandated insistence on hewing to standardized test scores. We know that model is not working, so basing even more educational decisions on these same test scores is counterproductive and counterintuitive. Enough is enough. (National Education Association, 2008, “Proposal Misses the Mark,” para. 6)

At the same time, the standards movement continues to grow with the now-developing Common Core. At the time this paper was written, there were only six states that had not yet adopted the Common Core Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2011). As discussed previously, the explicit skills outlined in the Common Core Standards are sometimes at odds with guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice in the area of writing. Further, the atomization of explicit skills evident in the Common Core may actually work against writing development. Paula Stacey, a writer and 30-year veteran teacher, recently published an article in *Education Week* calling for an end to writing instruction (Stacey, 2011). Stacey (2011) argued that explicit instruction of discreet skills such as thesis statements, topic sentences, and conclusions leads to mastery of something that is not writing. When standards include lists of such discreet skills, they ultimately skew instruction:

While the common-core standards, and before them the state standards, don’t mandate that a specific writing process be taught, they point districts and textbook publishers and teachers in this direction by detailing specific elements—structure, thesis statements, argumentative appeals—that need to be mastered. It’s not surprising that in efforts to streamline the real and complex world of instruction, these standards get twisted into oddly prescriptive steps and formats. (Stacey, 2011, p. 27)

This current cultural tendency toward atomization is one of the primary reasons I was attracted to this study. Vygotsky (1962) warned against such atomization when he said that trying to break language down into discreet elements is like trying to understand water by looking at hydrogen and oxygen. His observation that hydrogen burns and oxygen sustains fire, but that water extinguishes fire even though it consists of hydrogen and oxygen, led to his assertion that language is best understood holistically (Vygotsky, 1962). Scientist-turned-philosopher, Michael Polanyi (1964) made a similar statement:

The analysis of a skill has long been debated inconclusively; and common experience shows that no skill can be acquired by learning its constituent motions separately. Moreover, here too isolation modifies the particulars: their dynamic quality is lost. Indeed, the identification of the constituent motions of a skill tends to paralyze its performance. Only by turning our attention away from the particulars and towards their joint purpose, can we restore to the isolated motions the qualities required for achieving their purpose. (p. 126)

Stacey's (2011) article echoes this. Further, in an attempt to reconcile in my own mind the ideas of developmentalism and standardization, I have often wondered if the observations put forth by child developmentalists like Vygotsky (1962), Gessel and Ilg (1946) and Wood (2007), which were designed to be *descriptive*, have in actuality been interpreted as something more *prescriptive* in these standards. The disregard of all but the pragmatic is always a danger when an idea emerges through scientific discovery.

Scientist and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1901) explained,

But what is worse, from our point of view, they begin to look upon science as a guide to conduct, that is, no longer as pure science but as an instrument for a practical end. One result of this is that all probable reasoning is despised. If a

proposition is to be applied to action it has to be embraced, or believed without reservation. There is no room for doubt, which can only paralyze action. But the scientific spirit requires a man to be at all times ready to dump his whole cartload of beliefs, the moment experience is against them. The desire to learn forbids him to be perfectly cocksure that he knows already. Besides positive science can only rest on experience; and experience can never result in absolute certainty, exactitude, necessity, or universality. (pp. 46-47)

In his 1962 classic, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn explained that this belief without reservation is the result of the basic nature of the paradigm shift. According to the book, science is often thought of as linear and cumulative; that is, people often think that science has been constantly making steady progress towards some absolute truth since its inception, and that we are closer today to getting to the heart of that absolute truth than we were 200 years ago. But this is not the case. Science has somewhat of a democratic (truth by consensus) element based on paradigms. The science community has a consensus about what is *scientific*, how findings are to be interpreted, and what is worthy to be studied. During times of *peace*, the community works on articulating and refining the accepted theories and matching them with empirical data. That continues of its own inertia until some extraordinary problem suggests an alternative theory. At first, the new idea is dismissed by most, although it does attract the attention of a few scientists in the field. As more results are obtained that support the new idea, and more scientists get on board, it is often met with violent resistance from the establishment, which results from a feeling of crisis. Eventually, if the new idea continues to stand up to testing, more and more scientists convert to the new paradigm until a complete revolution occurs. At this point, scientists who will not convert

become irrelevant and eventually disappear. When this happens, textbooks are rewritten to fit neatly with the new paradigm, which frequently skews the history, facts, and ideas, to induct a new generation of scientists into the field. This leads to the incorrect assumption that what is contained in those books is reliable, based on decades (or even centuries) of cumulative, linear research (Kuhn, 1962).

Looking back on the history of writing instruction in America, I felt that it was time to take a fresh look at the fundamental truths of writing development in children. This, in the words of Peirce (1901), could result in a *transformation* of practices, as opposed to a *reformation*. There is a tendency in education to reform practices by introducing new programs or standards, but there are problems with such efforts.

The remaining systems of philosophy have been of the nature of reforms, sometimes amounting to radical revolutions, suggested by certain difficulties which have been found to beset systems previously in vogue; and such ought certainly to be in large part the motive of any new theory. This is like partially rebuilding a house. The faults that have been committed are, first, that the repairs of the dilapidations have generally not been sufficiently thoroughgoing, and, second, that not sufficient pains have been taken to bring the additions into deep harmony with the really sound parts of the old structure. (Peirce, 1901, p. 315)

In the vein of avoiding this kind of partial remodeling, I proposed to build a theory from the ground up using primary information from a primary source.

Experiential Context

I obtained my undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Education from a progressive university that advocated, like many schools of education in the 1990s, the Whole Language approach. As students, we were taught to value whole books of literary

quality and to draw lessons on reading, spelling, and grammar from those books. We were also instructed in the idea that reading, writing, listening, and speaking are interrelated and interdependent and that they develop concurrently. We spent time examining the writing (and drawings) of very young children as they progressed through the stages of prewriting through conventional writing.

As a young public school teacher of kindergarten and second grade I used the language arts model that had been adopted by my school district. The model taught reading and writing concurrently and encouraged even kindergarten children to write in a journal every day. This was in line with what I had been taught about writing instruction at university. The topics could be chosen by the students or prompted by the teacher. There were two things I could count on hearing each day at writing time: “I don’t know what to write,” and “How do you spell ____?” And each day, I would reply, “Why don’t you write about ____?” or “Just spell it the way it sounds for now.” When concerned parents asked about spelling development at conferences, I told them what I had been told—that with time and practice, those spelling errors would correct themselves.

A few years later I moved to a small, private school, where I taught third grade all the way up to eighth grade over several years. Even with 12-year-olds, composition was difficult. I continued to reply to the same two issues from students in the same way, though one new question was added: “How much do we have to write?” I was disconcerted because many of the errors I had seen in the primary grades were still present in middle school. Most of my students still lacked the ability to organize their thoughts and write an interesting, complete, and cohesive paragraph or essay. Some children had progressed toward conventional mechanics while others had not. My students with learning differences seemed especially debilitated by having formed habits

of misspelling. I also noticed that words children had spelled correctly on spelling examinations were often misspelled in their compositions.

Even worse was the twinge of guilt I felt when I hung *published* works on display. I knew—and the children knew—that those pieces were not true representations of what the students could do. They had been corrected and polished to the point of being arguably co-authored by the student and the teacher. To display this work in the hallway where other teachers and parents could see it without disclosing this fact felt deceitful to me. I worried that the real message—the hidden curriculum—was that appearance was of utmost importance, even if it did not represent the truth. I also feared that it might diminish the value of the written word in the minds of my students.

Believing that instruction should always meet the developmental needs of the children, I began to wonder if my students could have been right in protesting writing exercises and if their parents could have been right in questioning the validity of widely-accepted methods. I did not, however, see an alternative. Ethically, I felt compelled to instruct my students in accordance with what the experts in the field told me was right. When I discovered students like Charlie, who had not been exposed to Writer's Workshop or basal curricula and yet had developed into brilliant writers, I knew I had to investigate.

Mason's Context

Charlotte Mason, who operated a teacher college and practicing schools from 1895 to her death in 1923, is an obscure figure in the educational landscape, although interest in her ideas seems to be growing both in the United States and in her native England. The renewed interest most likely began with the publication of Susan Schaeffer Macaulay's *For the Children's Sake* (1984), in which the author described her own

struggle with finding a suitable education for her children and her accidental encounter with a small cottage school in England that still used Mason's methods. Soon after, in 1989, Mason's original series of volumes was republished for the first time since 1954. Since that time, a number of books and articles have been written about Mason, her philosophy, and her methods (see Andreola, 1998; Cooper, 2004; Gardner, 1997; Inman, 1985; Levison, 1996 and 2000; Ney, 1999; Van Pelt, 2012). There have also been several theses and dissertations written on some aspect of Mason's work (see Beckman, 2001 and 2004; Bernier-Rodriguez, 2009; Coombs, 1984; Neiwert, 2009; Smith, 2000; Van Pelt, 2002), though this is the first, so far as I have found, to investigate her approach to composition. In recent years, there has been a concerted effort to obtain research grants to digitize the Mason archive, housed at the Armitt Library and Museum in Ambleside, UK (Van Pelt et al., 2009-2010; Van Pelt, Smith, & Beckman, 2008-2009). Part of this archive is now available through Redeemer University College (2009-2011) in Canada.

In order to understand the study, it is important that the reader be sensitized to what Mason's model of literacy entails. The following is a synthesis of information found in three of her six volumes (Mason, 1925a; Mason, 1925b; Mason, 1925c). In this model, oral language development is the focus of the early years. Students spend hours outdoors and are encouraged to talk about what they observe. They are read to often from literary sources such as fairy tales and fables, and they are asked to express their understanding of those stories through oral retelling, acting out a scene, putting on a puppet show, etc. This is a method that Mason (1925a) called *narration*, which, along with copious amounts of reading, is the backbone of her method.

When a child is reading, he should not be teased with questions as to the meaning of what he has read, the signification of this word or that; what is annoying to

older people is equally annoying to children. Besides, it is not of the least consequence that they should be able to give the meaning of every word they read. A knowledge of meanings, that is, an ample and correct vocabulary, is only arrived at in one way—by the habit of reading. A child unconsciously gets the meaning of a new word from the context, if not the first time he meets with it, then the second or the third: but he is on the look-out, and will find out for himself the sense of any expression he does not understand. Direct questions on the subject-matter of what a child has read are always a mistake. Let him narrate what he has read, or some part of it. He enjoys this sort of consecutive reproduction, but abominates every question in the nature of a riddle. If there must be riddles, let it be his to ask and the teacher's to direct him the answer. Questions that lead to a side issue or to a personal view are allowable because these interest children—
—“What would you have done in his place?” (pp. 228-229)

Mason insisted that narration is a natural language function for children, and that it is the key to long-term memory (Mason, 1925a; Mason, 1925b; Mason, 1925c).

In this model, children learn to read using a combination of sight words and phonics. Both are informed by literary pieces like nursery rhymes and poetry. Writing begins with penmanship, copywork, and dictation, while original composition is saved until later. The idea is that this gives children time to see and hear only correct spelling and grammar until they become comfortable readers. Written composition begins at about age nine with written narration. Copywork is a short daily task that is intended, according to Mason (1925a) to serve several functions. First, and most important, it allows children to develop a sense of relationship with—and perhaps even ownership of—the literature they love. Second, it aids in the development of the habit of slow and careful work, since

perfect penmanship is required. Third, transcription is the introduction to good spelling, as children are encouraged to look carefully at a word, close their eyes and picture it in their minds, and then write it from memory. Later, transcription helps students notice exemplary examples of the proper use of grammar. Lastly, as students grow older, passages for transcription help them to organically develop a sense of literary style that finds its way into their compositions. After all, they have never been exposed to anything but the very best writing from the beginning of their days at school (Mason, 1925a).

Dictation is an activity that builds upon copywork. While copywork occurs with the text in front of the student, dictation raises the bar slightly by removing the text from view. Through copywork, students have developed the habit of looking attentively at words and then visualizing them in their minds. Now the teacher has the students study a passage for a time, then the book is put away and students write the passage correctly as the teacher reads it aloud, clause by clause, only once (Mason, 1925a).

Grammar is a subject that Mason (1925a) suggested saving until children were around 12, although she did introduce simple subject and predicate parts at about age nine. Her rationale was that English grammar is too abstract a concept to be appropriate for young children. She thought it best to introduce grammar through the study of Latin, because, in that language, changes in case are more visually evident than in English. However, Mason was insistent that grammar, like vocabulary, would be largely absorbed unconsciously through reading well-written books (Mason, 1925a).

Most relevant to this study is what Mason said about composition. In this quote, she explained why she thought assignments in composition were inappropriate for young children:

I think this great moral teacher [Thackeray] here throws down the gauntlet in

challenge of an educational fallacy which is accepted, even in the twentieth century. That futility is the extraction of original composition from schoolboys and schoolgirls. The proper function of the mind of the young scholar is to collect material for the generalisations of after-life. If a child is asked to generalise, that is, to write an essay upon some abstract theme, a double wrong is done him. He is brought up before a stone wall by being asked to do what is impossible to him, and that is discouraging. But a worse moral injury happens to him in that, having no thought of his own to offer on the subject, he puts together such tags of commonplace thought as have come in his way and offers the whole as his “composition,” an effort which puts a strain upon his conscience while it piques his vanity. In these days masters do not consciously put their hand to the work of their pupils as did that “prodigiously well-read and delightful master who had the educating of George Osborne. But, perhaps, without knowing it, they give the ideas which the cunning schoolboy seizes to “stick” into the “essay” he hates. Sometimes they do more. They deliberately teach children how to “build a sentence” and how to “bind sentences” together. (Mason, 1925a, pp. 244-245)

Here, Mason describes the heavy hand with which teachers sometimes *assist* students with their writing. Rather than use valuable class time in such an *educational fallacy*, she preferred that children spend that time reading well-chosen literature that would both provide good models of writing and substance that would give them something to *say* (Mason, 1925a). In another of her volumes, Mason (1925b) stressed that composition is more than *writing*; it is also *telling*:

In few things do certain teachers labour in vain more than in the careful and methodical way in which they teach composition to young children. The drill that

these undergo in forming sentences is unnecessary and stultifying, as much so perhaps as such drill would be in the acts of mastication and deglutination.

Teachers err out of their exceeding goodwill and generous zeal. They feel that they cannot do too much for children and attempt to do for them those things which they are richly endowed to do for themselves. Among these is the art of composition, that art of “telling” which culminates in a Scott or a Homer and begins with the toddling persons of two and three who talk a great deal to each other and are surely engaged in “telling” though no grown-up, not even a mother, can understand. But children of six can tell to amazing purpose. The grown-up who writes the tale to their “telling” will cover many pages before getting to the end of “Hans and Gretel” or “The Little Match Girl” or a Bible story. The facts are sure to be accurate and the expression surprisingly vigorous, striking and unhesitating. Probably few grown-ups could “tell” one of Aesop’s Fables with the terse directness which children reproduce. Neither are the children’s narrations incoherent; they go on with their book, week by week, whatever comes at a given time,—whether it be Mrs. Gatty’s *Parables From Nature*, Andersen or Grimm or *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, from the point where they left off,—and there never is a time when their knowledge is scrappy. They answer such questions as—“Tell about the meeting of Ulysses and Telemachus,” or, “about Jason and Hera.” “Tell how Christian and Hopeful met with Giant Despair,” or, “about the Shining Ones.” (pp. 190-191)

In this model, *composition* progresses very gradually from oral to written, although it is important to note that oral composition is never given up entirely. Mason divided children into *Forms*, rather than grade levels. Form I included children ages six

through eight, what are now Grades 1 through 3. This is what these children were doing in composition in Mason's schools:

Composition in Form I (A and B) is almost entirely oral and is so much associated with Bible history, English history, geography, natural history, that it hardly calls for a special place on the programme, where however it does appear as "Tales."
(Mason, 1925b, p. 190)

Children in Form II ranged in age from nine to 12, or Grades 4 through 7. At this age, composition relied mainly upon written narration, and during this transition period children were allowed to write a part and tell a part:

Form II (A and B), (ages 9 to 12). Children in this Form have a wider range of reading, a more fertile field of thought, and more delightful subjects for composition. They write their little essays themselves, and as for the accuracy of their knowledge and justice of their expression, why, "still the wonder grows." They will describe their favourite scene from *The Tempest* or *Woodstock*. They write or "tell" stories from work set in Plutarch or Shakespeare or tell of the events of the day. They narrate from English, French and General History, from the Old and the New Testament, from Stories from the History of Rome, from Bulfinch's *Age of Fable*, from, for example, Goldsmith's or Wordsworth's poems, from *The Heroes Of Asgard*: in fact, Composition is not an adjunct but an integral part of their education in every subject. (Mason, 1925b, p. 192)

Forms III and IV included children ages 13 and 14, or Grades 8 and 9:

In these Forms, as in I and II, what is called "composition" is an inevitable consequence of a free yet exact use of books and requires no special attention until the pupil is old enough to take of his own accord a critical interest in the use

of words. The measured cadences of verse are as pleasing to children as to their elders. Many children write verse as readily as prose, and the conciseness and power of bringing their subject matter to a point, which this form of composition requires, affords valuable mental training. One thing must be borne in mind.

Exercises in scansion [scanning a line to get a feeling for its rhythm] are as necessary in English as in Latin verse. Rhythm and accent on the other hand take care of themselves in proportion as a child is accustomed to read poetry. In III and IV as in the earlier Forms, the matter of their reading during the term, topics of the day, and the passing of the Seasons, afford innumerable subjects for short essays or short sets of verses of a more abstract nature in IV than in III: the point to be considered is that the subject be one on which, to quote again Jane Austen's expression, the imagination of the children has been "warmed." They should be asked to write upon subjects which have interested them keenly. (Mason, 1925b, p. 193)

It is not until Forms V and VI, when children are between 15 and 17, that Mason began to recommend that they be given some technical direction in their writing. Even then, there was less "instruction" than there was "coaching."

In these Forms some definite teaching in the art of composition is advisable, but not too much, lest the young scholars be saddled with a stilted style which may encumber them for life. Perhaps the method of a University tutor is the best that can be adopted; that is, a point or two might be taken up in a given composition and suggestions or corrections made with little talk. Having been brought up so far upon stylists the pupils are almost certain to have formed a good style; because they have been thrown into the society of many great minds, they will not make a

servile copy of any one but will shape an individual style out of the wealth of material they possess; and because they have matter in abundance and of the best they will not write mere verbiage. (Mason, 1925b, pp. 193-194)

This is the model under which Charlie was educated. Understanding of the model will aid the reader in interpreting the remainder of the study.

Chapter 3: Method of Inquiry

Introduction

Grounded Theory is “a specific methodology developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) for the purpose of building theory from data” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 1). Or, in the words of Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), it is “a systematic strategy for theory development without a prior theoretical framework; grounded theories are developed through the use of conceptualization to bind facts together, rather than through inferences and hypothesis testing” (pp. 324-325). The *theory* that the researcher attempts to build from the data is comprised of categories, concepts, and/or themes that emerge consistently in the data. The researcher searches for ways they could be interrelated, like so many pieces of a puzzle, in order to develop a theoretical framework that can explain the phenomenon being studied (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). As Corbin and Strauss (2008) explained,

At the heart of theorizing lies the interplay of making inductions (deriving concepts, their properties, and dimensions from data) and deductions (hypothesizing about the relationships between concepts; the relationships too are derived from data, but those data have been abstracted by the analyst to form concepts). (p. 56)

The theory that is generated at the end of a study can be either *substantive* or *formal*. *Substantive theory* is designed to explain a phenomenon within a specific context or area of inquiry, such as *writing*. *Formal theory*, in contrast, is more widely generalizable and is used for conceptual ideas, such as *creativity*. Formal theory emerges after substantive theory and is strengthened as more studies resulting in substantive theory are conducted (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Many types of research begin with intense study of related literature. In contrast, grounded theory begins with somewhat of a blank slate—not completely blank, because the researcher brings personal and professional knowledge, experiences, and paradigms to the study. However, as mentioned in Chapter 2 of this paper, the use of grounded theory does not require an exhaustive review of the literature at the outset. Corbin and Strauss (2008) claimed that being too steeped in the literature before commencing data collection can be constraining and even stifling. This is because when one is conducting such an open-ended investigation it is impossible to know which ideas will emerge as being most important. Instead, enough literature is reviewed at the outset to give the researcher some sensitivity to the phenomenon and guide the planning of initial data collection. Then the literature is consulted throughout the study in order to make comparisons, to confirm or refute findings, or to suggest questions for subsequent data collection (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Another distinction in this type of research is that it is considered to be just as much an art as a science. Although procedures are present, those procedures can be used creatively and flexibly in order to “construct a coherent and explanatory story from data, a story that ‘feels right’ to the researcher” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 47).

Some who favor more positivist methods criticize grounded theory as unscientific and soft (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Some critics even suggest that the use of grounded theory signifies “a return to simple ‘Baconian’ inductivism” (Haig, 1995, p. 2). Sir Francis Bacon’s ideas about inductive thinking, which heavily influenced the empiricism fetish of the Enlightenment Period, suggested that scientists should remove their prejudices and preconceptions completely from their topics, gather objective data of all things that are observable, and then, once sufficient data had been collected, make

generalizations toward some theory or hypothesis about the patterns (Goodstein & Woodward, 1996). While this sequence may be similar in some ways to grounded theory, modern researchers acknowledge Bacon's philosophical shortcomings:

Historians, philosophers and those scientists who care are virtually unanimous in rejecting Baconian inductivism as a general characterization of good scientific method. The advice to record all that one observes is obviously unworkable if taken literally; some principle of selection or relevance is required. But decisions about what is relevant inevitably will be influenced heavily by background assumptions, and these, as many recent historical studies show, are often highly theoretical in character. The vocabulary we use to describe the results of measurements, and even the instruments we use to make the measurements, are highly dependent on theory. This point is sometimes expressed by saying that all observation in science is "theory-laden" and that a "theoretically neutral" language for recording observations is impossible. (Goodstein & Woodward, 1996, p. 3)

While *inductive* reasoning, or using particulars to generalize to universals, is a part of the process of grounded theory, a more apt term may be what Charles Sanders Peirce (1901) termed *abductive* reasoning. To abduct a hypothesis is to go beyond inferring a generalization from observable particulars. In abductive reasoning, the researcher attempts to adopt an "explanatory hypothesis" (Peirce, 1901, p. 151) that accounts for the facts. The pattern of inference is as follows: The researcher observes a surprising phenomenon (in this case, the fact that Charlie developed into a strong writer without traditional instruction in writing). Then the researcher reasons out that if [such-and-such an explanation] were true, then the surprising phenomenon would be a matter of

course. Therefore, there is reason to suspect that explanation to be true. This hypothesis must not only be sufficient to explain the phenomenon, but must also be the simplest, most economical explanation available. Simplicity is important because, as Peirce (1901) stated, “The further physical studies depart from phenomena which have directly influenced the growth of the mind, the less we can expect to find the laws which govern them ‘simple,’ that is, composed of a few conceptions natural to our minds” (p. 317). This fidelity to the phenomenon being studied suggests a significant tie to grounded theory.

In a grounded theory study, the “scientific” element comes from grounding the concepts that emerge fully in the phenomenon being studied (Haig, 1995). Fully grounding interpretations in the data and checking them with participants and with the literature helps to prevent the researcher from straying into flights of fancy or from pushing preconceptions onto the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Rationale

There are several reasons why I chose to conduct a grounded theory study of a single case rather than a case study. First, with all the contradicting voices shouting about raising standards versus developmentally appropriate practices, as well as the plethora of packaged curricula, programs, and books on how to teach writing, the thing I perceived to be missing is a unifying *theory* of writing development. A single case is not sufficient to create a *formal* theory, which is broad and generalizable. However, it is at least a starting point that can result in a *substantive* theory, which is specific to a context, and which can be built upon and expanded in future studies.

Second, I enjoy theory. As stated by Michael Polanyi (1958), we develop and accept theories “in the hope of making contact with reality” (p. 5). I find the search for a

larger truth through the development of theory intellectually stimulating and satisfying. The future prospect of continuing to work with and refine that theory with others who are seized by similar ideas is also attractive.

Lastly, theory is arguably more objective than experience, because it is something that exists outside of myself. It is either right or wrong in itself, regardless of my personal opinions, biases, and ambitions. Polanyi (1958) explained,

Of two forms of knowledge, we should consider as more objective that which relies to a greater measure on theory rather than on more immediate sensory experience. So that, the theory being placed like a screen between our senses and the things of which our senses otherwise would have gained a more immediate impression, we would rely increasingly on theoretical guidance for the interpretation of our experience, and would correspondingly reduce the status of our raw impressions to that of dubious and possibly misleading appearances. (p. 4)

According to Peirce (1891), well-rounded theories always consist of three elements that work in connection with one another. The first is the idea that some truth or occurrence exists independently of everything else. The second is the idea of being relative to and in reaction with something else. The third is the element of mediation, through which the first and second are brought into relation. This concept might be better understood through study of Figure 1 on the following page:

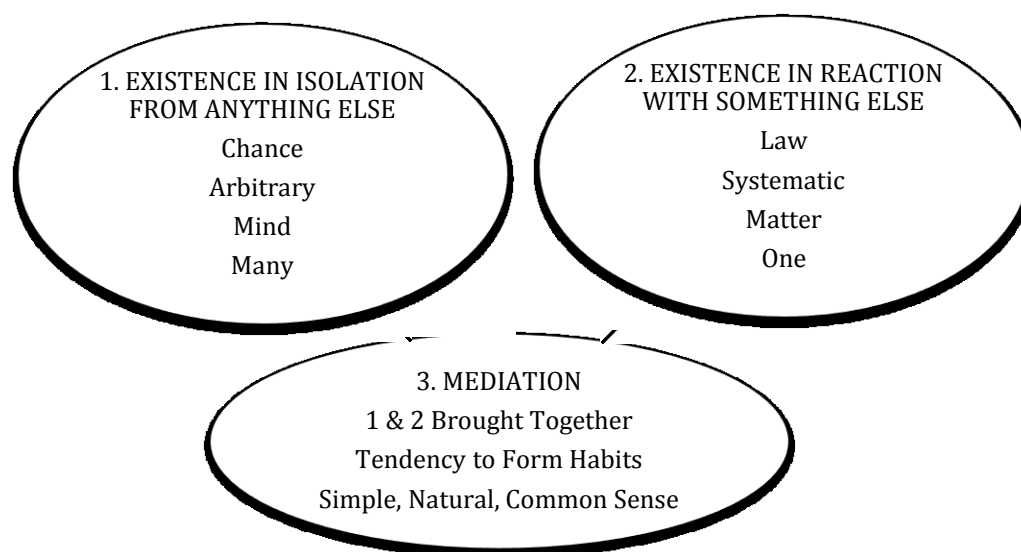


Figure 1. Peirce's (1891) Architecture of Theories.

Peirce's (1891) Architecture of Theories shows the three elements of Logic always present in any well-rounded theory. Peirce (1891) suggested that inferior theories place excess emphasis on either one or two. The best theories bring one and two into relation through some process of Mediation. The most likely Mediator is the one that is the most natural and simple—the one that most appeals to common sense.

One example that Peirce (1891) gave comes from the field of evolutionary biology: First is the fact that a change is evident from the parent's generation to the child's. Second is the law of heredity. Third, the thing that puts one and two in relation with one another, is the specific process of the characteristics becoming fixed. As for a theory of writing development, first is the fact that a child's writing develops. Second is the idea that writing development follows a specific pattern. Third is the force or event or procedure through which those patterns of writing development actually culminate in the child's development in writing.

Peirce (1891) explained that, in inferior theories, there is exaggerated emphasis on either the First or the Second. When there is undue emphasis on the First, the result is frequently the assertion that the phenomenon is completely random; there is no law governing it (Peirce, 1891). As regards writing development, perhaps one emphasizing the First might say that there is nothing we can do to help students develop as writers; they are either born good writers or they are not. In contrast, theories that place too much emphasis on the Second tend to emerge from Dualistic philosophies, which contend that spirit (mind) and matter are separate and mutually irrelevant. These theories acknowledge only the patterns or laws that are empirically observable (Peirce, 1891). A theory of writing development emerging from this perspective might say that writing development follows a specific, predictable pattern. If that pattern is discerned, then writing development can be orchestrated in all children through the right program, system, technique, or standards.

From my understanding of the current paradigm of writing instruction, both the developmentalists and the proponents of standards seem to be operating with exaggerated emphasis on the Second, though the resulting recommendations are quite different. While developmentalists acknowledge predictable stages of writing development and suggest allowing children to move through them at their own paces, proponents of Core Knowledge, standards, and traditional curriculum materials assert that direct instruction in specific skills along a scope and sequence will result in good writers. What I perceived to be missing was a sufficient Mediator that would bring mind and matter into relation—something that would allow pattern and variation to co-exist—a *means* of writing development that is natural, that is simple, and that appeals to common sense. In this study, the use of grounded theory allowed me to explore the process of writing

development as it occurs naturally by focusing on a student whose writing development was not the result of any of the widely-accepted practices, and then propose a theory for how that development occurred that was simple, natural, and grounded in the phenomenon and data.

Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

Ontology is a branch of metaphysics that deals with the nature of being (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1993). Corbin and Strauss (2008) asserted that the design of any research study reflects certain ontological assumptions possessed by the researcher. Influenced by the writings of pragmatists and interactionists such as John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, and Herbert Blumer, Corbin and Strauss (2008) laid out 16 ontological assumptions behind their method of grounded theory, which can be summarized by saying that there are no simple explanations for phenomena that occur in such a complex world. The descriptions and explanations of the actors are dependent upon the "social, political, cultural, racial, gender-related, informational, and technological framework" from which they come (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 8). Sometimes the actors' perceptions are in agreement. When they are not, the truth must be negotiated between them in order to establish understanding. In other words, knowledge is constructed and reconstructed—co-constructed, in fact, by the participants and the researcher through discourse (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), "*epistemology* is the philosophy of knowledge and involves long-standing debates about what knowledge is and how it is obtained" (p. 47). In other words, the field of epistemology is concerned with determining how we know that we know something. Beginning in the middle of the 20th century, the positivist model of epistemology—that is, a model in which true scientific

knowledge is found only in methods that follow strict rules that are not dependent upon content or context (i.e., quantitative studies)—largely dominated research in the social sciences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In recent years, however, several fields, including education research, have begun to shift toward a more qualitative paradigm (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Although some qualitative research still reflects the modernist belief that truth is absolute and discoverable, and it is therefore the researcher's job to uncover it, qualitative research has increasingly taken on a more postmodern bent, in which knowledge is constructed by the knower and is dependent upon both content and context (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Put simply, this means that current trends in qualitative research often lean toward the assumption that events and phenomena are complex, and thus require complex research methods. They depend upon the lived experiences, perceptions, and assumptions of the persons involved. Therefore, the goal of research should be to capture that complexity, since reductionism usually results in fragmentation and over-simplification of the phenomenon (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

This leads naturally to considerations about objectivity. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), the word *objectivity* is ambiguous. It can simply mean not allowing personal bias to distort findings. This is a goal toward which any researcher should strive for both ethical and epistemological reasons. In qualitative studies, however, this end is not accomplished through random sampling or statistical analysis. Instead, the researcher spends time checking, crosschecking, and validating concepts to be sure that they are thoroughly grounded in the data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

There is also reflexive objectivity, or “objectivity about subjectivity” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 242). Reflexivity, or reflecting on how the researcher's presence affects what is observed, is important because, as pragmatists assert, “acts of knowing

embody perspectives. Thus, what is discovered about ‘reality’ cannot be divorced from the operative perspective of the knower, which enters silently into his or her search for, and ultimate conclusions about, some event” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 4). Or, in the words of Kvale and Brinkmann (2009),

In the language of hermeneutics, we can only make informed judgments, for example, in research reports, on the basis of our pre-judices (literally pre-judgments) that enable us to understand something (see Gadamer, 1975). The researcher should attempt to gain insight into these unavoidable prejudices and write about them whenever it seems called for in relation to the research project. (p. 242)

Of course when bringing our prejudices into a study there is a danger of the research appearing biased and/or completely relativistic. To prevent this, researchers should first and foremost be true to the data and quick to challenge their own interpretations and assumptions. They should also build into the study design ways of garnering multiple perspectives of the phenomena (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). They must be honest about their own biases. In the 2008 edition of *Basics of Qualitative Research*, Juliet Corbin, in drawing a distinction between herself and her long-time research partner, the late Anselm Strauss, acknowledged the contribution of feminists to research:

I [Corbin] agree with the feminists in that we don’t separate who we are as persons from the research and analysis that we do. Therefore, we must be self-reflective about how we influence the research process and, in turn, how it influences us. (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 11)

Thirdly is objectivity as “intersubjective consensus,” which refers to the degree of agreement among researchers and between researchers and subjects about an

interpretation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 242). In this respect, there should be an ongoing conversation and negotiation between researchers and subjects regarding the meaning of data.

Objectivity can also mean “fidelity to the phenomenon” by allowing the object to speak for itself, as in a qualitative interview:

Thus, if one conceives of the human world as basically existing in numbers, a restriction of the concepts of objectivity and validity to measurement follows naturally, as only quantitative methods then reflect the real nature of the social objects investigated. However, with the object of the interview immersed in a linguistically constituted and interpersonally negotiated social world, the qualitative research interview obtains a privileged position in producing objective knowledge of the social world. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 243)

Lastly, objectivity can mean “allowing the object to object” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 243). This occurs when the subjects are allowed to frustrate or even negate the researcher’s biases or preconceptions when they leak out into interpretation of meaning. In order to prevent a scholarly work from disintegrating into an editorial piece it is important to build all of these facets of objectivity into the study design. The ways in which each of them was addressed in this study will be discussed at the end of Chapter 4.

Rationale for the Study Design

The aim of this study comes from an emerging field for which no data exist, making an exploratory design appropriate. In thinking epistemologically about how one could come to know how Charlie became a capable writer, I thought that the most direct route would be to ask him and to examine samples of his writing that span his school years. It is common for some qualitative investigations to be deductive in nature; that is

they begin with certain themes or hypotheses that are predetermined by the researcher. For this study, however, since no data currently exists on this topic, there are no themes with which I felt it would be logical to begin. Instead, I thought that it would be best to design a more inductive, or abductive, study that follows the data as it emerges from the interviews and document analyses and allows it to create its own themes. This led to the incorporation of grounded theory.

Grounded theory has several advantages. One is the balance between analysis and integration. The movement between universals and particulars strengthens both. Polanyi (1964) described the relationship between induction and deduction and the importance of alternating between them:

I have called these two efforts complementary since they contribute jointly to the same final achievement, yet it is also true that each counteracts the other to some extent at every consecutive step. Every time we concentrate our attention on the particulars of a comprehensive entity, our sense of its coherent existence is temporarily weakened; and every time we move in the opposite direction towards a fuller awareness of the whole, the particulars tend to become submerged in the whole. The concerted advantage of the two processes arises from the fact that normally every dismemberment of a whole adds more to its understanding than is lost through the concurrent weakening of its comprehensive features, and again each new integration of the particulars adds more to our understanding of them than it damages our understanding by somewhat effacing their identity. Thus an alteration of analysis and integration leads progressively to an ever deeper understanding of a comprehensive entity. (p. 125)

This is precisely what grounded theory does.

Background

Grounded theory is a method that was first developed in 1967 by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in response to what they perceived to be an overemphasis on verification in social science research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Up until this point, most research focused on *verifying* theories rather than *developing* them. And the few theories that were proposed generally were speculative interpretations emerging from the results of some quantitative study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The original intent of grounded theory was to develop a method of investigation that would allow researchers to discover theories in a systematic and rigorous way by allowing the data to speak for itself. This, they thought, would make qualitative studies stand up to empirical standards (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss's (1967) original version of grounded theory was focused on credibility, and, therefore, it leaned heavily toward the positivist scientific ideals that were so prevalent in the middle of the 20th century. It was very rigid in its practices of data collection and analysis.

Eventually, philosophical differences led to a schism between Glaser and Strauss, who each went on to evolve grounded theory in their own ways. Glaser built on his training as a quantitative researcher to keep grounded theory moving in the direction of positivism, while Strauss built upon his background in qualitative research to create something that focused more on process and meaning rather than verification (Charmaz, 2005). He soon teamed with Juliet Corbin (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), who, according to Kathy Charmaz (2005), pushed Strauss back in the direction of positivism for a time.

Charmaz (2005) represents the new face of grounded theory. Her ideas are much more rooted in the postmodern and constructivist ideals and drive the method of grounded theory away from positivism altogether. According to Charmaz (2005),

A constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 1990, 2000a, 2003b; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001) adopts grounded theory guidelines as tools but does not subscribe to the objectivist, positivist assumptions in its earlier formulations. A constructivist approach emphasizes the studied phenomenon rather than the methods of studying it. (p. 509)

Since the publication of Charmaz's work, Juliet Corbin has published an updated version of grounded theory that builds on her partnership with Strauss while giving some importance to constructivist ideals (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This work might be considered a middle ground between Glaser's positivist model and Charmaz's constructivist model.

Outcome

The outcome of this study was a substantive *grounded theory of personal integration*, which outlines the factors that contributed to Charlie's writing development and how they relate to one another. While the study of a single case is not sufficient for the development of a formal theory on writing development, this small beginning can be built upon in future research, which will include many other participants, and, therefore, yield results that can be generalized more widely.

Source

For this study, I adhered to the Corbin and Strauss (2008) version of grounded theory. It was first proposed by Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss in 1990 and was carried on by Corbin after Strauss's death in the 2008 edition of *Basics of Qualitative Research*. I chose this version because it occupies the middle ground between positivism and constructivism. I feel that this gives the study both structure and flexibility.

General Procedures

This section outlines the general characteristics of each of the methods that were used in this study. First is a discussion of grounded theory, followed by qualitative interviews and qualitative document analysis. The following section on Applied Procedures provides an in-depth description of the specific procedures that were used.

Corbin and Strauss's (2008) Grounded Theory. In studies using Corbin and Strauss's (2008) model of grounded theory, advanced planning of data collection is minimal. The aim of the study and a minimal preliminary review of literature are used to guide the initial stage, but the remainder of the data collection is guided through what Corbin and Strauss (2008) call *theoretical sampling*:

[Theoretical sampling is] A method of data collection based on the concepts/themes derived from data. The purpose of theoretical sampling is to collect data from places, people, and events that will maximize opportunities to develop concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions, uncover variations, and identify relationships between concepts. (p. 143)

This means that the design of the study is fairly open. There is not a rigid plan about who will be interviewed, how many times subjects will be interviewed, or what questions will be asked. All of that is dependent upon the emerging concepts from the data and the needs of the researcher, so that the most salient concepts can be pursued while less important concepts can be dropped. It is important to remember here that it is *concepts* that are being sampled and not *persons*. The researcher follows the concepts, "never quite certain where they will lead, but always open to what might be uncovered" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 144). This means that subjects or documents will be studied as long as they are providing the data that the researcher is seeking. If it appears that another source

will provide more relevant data, the researcher is free to pursue it as well. However, as Corbin and Strauss (2008) pointed out, a scholar must provide some indication of what questions will be asked in interviews and what kinds of observations will be made in order for a research proposal to be approved. Therefore, this study began with the analysis of a document describing Mason's model of Language Arts instruction from Ambleside Online, a popular Charlotte Mason curriculum website for home schoolers.

Theoretical sampling requires the analysis of data to be ongoing, beginning with the very first collection. In the words of Corbin and Strauss (2008),

Data collection leads to analysis. Analysis leads to concepts. Concepts generate questions. Questions lead to more data collection so that the researcher might learn more about those concepts. This circular process continues until the research reaches the point of **saturation**; that is, the point in the research when all the concepts are well defined and explained. (pp. 144-145)

Theoretical sampling is particularly important when a study focuses on a previously unexplored area because it allows freedom to make new discoveries (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This made it appropriate for the present study.

Once data has been collected, it is coded using a method called *open coding*. Open coding is an attempt to break apart all the potential concepts contained in the data. Then the bits are put back together through *axial coding*, in which the researcher brainstorms the possible relationships between the concepts within the given context (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Sometimes these concepts are delineated and named by the researcher. Other times, the concept or the term with which to name it comes directly from the participants. This is known as an *in vivo code* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). When coding for themes, it is important to let the data speak for itself rather than imposing

preconceptions upon it. The researcher's job is to tease out the ideas contained in the data. This requires the researcher to spend time writing rich descriptions and reflecting on nuances. It also requires the researcher to think about how those ideas fit together from the very beginning by distinguishing between lower-level and higher-level codes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

By the end of the first round of analysis, the researcher should have some idea of the direction the second round of data collection should take. Corbin and Strauss (2008) stated, "A researcher cannot possibly know all the questions to ask when beginning a study. It is only through interaction with data that relevant questions emerge" (p. 216). These questions become the focus of the next round. As new data are gathered, they are checked against each other and against previously gathered data and themes. The preliminary concepts that emerged and their perceived relationships to one another may at this point begin to be accepted, altered, or discarded (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Both open coding and axial coding continue as new data are collected. At the same time, to ensure a critical stance on his or her interpretation of meaning, the researcher records personal feelings or biases that emerge in separate memos (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The focus narrows as the study progresses because more and more pieces of the puzzle are visible in the concepts and themes. At this point the researcher can propose an initial theory and begin checking it against the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). He or she must check for gaps in logic and attempt to fill them with data that may have been overlooked or misinterpreted earlier. Concepts and categories should be unified by the overarching theory and their relationships must be established. Also, the participants in the study should have the opportunity to validate or refute the theory. Once the story of the study can be retold around that central theme and all the concepts fit logically, the

formal or substantive theory may be proposed.

Since this study focused on finding out about student and parent perceptions, it was thought best to use a method that allowed the participants to express their thoughts and experiences in their own words and within their own contexts. This led to the decision to use qualitative interviews. The initial set of interview questions emerged from concepts observed during a preliminary qualitative document analysis of Ambleside Online. The collective interview responses then allowed the researcher to construct understanding about Charlie's writing development through recurring themes. This is the essence of grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The information gathered in the interviews was triangulated by comparing themes that emerged from the interviews with observations made through examination of Charlie's writing samples. The themes and patterns that stood up to triangulation efforts led to the development and postulation of the *grounded theory of personal integration* that is thoroughly grounded in data obtained during the study.

Qualitative interviews. One of the primary methods of data collection used in this study is the qualitative interview. In qualitative interviews, the researcher attempts to draw out vivid descriptions of specific experiences from the participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The purpose of qualitative interviewing is to "obtain rich data to build theories that describe a setting or explain a phenomenon," making them especially useful for this study (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 56). As with other qualitative methods, the goal is not to quantify information or to generalize findings. Instead, qualitative interviews use language as data within a specific context (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The researcher then interprets both *what* is said and *how* it is said in order to give meaning and assign themes.

Qualitative interviews are similar in many ways to ordinary conversations. In fact, Rubin and Rubin (1995) preferred to call interviewees “conversational partners,” since the interviewer and interviewee cooperate to better understand the phenomenon (p. 11). There are distinctions, however. In qualitative interviews, the interviewer controls the focus of the conversation. These conversations go further in depth on a narrower range of topics than is normal in conversation. Interviews may also seem more one-sided, in that the interviewer’s primary interest is understanding the topic as experienced by the interviewee, without pushing his or her own thoughts, feelings, and experiences onto the interviewee’s world (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Just as Corbin and Strauss (2008) stressed the importance of coming into the study without preconceptions or preexisting themes and categories, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argued that a researcher should enter qualitative interview sessions with “deliberate naïveté” (pp. 30-31). This allows the researcher to be open to the unexpected. For the same reason, qualitative interviews are focused, but not standardized. They are focused in that the researcher formulates questions based on themes upon which information is desired, but the questions are general and open enough so that they do not lead the participants’ responses (Seidman, 1998). Rubin and Rubin (1995) indicated, however, that some knowledge of the phenomenon is important in order to extract detailed factual information:

Your informed questions signal the interviewees that you have done your homework, made an effort, and have not just come to pick their brain. You have gone as far as you can go with the available material and now you need some help. (p. 198)

The researcher uses sensitivity to the topic and to the participant responses to formulate

probing questions during the interview that help the subjects elaborate upon ideas or clarify meaning. In this way, the focus of the interview may change depending upon the responses to certain questions. Researchers also develop follow-up questions for subsequent interviews in order to test ideas that emerged in previous interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Planning interviews. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) emphasized the importance of planning for every stage of an interview study—from developing questions to transcription, analysis, and assessment—at the outset. After considering the purpose of the study and conceptualizing the theme, the interviews are designed with consideration given to ethical concerns, including confidentiality and potential risks and benefits for participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). It is also during this time that the researcher must decide who will be interviewed. Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggested that potential interviewees should be chosen according to their knowledge of the phenomenon and their willingness to talk about it. When different perspectives are evident, the interviewees “should represent the range of points of view” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 66).

According to Foddy (1993), it is important to weigh every word when formulating interview questions because of the potential for “unintended nuances associated with apparently similar words” (p. 45). He also recommended keeping questions short, grammatically simple, and focused on one idea at a time, so the meaning is clear to the respondent. Foddy (1993) explained that while closed questions can be helpful in more quantitative studies, open-ended questions in qualitative studies allow the researcher to hear responses in the words of the interviewee, although this increases the complexity of the coding process. Open-ended questions can also yield clues as to “the salience of the topic in the respondents’ minds” (Foddy, 1993, p. 130). Finally, in a grounded theory

study, questions must emerge in response to data that already exists to ensure that the researcher does not thrust an existing framework upon the study, thus compromising the results before data is collected (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

It is important to remember that the plan will change over the course of the study. As Rubin and Rubin (1995) explained,

Concerns that appear important at the beginning of the research may seem less vital later, and points that seemed unimportant when the study began may turn out to be valuable. To adapt to what you are learning, your design has to be flexible. In preparing the design, you have to suspend your own assumptions about the way things work and actively solicit ideas and themes from your interviewees. You analyze these themes and gradually winnow them down to those that you want to examine in detail. (p. 43)

After several rounds of gathering, analyzing, and testing the ideas that emerge during the interviews, an explanatory theory will emerge that fits the experiences of the interviewees.

The interview process. Once all stages have been planned, the actual interviews begin. The approaches authors recommend for the interview process are many and varied. Seidman (1998) suggested using three interviews per respondent, spaced from 3 days to 1 week apart and lasting 90 minutes each. In the first interview, the researcher should focus on gaining insight into the subject's context and experience. In the second, the researcher gathers as much concrete, specific detail as possible. In the third interview, the subject and the researcher interpret those experiences and reflect on the meaning (Seidman, 1998). Rubin and Rubin (1995) are less rigid in structure, but they do acknowledge seven stages of interviews, including putting the subject at ease, demonstrating interest in the

subject's insights, asking probing questions, progressing from more general to more specific topics, minimizing threats to the participant, and keeping the door open for future conversations. Seidman (1998) emphasized the importance of exploring at the appropriate level: If the researcher goes too far, the participant may become defensive or the interviewer's agenda may be pushed onto the participant, but if the researcher does not go far enough, then the results can be too vague and, therefore, of little value.

In addition to asking the right kinds of questions, it is imperative that the interviewer really listens to the participant's responses. On the surface, the researcher is listening for substance, facts, and details. Underneath, he or she also listens for evidence that the participant is using a "public voice" (Seidman, 1998, p. 7). While the use of this voice does not equate to lying, it is guarded, and the researcher must determine how to break through or use follow-up questions in order to get the complete picture (Seidman, 1998). The interviewer must also pay attention to important omissions, nonverbal clues, and the emotional tone with which the participant answers questions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Seidman (1998) suggested exploring silences and laughter. He also emphasized that, while listening and interpreting, the researcher must remain aware of how the interview is progressing, in order to keep the conversation moving forward and on topic. Acknowledging that sometimes using the word *remember* in interview questions can actually cause memory blocks for respondents, he recommends using *reconstruct* instead. If the respondent still has trouble remembering, the researcher can sparingly insert personal experiences to help the participant reconstruct his or her own experience (Seidman, 1998).

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), the key to efficient and effective interviews lies with the researcher's ability to compose the right probing questions to

participant responses as the interview progresses. These questions should allow the subject to clarify or refine responses and to elaborate on relevant concepts so that by the end of the interview there is very little interpretation for the researcher to do. In this way, the researcher and the subject co-construct meaning from the responses (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Transcription. After an interview is conducted, it must be transcribed.

Transcription is not simply a process of typing what is said in an interview; it is “an interpretive process, where the differences between oral speech and written texts give rise to a series of practical and principal issues” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 177). One such issue is that, whereas the interview process itself is organic, transcription can make the spoken words abstract and static because oral language and written language have different rules:

Once the interview transcriptions have been made, they tend to be regarded as *the* solid rock-bottom empirical data of an interview project. In contrast, from a linguistic perspective the transcriptions are translations from an oral language to a written language, where the constructions on the way involve a series of judgments and decisions. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 178)

For this reason, the researcher must decide at the outset of the study how the interviews will be transcribed.

There are several levels of transcription. These range from the verbatim transcription, which includes all the pauses, “ums,” and perhaps even notes on nonverbal language, to the narrative transcription, which tells the main ideas in a formal, narrative style. The level needed for a study depends on how the transcriptions will be used. A study that requires a detailed analysis of linguistics or conversation would most likely

require verbatim transcriptions. However, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) advised against the use of verbatim transcriptions for other types of studies because of the inherent differences between oral and written language. As the authors said, “attempts at verbatim interview transcriptions produce hybrids, artificial constructs that may be adequate to neither the lived oral conversation nor the formal style of written texts” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 178). A narrative style is especially recommended if the transcripts will be sent back to the subjects for comments or clarification. There are no hard and fast rules about how to do transcriptions. The only requirements are that the researcher plan with transcription in mind and then disclose how transcriptions were done in the report (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Analysis. One rather humorous anecdote used by Kvale and Brinkman (2009) is “The 1,000-Page Question” frequently posed by novice researchers: “How shall I find a method to analyze the 1,000 pages of interview transcripts I have collected?” (p. 189). The short answer is that there is no such method. Instead, analysis must be planned for at the outset, and interviews should be analyzed as they are conducted:

The method of analysis decided on—or at least considered—will then guide the preparation of the interview guide, the interview process, and the transcription of the interviews. In addition, the analysis may also, to varying degrees, be built into the interview situation itself. In such forms of analysis—interpreting “as you go”—considerable parts of the analysis are “pushed forward” into the interview situation itself. The final analysis then becomes not only easier and more amenable, but also rests on more secure ground. Put strongly, the ideal interview is already analyzed by the time the sound recorder is turned off. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 190)

The authors stressed the importance of analyzing the *interviews*, as opposed to the *transcripts*, because, whereas the interview itself is a living affair, the transcript by its nature is static:

Focusing on the transcripts as a collection of statements may freeze the interview into a finished entity rather than treat its passages as steppingstones toward a continuous unfolding of the meaning of what was said. The analysis of the transcribed interviews is a continuation of the conversation that started in the interview situation, unfolding its horizon of possible meanings. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 193)

There are many levels of analysis. Some focus on meaning. These include coding, condensation, and interpretation. Others, such as linguistic, discourse, and conversation analysis, focus on language (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Analysis can be done within a particular case as well as across cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As with transcription, there is no list of definitive rules the researcher must follow, except that the methods of analysis should fit the purpose of the study. The important things are to plan for analysis at the beginning of the study and then to describe the process in the report (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Rubin and Rubin (1995) broke analysis down thusly: The coding process begins with rereading the interview transcripts, with the researcher always keeping the concepts and themes being sought in the forefront. Some of these concepts will find support and, therefore, be explored further. Other concepts will not be supported and will be dropped. Concepts that do fit are marked off on the transcript, and each time a new concept emerges, the researcher must go back and code for it in each previous transcript. They continued:

When the coding is complete, the data are grouped in categories that allow us to compare what different people said, what themes were discussed, and how concepts were understood. Through examining the information within each category, we come up with overall descriptions of the cultural arena or explanations of the topic we are studying. We then seek out the broader significance by asking if our data support, modify, or contradict an existing theory or policy. (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 229)

This process echoes Corbin and Strauss's (2008) ideas on open and axial coding.

Verification. After analysis, the findings must be verified. This is the stage at which criticisms about reliability, validity, and generalization are answered, and, again, it must be planned for at the beginning of the study. In the positivist model, the aim is to reduce the study to one variable and control for all others to keep them from influencing the results. As discussed previously in this paper, however, that is not the aim of qualitative research. The goal of qualitative studies is to capture the complexity of a phenomenon. Therefore, questions about reliability, validity, and generalization must be reframed to fit the paradigm of qualitative research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Reliability refers to concerns about the “consistency and trustworthiness of research findings; it is often treated in relation to the issue of whether a finding is reproducible at other times and by other researchers” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 245). While this type of reliability can reduce subjectivity, being too rigid in qualitative interviews can actually stifle the study. Interviewers need flexibility built into the study design to give them the freedom to follow up on new data as it emerges, being always sensitive to individuals and context. If another researcher were to replicate a study of this nature, it is probable that he or she could begin with the same set of initial interview

questions and be taken by the subjects—with different contexts and different life experiences—into a completely different direction from that of the original study. Therefore, questions about reliability must be framed within the context of a particular study. Instead of being concerned about whether or not a study can be replicated and get the same results, the researcher should focus on whether or not the subjects within the study show consistency in their own answers to interview questions. Avoiding leading questions can bolster this, as can repeating or reframing questions. The researcher can also enhance reliability by having more than one researcher transcribe and code the interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Validity is concerned with “the truth, the correctness, and the strength of a statement” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 246). In the positivist model, this means determining the degree to which an instrument measures what it was intended to measure. In contrast, the purpose of qualitative methods is to *describe* rather than to *quantify*. Qualitative researchers determine validity by asking how true the descriptions and findings are to the actual phenomenon being studied (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). There are several ways researchers can plan with validity in mind. The first, of course, is to choose methods that fit the research questions. Another is to use well-crafted questions during the interview and then follow with questions that help the participant clarify or refine the meaning of his or her own responses. Once the interview has been transcribed, it can then be sent to the subject for clarification and refinement of meaning. During analysis, the researcher can strengthen interpretations by trying to find ways to falsify them:

Validity is ascertained by examining the sources of invalidity. The stronger the falsification attempts a knowledge proposition has survived, the stronger and

more valid is the knowledge. The researcher adopts a critical look upon the analysis, presents his or her perspective on the subject matter studied and the controls applied to counter selective perceptions and biased interpretations. The interviewer here plays the devil's advocate toward his or her own findings. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 249)

This can mean being reflexive through journaling. It can also mean triangulating data, looking for negative cases, investigating alternative explanations, or sending interpretations to the subjects for comments and clarification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Checks for validity are built into the grounded theory model, since any interpretations made by the researcher must be thoroughly grounded in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

In the positivist model, one goal of scientific research is to establish universal laws that can be *generalized* across subjects and contexts. As previously noted, this is not the purpose of qualitative research. It strives, instead, for *contextualization*:

If we are interested in generalizing, however, we may ask not whether interview findings can be generalized globally, but whether the knowledge produced in a specific interview situation may be transferred to other relevant situations. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp. 261-262)

Contextualization is important when dealing with human subjects because persons come with beliefs, experiences, and backgrounds that are unique. Therefore the individual will frustrate the search for universal, context-independent laws. By incorporating rich descriptions of both the phenomenon and the context, however, the researcher could possibly generalize to similar individuals within similar contexts (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Qualitative document analysis. Qualitative document analysis is a procedure for examining and evaluating documents in a systematic way (Bowen, 2009). It is frequently used to triangulate data collected in other ways, such as interviews or surveys (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). According to Bowen (2009), there are five reasons a researcher may decide to use qualitative document analysis. First, documents such as newspaper clippings or meeting minutes can be used to provide a context for the participants or the phenomenon. Second, examination of documents can suggest a direction for interview questioning or for observations. Third, the documents themselves can provide another source of data. Next, if the researcher has access to a sequence of documents, they can be used to show changes over time. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, documents can either verify or refute data from other sources (Bowen, 2009).

Qualitative document analysis is subject to the same rigorous methods as other forms of qualitative data analysis. Bowen (2009) suggested beginning with a skim reading of the entire document without making any notes or forming any judgments. Then a slower, more careful reading can be undertaken in order to look for codes. Sometimes it may be appropriate to use predefined codes (Bowen, 2009). For the purposes of this study, scopes and sequences and documents relating to Mason's language model from the Ambleside Online website were analyzed using theoretical sampling without the aid of predefined codes. Then concepts and categories that presented themselves in interviews were checked against evidence in the writing samples.

There are several advantages that make qualitative document analysis suitable for this study. First of all, grounded theory is a relatively unstructured study design. To go into initial interviews with predetermined questions and codes put forth by the researcher would be antithetical to the definition of grounded theory. However, the use of such an

open study design for a dissertation could make ethics committee members uncomfortable if the interview format were unclear. The initial document analysis of an article found on the Ambleside Online website provided enough information to create good initial interview questions without compromising the integrity of the study.

The use of qualitative document analysis can also counter concerns about bias or reflexivity, since documents are unaffected by the researcher's presence or preconceptions (Bowen, 2009). It can also keep participant bias in check during the study. The fact that the documents themselves do not change enables the researcher to go back to them repeatedly as new concepts surface in the interviews. Finally, since the interviews in this study required Charlie and Elizabeth to recollect Charlie's school years, the use of documents brought made tangible some things that might otherwise have been forgotten.

Applied Procedures

Aim. The aim of this study was to explore how Charlie developed as a writer without receiving instruction in composition. Specifically, I examined his development in the following areas: various types of writing (narrative, expository, persuasive), having something worthwhile to say, style, mechanics (spelling, grammar, usage), and vocabulary and word choice.

Sample. This study focused on a single case. The participants in the study were one adult who completed his K-12 education at home and his mother. The sample was chosen purposefully through my own personal and professional contacts. I chose Charlie and Elizabeth for several reasons. First, I suspected that Charlie was an excellent writer, since I had read some of his blog entries, he had received a full college scholarship to study English, and he had just spent a semester in the English department at Oxford.

Second, I was confident that Elizabeth implemented Mason's methods with fidelity. She has been an active researcher of Mason's writing for many years and is a well-respected mentor for many home school parents who want to know how to implement Mason's ideas. Both Charlie and Elizabeth demonstrated great insight into how Mason's method impacted Charlie, as evidenced in several blog entries I had read. I felt that they would provide this study with rich data. They were also very interested in the project and eager to talk about their experiences and observations.

Setting. Charlie is the oldest of four children. He was educated at home from preschool all the way through high school. Although his mother, Elizabeth, liked Mason's ideas from the beginning, she used a prepackaged home school curriculum with Charlie until he was eight. She then helped create a curriculum based on Charlotte Mason's methods. This curriculum relies heavily on wide reading and eschews direct instruction in composition.

Chronicle of the inquiry. Charlie had just returned from his stay at Oxford when I met him and his mother briefly to obtain informed consent (see Appendix A). We talked about the design of the study and agreed together that Skype and email would likely be the most efficient means of communication. Elizabeth had prepared a CD-ROM containing work samples from Charlie's school years. Charlie, in a moment of nostalgia, opened the files and found that his brother had actually written some of the pieces. We decided that instead of Elizabeth making another CD to send in the mail, we would create a shared folder on www.dropbox.com that would house digital and scanned copies of Charlie's work. Charlie then went back home and helped his mother sort through his records. We met via Skype to go through the collection together. Elizabeth had kept almost everything Charlie had written, due partly to sentimental reasons and partly to the

home school law in her state, which required her to maintain a portfolio of his work. I helped her decide what to include and what to leave out. We decided that a few samples from the beginning, middle, and end of each school year, preschool through Grade 12, would be sufficient. We included dictated journal entries from the time Charlie was 4 years old, written narrations, copywork, essays, creative stories, and dictation (though there were only a few samples of these). Many of the pieces were dated, but some were not. Charlie and Elizabeth tried to assign approximate dates to some documents in order to create an accurate chronology, but many items that made it into the Dropbox folder were not dated. I printed the samples and placed them in a binder, sectioned by year. The undated pieces were not used in analysis because it was difficult to pinpoint where they fit in Charlie's development. One element that was missing from the writing samples was oral narration. Although both Elizabeth and Charlie said that oral narration was an important part of Charlie's schooling, Elizabeth did not record or transcribe them. Before conducting interviews, I read through all of the writing samples and made notes about Charlie's overall development as a writer.

Grounded theory requires that interview questions emerge from data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Therefore, a qualitative document analysis was conducted on a document called *Ambleside Online Language Arts* (AOLA) (Ambleside Online, n.d.). I chose to begin with this item because it seemed to be a good general introduction to Mason's entire model of language arts instruction. Review of this document revealed several concepts that were used to focus the first round of interview questions. Among the most salient were the ideas of self-education, child-centered and developmental practices, learning for mastery, narration, the affective domain, and the use of quality books. The AOLA document also outlined the mechanics of how to implement narration, copywork,

and dictation (Ambleside Online, n.d.).

The idea of self-education was evident in practices such as having students do their own reading as soon as they are able, holding them accountable for *knowing* what they have read for themselves, and helping them develop metacognitive awareness. While the teacher is present to scaffold learning, the students must labor for themselves and construct their own understanding of the material (Ambleside Online, n.d.).

The concept of child-centered and developmental practices was apparent in the fact that there were no firm timelines or descriptions of *grade-appropriate* work given. The authors of the AOLA document were clear that every child develops at his or her own pace and should be given time to mature. If skills develop later rather than sooner, that is perfectly fine. Related to this idea is the concept of learning for mastery. The AOLA document stressed quality over quantity. The processes are slow and incremental. For example, the authors suggest starting narration with a fable, which is a complete story in very short form, and then progressing slowly to narrating a paragraph (or even a sentence for those having trouble), to two paragraphs, to a page, to a chapter as the child grows in skill and maturity. Likewise, dictation may begin with a single word and then progress to a sentence, then to a paragraph, then to the child preparing two to three pages (of which a paragraph is dictated to them). This progression occurs over the course of approximately 5 years (Ambleside Online, n.d.).

The idea of narration was catholic throughout the AOLA document. The authors stressed the importance of narrating every lesson, and they suggested many types of narration—including oral telling, drawing, acting out, and creating models—to keep lessons from growing stale. They said several times that narration is the foundation of composition, so this became a significant topic of exploration in this study (Ambleside

Online, n.d.).

The affective domain was emphasized in the document through discussions on interest, beauty, and delight. The authors wrote that copywork, in addition to helping students develop skills in spelling and grammar, gives a sense of possession as the child collects favorite works. Handwriting exercises appeal to the child's eye, while colorful literary language appeals to the ear (Ambleside Online, n.d.).

Finally, great books are at the heart of Mason's model of education. The AOLA document stresses that there is much incidental learning that takes place when children use their books freely. They acquire vocabulary, spelling, grammar, sentence structure, and literary style at the hands of great writers when they read, narrate, and do copywork and dictation from their books; therefore, very little direct instruction in any of those skills is required (Ambleside Online, n.d.).

The concepts that emerged in the document analysis were used to create the first set of interview questions (Appendix B). I interviewed Elizabeth first, using the Clear Record application on my smart phone. The interview focused mainly on the six concepts that emerged through the document analysis, but I also wanted to know exactly how she had implemented Mason's methods with Charlie and hear her initial thoughts on factors that contributed to Charlie's writing development.

Analysis in the study was ongoing. I transcribed the interview verbatim, including pauses and laughter. After transcription, I used *open coding* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to try to discern all of the ideas that emerged in the interview. Using Microsoft Word, I highlighted individual phrases and inserted comments to the side in an attempt to name concepts.

Whenever the topic of conversation changed, I stopped coding to write memos

and reflexive journal entries. In the memos, I chronicled my entire thinking process and mapped out possible meanings, as well as concepts that needed to be explored further, including ideas for literature review. Reflexive journal entries were written when I felt strong emotion or bias creeping into my analysis. Journaling in this way allowed me to purge those thoughts and feelings so there would be less chance they would affect the data. I also made notes to myself in the reflexive journal about mistakes I perceived that I was making in the interview process so that I could try to avoid them the next time. For example, there were a few times when I wrote that I felt my questions may have been a bit leading. Luckily, Elizabeth and Charlie were quick to push back. During the study, I wrote 110 memos and 36 reflexive journal entries.

The first interview yielded more than 100 individual codes, which I then put into outline form to try to establish a hierarchy and possible relationships among the codes. This is *axial coding* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I used the outline to write a narrative that included the main themes that emerged in the interview and sent it, along with the transcript, to Elizabeth for comment. She then had the opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings and give any additional thoughts. I also sent the narrative and transcript to a fellow researcher who sent feedback on my coding, memos, and reflexive journal entries. She also asked critical questions and looked for bias.

The second interview was with Charlie. It followed the same sequence as the first interview with Elizabeth, using the questions that were created using the AO document. This interview was done immediately after the interview with Elizabeth, since Charlie was at home. Charlie was also able to expand on some of the ideas that had come out of Elizabeth's responses. This interview was transcribed in the same way as Elizabeth's interview, with coding, memos, and reflexive journal entries being checked by my

colleague and Charlie having the opportunity to respond via email to the transcript and narrative.

I continued with Charlie for the next two interviews, because he gave such rich, detailed information and insights. These interviews were also conducted via Skype and recorded. While Charlie's first interview focused on gaining knowledge about his context, in his second interview he gave in-depth accounts of specific experiences. Then, in his third interview, we worked together to make meaning from those experiences. This followed Seidman's (1998) suggestion for the three-interview process, as well as Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) model for co-construction of meaning. These interviews were transcribed and verified in the same manner as mentioned previously. In addition, I was able to compare the responses given by Elizabeth and Charlie with one another and with the writing samples I had been given in order to test and retest concepts before they were accepted.

One final interview with Elizabeth allowed me to reach a point of reasonable theoretical saturation with these two participants. After the last interview had been transcribed, coded, and verified, I reworked the outlines from each interview into one cohesive model. I then developed a graphic organizer using Gliffy, an online generator, and created a screencast using Jing, which I was able to share with Elizabeth, Charlie, and several colleagues. After receiving feedback that sustained the model, and reviewing the extant literature, I was able to articulate the findings into the present report around the core concept of *personal integration*. These findings were then presented to Elizabeth and Charlie in the form of a debriefing statement (Appendix C).

Concepts and Terms

Abductive reasoning. A term coined by Charles Peirce (1891) to describe the

development of an explanatory hypothesis that accounts for a phenomenon.

Analysis. Breaking a phenomenon down and examining its component parts in order to learn about the whole (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Axial coding. Relating concepts to one another (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Categories. Broader themes under which concepts can be grouped (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Coding. “Deriving and developing concepts from data” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 65).

Comparative analysis. Comparing incidents with one another to look for similarities and differences (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Concepts. Words that stand for like or recurring ideas in analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Conceptual saturation. The process of fully developing the properties and dimensions of concepts, categories, and themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Constant comparisons. The process of comparing data and looking for patterns of similarity and difference (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Context. Conditions that influence the nature of circumstances or problems (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Copywork. A method used in Mason schools in which students choose or are given exemplary passages of poetry and literature to copy slowly, usually one or two lines per day. The purposes of this activity include penmanship, spelling, grammar, style, and a sense of beauty and possession (Ambleside Online, n.d.).

Deliberate naïveté. “The interviewer’s exhibiting openness to new and unexpected phenomena, rather than having readymade categories and schemes of

interpretation” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 28).

Dictation. A method used in Mason’s schools in which students study a passage and then write it as the teacher dictates it (or a portion of it) aloud. The purposes of this activity include spelling and grammar (Ambleside Online, n.d.).

Dimensions. Variations within properties (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Epistemology. The philosophy of knowledge concerned with how we know that we know something (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Dimensions. Variations of a property (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Grounded theory. A method of inquiry developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to build theory from data; can also be used in reference to the “theoretical constructs derived from qualitative data analysis” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 1).

In-vivo codes. Concepts named with the actual words of the subjects rather than the researcher (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Inductive reasoning. Using particular examples to infer generalizations (Peirce, 1891).

Integration. “Linking categories around a central or core category and reefing the resulting theoretical formulation” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 87).

Member validation. Study participants are given the researcher’s interpretations for discussion and validation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Memos. “Written records of analysis” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 117).

Narration. A method used in Mason schools in which students tell back what they have read or heard read (Ambleside Online, n.d.).

Ontology. The field of philosophy concerned with the nature of being, or the way things are (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Open coding. The initial analysis during which raw data are broken down and potential concepts are established (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Pattern coding. A method of coding used later in the study to describe evident patterns in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Properties. “Characteristics that define and describe concepts” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 159).

Saturation. The point in a study at which no new data are emerging and concepts and relationships have been delineated fully (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Sensitivity. The ability to discern subtleties in the data that might point to meaning (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Substantive theory. A theory that applies to a specific case or context.

Theoretical sampling. “Sampling on the basis of concepts derived from data” in an effort to bring out their properties and dimensions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 65).

Theoretical saturation. “The point in analysis when all categories are well developed in terms of properties, dimensions, and variations. Further data gathering and analysis add little new to the conceptualization, though variations can always be discovered” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 263).

Chapter 4: Findings of the Inquiry

Introduction

This chapter presents a substantive grounded theory that evolved from interviews with Charlie and his mother, as well as from examination of writing samples from Charlie's school years and relevant literature. The data was collected and analyzed using the method of grounded theory put forth by Corbin and Strauss (2008). The purpose of this study was to explore how Charlie, a college student who was educated at home using the Charlotte Mason method (which eschews writing instruction) developed into an exemplary writer. This chapter outlines and describes the components of the newly grounded theory.

During the proposal phase of this study, I disclosed my suspicion that wide reading and narration would play an integral part in writing development, although I was unsure *how*. It became clear early in the interview process that this was true, but the process of Charlie's writing development was much more complex than what was anticipated. Elizabeth also made it very clear at the outset that, in comparing Charlie to her other three children, she thought Charlie was an exceptional case; he developed as a writer mainly because of natural talent and ability. However, as the study progressed, it became evident that giftedness was not the only factor, either. The concepts of wide reading, narration, and natural ability provided a starting point for exploration. The concepts that emerged from interviews with Elizabeth and Charlie (through the use of open and axial coding) eventually became organized into a process that I will call the *grounded theory of personal integration*, and which I will describe in detail in the rest of this chapter.

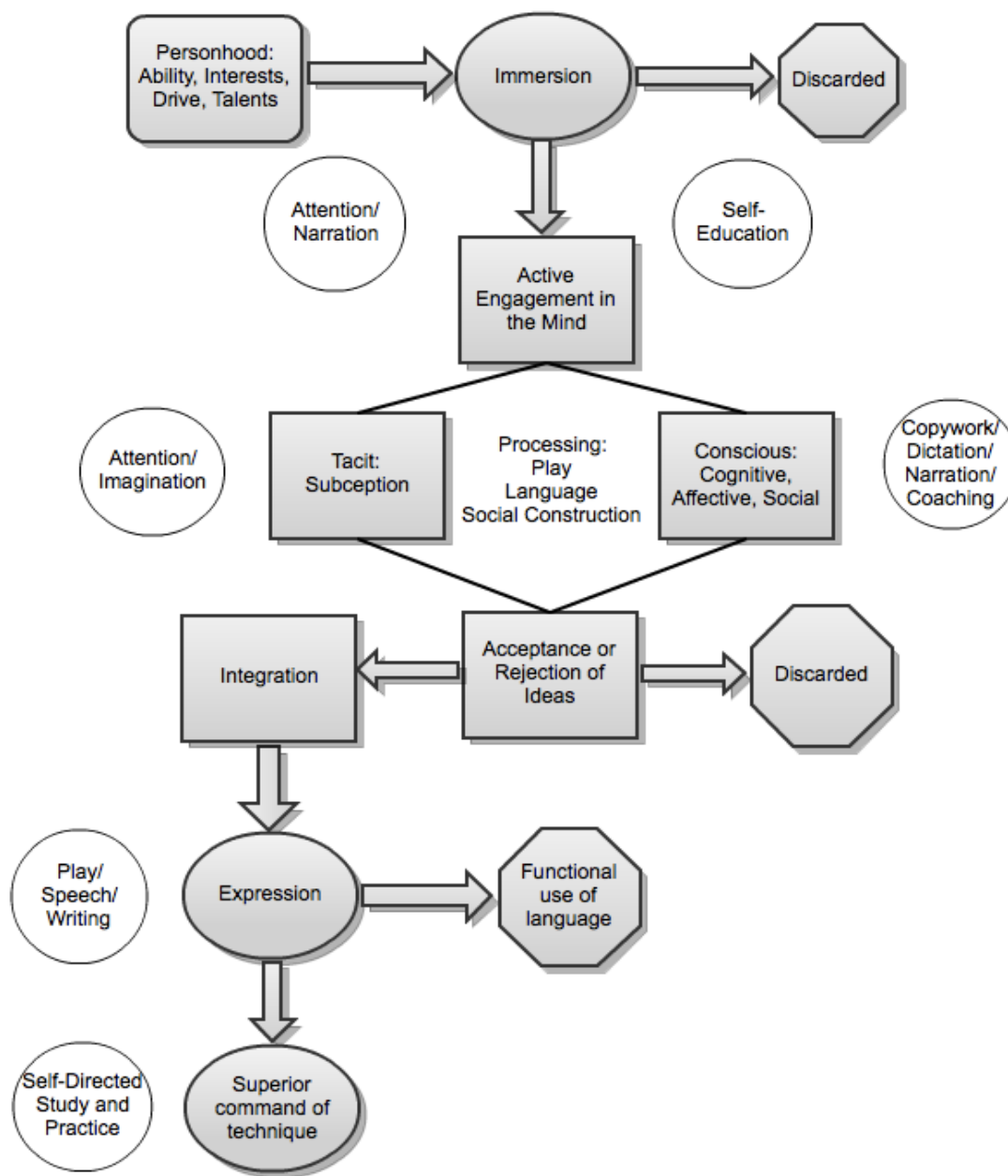


Figure 2. Grounded Theory of Personal Integration.

This grounded theory of personal integration begins with Charlie's being immersed in the work of master writers. When he actively engaged the text, there were two streams of learning that took place simultaneously: *Tacit* learning occurred underneath the surface and was difficult to observe, while *conscious* learning required his

active effort. Play and language were the primary means by which he processed information during this phase. Next, his mind rejected some ideas because they did not resonate with him. Other ideas went through a process of *personal integration*; they became assimilated to the point that they were an inseparable part of him, and, thus, emerged naturally in his expression through his play, his speech, and his writing. This gave him a functional use of language, after which he sought out the training that pushed him towards a superior command of writing technique.

Paradigmatic Lens: Personhood and the Roles of Teacher and Learner

My first interview with Elizabeth allowed me to become acquainted with Charlie's educational context and with her initial thoughts about his writing development. She seemed eager to make sense of her experience, since Charlie's writing development was very different from that of her other children. The following narrative collection of interview quotes, a profile strategy suggested by Seidman (1998), provides the reader with an initial snapshot of Charlie's natural language ability. In all of the interview quotes in the remainder of this paper, the participant's emphasis is indicated with italics:

Natural talent and ability, I think, played a very key role for this particular student....[Charlie] seems to have been born with it....He liked language. He always liked language itself. So he was fine using it, never really tried to get out of using it, never tried to shorten his writing assignments or reading assignments, because he loved it....I've homeschooled two other kids and I haven't seen it in them....My other two sons have done the same curriculum, haven't read quite as many books, haven't really chosen to read on their own, but have read the same quality literature because I made them...but they're not taking off with writing like he did....Now, when [Charlie] was two years old, he would ask me to write

words. He would ask me to write the word “ball,” write “cup,” write “toy.” And I would get a list of say six or seven words, and he would say, “Now read it to me.” This was when he was two! So he was already interested in words and what they looked like written down. And then he was reading when he was four. You know, I have a video of him, sitting by the couch, reading a library book about cowboys, and I was videotaping, and I said, “What are you reading?” and he told me the name of the book, and I said, “What’s it about?” and he told me. This was before school, before Charlotte Mason, so he was already reading fluently and even narrating. (Elizabeth, personal communication, December 30, 2011).

Elizabeth went on to describe the early writing experience Charlie had while using a prepackaged home school curriculum called *Sonlight*; this was before she fully embraced Mason’s methods:

When he was much younger, he was very literal, very factual. I thought he might grow up to be a scientist. I never would have thought that he would have been writing poetry or that he would have been interested in writing at all. He always wanted just the facts...I remember doing *Sonlight* when he was in second and third grade. And they had a creative writing course that they were having all the students do. And one of the things was “Pick up the stump of a candle. Hold it in your hand and describe it. How long is it? What does it look like? What does it smell like? What is its shape?” And those exercises really frustrated him. He had a really hard time with it. What he would end up with is basically a list. “Two inches. Bumpy. Red.” You know? They didn’t enhance his writing at all. And so I think, because of that, he wasn’t really that interested in writing, because that’s what he thought writing *was*. It wasn’t until after he started doing his narrations

and reading more and coming up with his own stories that he really got interested in writing. Maybe in spite of those exercises and not because of them....[So his interest in writing came] way after that. Because at that point, I think if you would have said “creative writing,” he would have run the other way....[His interest in writing started at] probably about nine, when he started reading more the fantasy books and doing his own typed narrations. (Elizabeth, personal communication, December 30, 2011)

I found it interesting that writing exercises frustrated Charlie when Elizabeth had made it clear that he had high language function from a very early age, and that his interest in writing coincided with stopping those writing exercises in favor of reading and narrating. Elizabeth continued by telling me that she thought one of the most important factors in Charlie’s writing development was that he read so much. The Ambleside Online curriculum relies heavily on the reading of *great books*. (See Appendix D for a book list.) In the following passage, it seems that Elizabeth is grappling with her own ideas, unsure about what she thinks about her own role, but positive that Charlie’s natural ability was important:

I think Charlotte Mason was a perfect match for bringing out the best in him, but I think he’s one of those kids who would have done well in public school, if I had done the “Principle Approach,” probably even textbook approach, he would have done ok. I don’t know if he would have *loved* language and *loved* writing in the same way. (Elizabeth, personal communication, February 25, 2012)

These passages can be used to initiate the reader to the paradigmatic lens through which the rest of this paper should be viewed. In them, we become acquainted with Charlie as a student and with the context of this family’s home school. More importantly,

we get an initial glimpse of the highly personal nature of Mason's philosophy of education. This is a critical idea for understanding the results of this study, and so it merits some discussion before proceeding.

In 1862, when Mason was a young teacher, Great Britain passed the Revised Code in education (Curtis, 1957). This code included standardization of the national curriculum, as well as a provision for Payment by Results, which tied funding to student achievement. After working within this system for a number of years and training student teachers at Bishop Otter College to enter state-run schools, Mason moved to Bradford to work in a private school that was not bound by state regulation. Then, in 1895, she moved to Ambleside to start her teacher college (Cholmondley, 2000). The Revised Code was abandoned in 1897 because it was evident that Payment by Results was not working and was, in fact, discriminatory against the poorer classes (Curtis, 1957). After this change, according to Dr. John Thorley (Mason historian and the last principal of Charlotte Mason College before its incorporation into the University of Cumbria),

[Mason] did indeed try to have her college incorporated into the national system of teacher education, but I don't think money came into it much (there were always plenty of applicants willing to pay the fees). The point was that teachers trained at Ambleside were not regarded as qualified for state schools, and this continued to be so until 1960. But [Mason] was not prepared to compromise the distinctiveness of the training at Ambleside, which would have been to some extent necessary in order to join the national system. (Thorley, personal correspondence, April 7, 2012)

The "distinctiveness of the training at Ambleside" centered around the personhood of the child and the use of holistic practices. The theme of *personhood*, or respect for the child

as an individual, pervades all of Mason's writing. This idea, as well as her rejection of standardization, teacher-centeredness, and behaviorism, is evidenced by her "20 Principles of Education," which can be found in the preface of her final volume, *Towards a Philosophy of Education* (1925b):

1. Children are born *persons*.
2. They are not born either good or bad, but with possibilities for good and for evil.
3. The principles of authority on the one hand, and of obedience on the other, are natural, necessary and fundamental; but—
4. These principles are limited by the respect due to the personality of children, which must not be encroached upon whether by the direct use of fear or love, suggestion or influence, or by undue play upon any one natural desire.
5. Therefore, we are limited to three educational instruments—the atmosphere of environment, the discipline of habit, and the presentation of living ideas. The P.N.E.U. Motto is: "Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, and a life."
6. When we say that "*education is an atmosphere*," we do not mean that a child should be isolated in what may be called a 'child-environment' especially adapted and prepared, but that we should take into account the educational value of his natural home atmosphere, both as regards persons and things, and should let him live freely among his proper conditions. It stultifies a child to bring down his world to the child's' level.
7. By "*education is a discipline*," we mean the discipline of habits, formed definitely and thoughtfully, whether habits of mind or body. Physiologists tell us of the adaptation of brain structures to habitual lines of thought, *i.e.*, to our habits.

8. In saying that "*education is a life*," the need of intellectual and moral as well as of physical sustenance is implied. The mind feeds on ideas, and therefore children should have a generous curriculum.

9. We hold that the child's mind is no mere sac to hold ideas; but is rather, if the figure may be allowed, a spiritual organism, with an appetite for all knowledge. This is its proper diet, with which it is prepared to deal; and which it can digest and assimilate as the body does foodstuffs.

10. Such a doctrine as *e.g.* the Herbartian, that the mind is a receptacle, lays the stress of education (the preparation of knowledge in enticing morsels duly ordered) upon the teacher. Children taught on this principle are in danger of receiving much teaching with little knowledge; and the teacher's axiom is, 'what a child learns matters less than how he learns it.'

11. But we, believing that the normal child has powers of mind which fit him to deal with all knowledge proper to him, give him a full and generous curriculum; taking care only that all knowledge offered him is vital, that is, that facts are not presented without their informing ideas. Out of this conception comes our principle that,—

12. "*Education is the Science of Relations*"; that is, that a child has natural relations with a vast number of things and thoughts: so we train him upon physical exercises, nature lore, handicrafts, science and art, and upon many living books, for we know that our business is not to teach him all about anything, but to help him to make valid as many as may be of—

"Those first-born affinities

"That fit our new existence to existing things."

13. In devising a SYLLABUS for a normal child, of whatever social class, three points must be considered:

(a) He requires *much* knowledge, for the mind needs sufficient food as much as does the body.

(b) The knowledge should be various, for sameness in mental diet does not create appetite (*i.e.*, curiosity).

(c) Knowledge should be communicated in well-chosen language, because his attention responds naturally to what is conveyed in literary form.

14. As knowledge is not assimilated until it is reproduced, children should 'tell back' after a single reading or hearing: or should write on some part of what they have read.

15. A *single reading* is insisted on, because children have naturally great power of attention; but this force is dissipated by the re-reading of passages, and also, by questioning, summarising, and the like.

Acting upon these and some other points in the behaviour of mind, we find that the *educability of children is enormously greater than has hitherto been supposed*, and is but little dependent on such circumstances as heredity and environment.

Nor is the accuracy of this statement limited to clever children or to children of the educated classes: thousands of children in Elementary Schools respond freely to this method, which is based on the *behaviour of mind*.

16. There are two guides to moral and intellectual self-management to offer to children, which we may call 'the way of the will' and 'the way of the reason.'

17. *The way of the will*: Children should be taught, (a) to distinguish between 'I want' and 'I will.' (b) That the way to will effectively is to turn our thoughts from

that which we desire but do not will. (c) That the best way to turn our thoughts is to think of or do some quite different thing, entertaining or interesting. (d) That after a little rest in this way, the will returns to its work with new vigour. (This adjunct of the will is familiar to us as *diversion*, whose office it is to ease us for a time from will effort, that we may 'will' again with added power. The use of *suggestion* as an aid to the will is *to be deprecated*, as tending to stultify and stereotype character, It would seem that spontaneity is a condition of development, and that human nature needs the discipline of failure as well as of success.)

18. *The way of reason*: We teach children, too, not to 'lean (too confidently) to their own understanding'; because the function of reason is to give logical demonstration (a) of mathematical truth, (b) of an initial idea, accepted by the will. In the former case, reason is, practically, an infallible guide, but in the latter, it is not always a safe one; for, whether that idea be right or wrong, reason will confirm it by irrefragable proofs.

19. Therefore, children should be taught, as they become mature enough to understand such teaching, that the chief responsibility which rests on them *as persons* is the acceptance or rejection of ideas. To help them in this choice we give them principles of conduct, and a wide range of the knowledge fitted to them. These principles should save children from some of the loose thinking and heedless action which cause most of us to live at a lower level than we need.

20. We allow no separation to grow up between the intellectual and 'spiritual' life of children, but teach them that the Divine Spirit has constant access to their spirits, and is their Continual Helper in all the interests, duties and joys of life.

(Mason, 1925b, pp. xxix-xxx)

Along with statements about personhood, it is worth noting Mason's thoughts about the human mind and ideas. She stated that the mind is not a "sac" to *hold* ideas or information, but rather a "spiritual organism" that *feeds* on ideas (Mason, 1925b, p. xxx). She asked later,

What is an idea? we ask, and find ourselves plunged beyond our depth. A live thing of the mind, seems to be the conclusion of our greatest thinkers from Plato to Bacon, from Bacon to Coleridge. We all know how an idea "*strikes*," "*seizes*," "*catches hold of*," "*impresses*" us and at last, if it be big enough, "*possesses*" us; in a word, behaves like an entity. (Mason, 1925b, p. 105)

In reading Mason's words, one senses that she had almost a metaphysical view of learning. This, according to Thomas Kuhn (1962), is enough for her ideas to be largely dismissed in the normal scientific community and relegated to the Department of Philosophy, since they do not result in something that is observable and capable of being tested empirically. However, as Kuhn (1962) stated,

Observation and experience can and must drastically restrict the range of admissible scientific belief, else there would be no science. But they cannot alone determine a particular body of such belief. An apparently arbitrary element, compounded of personal and historical accident, is always a formative ingredient of the beliefs espoused by a given scientific community at a given time. (p. 4)

The experiences of Charlie and others like him may, at some point, provide that *formative ingredient* that allows the normal scientific community to open itself to a new pathway of empirical study, but for the present study it will be important to view the findings through not only the paradigm of qualitative research, but also through the paradigm of education

as a *personal* experience—one that cannot always be quantified, standardized, or indeed even orchestrated by a teacher.

This is a timely idea, since the Common Core standards are currently being adopted almost nationwide and Race to the Top is based on competition for federal dollars. While some champion the standards movement as necessary for social justice and democracy (Hirsch, 1996), critics argue that our culture's current obsession with standards and testing actually undermines social justice, as the achievement gap continues to widen (Kohn, 2004). This is, indeed, what Great Britain found to be true a century ago with the Revised Code and, again in 2010 with the wide boycott of the national SATs tests by parents and teachers (Harrison, 2010). Other critics, like Sir Ken Robinson (2001), asserted that the modern preoccupation with certain sorts of academic abilities, to the exclusion of others, has caused society to squander much of its human talent and resources, as many students who have talents outside of those valued by the system come to perceive themselves as less able. Robinson (2001) traced this preoccupation to the Enlightenment Period of the 16th and 17th centuries:

[The Enlightenment] led to a view of knowledge and intelligence dominated by deductive reason and ideas of scientific evidence. These ideas have been reinforced since then by the styles of formal education, promoted especially through the public schools and universities. These methods of thought have had spectacular success in shaping our understanding of the world and in generating technological advances. But there has been a terrible price, too. (p. 7)

While the world around Charlie was busy arguing the merits and detriments of standardization in education, which areas of study needed standards, and what those standards should be, he was largely unaffected. His mother had fully embraced Mason's

ideas about *personal* education, and so she set out to offer him a wide variety of ideas and allowed him to develop according to his talents, interests, and ability. He grew up to be an excellent writer, while his brothers, who were provided the same curriculum, ideas, and opportunities, developed in different directions.

Results of the Study

Corbin and Strauss (2008) recommended that researchers tell the “analytic story” of the study by explaining the results using a specific hierarchy of ideas (p. 278). The broadest and highest level of ideas is *categories*, sometimes called *themes*. Categories are the umbrella ideas under which other concepts that share certain properties are grouped. The properties used to classify concepts into categories also contain variations, which are disclosed as *dimensions*, as well as the conditions under which the properties exist or emerge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In the present study, emerging concepts were combined under three categories to form a process: Immersion, Processing, and Expression. Within this process, the idea of Personhood repeatedly enters as a condition under which the process works.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the ideas of First, Second, and Third that are contained in the philosophical writings of C. S. Peirce (1891). First was the idea of all the random possibilities, and Second was the idea of the one empirical fact. As regards writing development, someone attached to the idea of First might say that writing cannot be taught. A person is either born a good writer or not. Given Mason’s principles, it would be easy to stop here and say that this is where her model fits; the teacher exposes the child to a wide variety of things, and the child simply develops according to her abilities and interests. On the other end of the spectrum is one who is fixed to the idea of Second. This person might say that there is one royal road to writing development; if we

can discover that absolute truth and distill its components, then we can orchestrate a high level of writing development in every child. Both of these are oversimplified models. Peirce (1891) urges us toward a more complex Third. This is the realm of theory that accounts for both pattern and variation. The *grounded theory of personal integration* is an effort in this direction. The remainder of this chapter provides a substantive framework for how Mason's very personal model of education led to Charlie's development as a writer. The theory is consists of three stages, as outlined below in Figure 3.

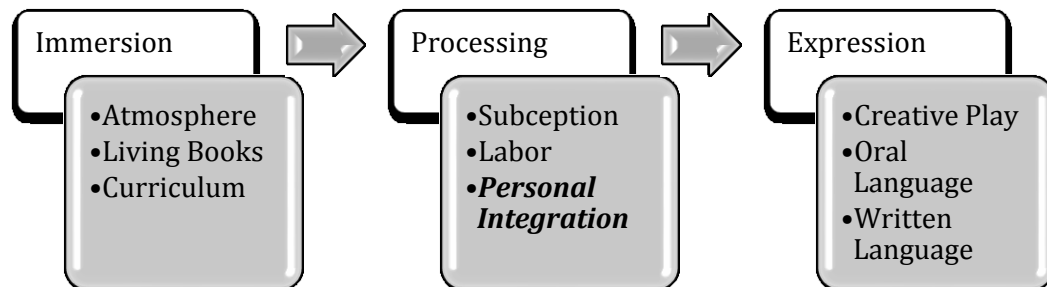


Figure 3. The Personal Integration Process.

This figure outlines the major categories that emerged from this study. Charlie was first *immersed* in the written word through many books and a home atmosphere that demonstrated the value of reading. Charlie processed what he read in two ways. The first was *subception* (Polanyi, 1958), in which he unconsciously absorbed the use of language. The second was through his own *labor*. *Personal integration* occurred with authors, books, and ideas that resonated with him as a person. These became an inseparable part of himself and emerged naturally in his *expression*, through his creative play and through both oral and written composition.

Immersion. The first category that emerged as significant in this study was one that was suspected from the beginning: *Immersion in the written word*. When asked at the beginning of the study what they thought contributed most to Charlie's writing development, both Elizabeth and Charlie stated that wide reading of great books was a significant factor. It is interesting to note that, while both Elizabeth and Charlie acknowledged that he has a natural proclivity for language, Charlie seemed to attribute that quality, at least partially, to "reading lots of books. I think that that's *why* words come naturally to me, and using words, because I read so many books and absorbed the use of the language through reading, and through reading authors who knew how to use language."

The idea that reading contributes to writing development is well-established. In her 1983 meta-analysis of research linking reading and writing, Stotsky found that studies consistently showed improvement in composition when students read more, even when they actually *wrote* less. Using good literary models as a springboard to writing was also found to be very effective. Reading was shown to be as effective or more effective on writing improvement than writing practice and/or grammar instruction (Stotsky, 1983). The idea of *absorbing* the use of language through reading is supported by Stephen Krashen (2004), who also analyzed existing research and came to the conclusion that, while reading is improved by reading, writing is not necessarily improved by writing practice and is rarely, if ever, affected by formal instruction in the rules of writing. Instead, writing is best improved by *reading*:

All the ways in which "formal" written language differs from informal conversational language are too complex to be learned one rule at a time. Even though readers can recognize good writing, researchers have not succeeded in

completely describing just what it is that makes a “good” writing style good. It is, therefore, sensible to suppose that writing style is not consciously learned but is largely absorbed, or subconsciously acquired, from reading. (Krashen, 2004, p. 133)

Charlie, never at a loss for an analogy, put it thusly:

[Someone who has not read widely] might have a functional command of the language, so you could get across your ideas if you were fairly intelligent and had had some practice, but it would lack the craft. It would lack fluidity. It would lack a deeper, skill-like, intimate knowledge of vocabulary and careful word choice, or a sense of how one sentence flows into another, or even one paragraph flows into another, a sense of the balance in sentence length. Those kinds of things I think you only learn from hearing them. It’s the natural idiom of the language....It’s like, I could write a [musical composition] for strings, but all the string players would be rolling their eyes because I’ve never played a stringed instrument. And yes, they might be able to play those notes, but it’s really awkward for them to play them the way I’ve written them down because I don’t know how to write idiomatically for strings. Someone who’s not read a lot of books doesn’t know how to write idiomatically in the language. (Charlie, personal communication, December 30, 2011)

In the present study, immersion in the written word was found to be a necessity for writing development; however, it was not found to be sufficient alone. The following sections explain the properties of immersion and the conditions under which immersion helped Charlie become a good writer, as outlined in Figure 4.

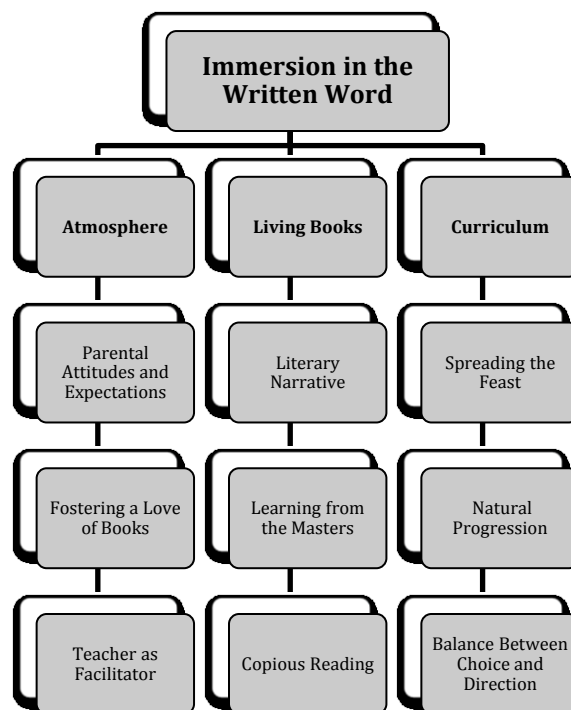


Figure 4. Immersion in the Written Word.

The properties of *Immersion*, as experienced by Charlie, were: *atmosphere*, *living books*, and *curriculum*. The conditions under which immersion resulted in writing development are listed underneath.

Atmosphere. One of the ways open to teachers in Mason’s model of the facilitation of student learning is *atmosphere*. The environment in which the child is educated can become part of the “hidden curriculum” (Posner, 2004, p. 13). As Mason (1925b) noted in her principles, providing atmosphere does not mean that the teacher should create a contrived “school” or “child’s” environment, but rather that the child should be free to live real life under natural conditions. Charlie learned at home by reading good books and talking them over with his mother. Reading and learning were not things that happened in a particular place during specific hours, but rather were like the air he breathed. There was an element of authenticity, as he read real books instead of

textbooks, wrote real letters to friends and family, and had real conversations about what he was learning rather than answering questions or taking tests on the material.

Underneath this concept, three properties emerged as important: *parental attitudes and expectations, fostering a love of books*, and the role of *teacher as facilitator*.

Parental attitudes and expectations. Research shows that a child's home environment has a significant effect on achievement. In a 1992 meta-analysis, Christenson, Rounds, and Gorney (1992) identified parental and home factors that can overcome socioeconomic status in affecting student achievement. Among them were parental attitudes and guidance, quality of verbal interaction, an environment rich in books and play materials, parental modeling of reading, and the affective environment of the home (Christenson et al., 1992). Charlie was reared to value reading. Not only did his mother read regularly, she also showed a genuine interest in what Charlie chose to read:

He would tell me what he was reading because I was interested. He was an interesting student because he was interested in everything. So I was always curious to know what he was reading, what he was thinking about it. He always had his own opinions about things. It was always interesting to ask him, you know, "What are you reading? What do you think about it?" Still is. (Elizabeth, personal communication, December 30, 2011)

Fostering a love of books. Charlie grew up in a home full of books. He had ready access to a vast collection of literature, poetry, histories, biographies, and nature lore. Elizabeth also fostered Charlie's love of books by allowing him to stay up as late as he wanted as long as he was reading. Every evening the family enjoyed stories together, which is a tradition that endured even into Charlie's adulthood. Charlie attributes his interest in writing to this love of books:

I think it really started with fan fiction and having stories that I loved and having something that I wanted to write about—having a passion for the stories and wanting to make more stories like that or to try to imitate those authors. But it started with the *love* of something that I’d already read....[If I hadn’t grown up loving books,] I might be more of a linguist and less of a writer. (Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

As a young child, Charlie had an especial love for Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little House* series and C. S. Lewis’s *Chronicles of Narnia* series. Elizabeth began reading these to Charlie when he was about five. A few years later, his family obtained a copy of a *Narnia* radio drama, and he and his brother listened to it almost every night for an entire year. The stories of Wilder and Lewis captivated Charlie’s imagination and became favorite stories for pretend play, which will be discussed at length in a later section. Stephen Krashen (2004) noted children’s tendencies to begin to enjoy reading after developing a love for a specific book or series. He calls books that children develop special bonds with “home run books” (Krashen, 2004, p. 82). While the *Little House* and *Narnia* series did put him on the road to wanting to write, his real home run came at the age of 12, when he discovered J. R. R. Tolkien. Charlie’s relationship with Lewis and Tolkien set him on the course of becoming a writer.

Teacher as facilitator and student responsibility. Mason’s model assumes that the teacher can only facilitate student learning by providing exposure and opportunity; ultimately, the student is responsible for educating himself. Therefore, while Elizabeth may have read all his books for him initially, Charlie began taking responsibility for his own learning fairly early. By the time he was around nine years old, Elizabeth was also homeschooling one of his younger brothers and taking care of a toddler. Since his

younger brother needed everything read aloud and Elizabeth thought he might be ready, Charlie began reading about half of his books by himself. During this time, Elizabeth kept a close watch to make sure he was handling it well.

It seems like in year four I started to let him try some of his own reading. And he surprised me [that] he was able to do it. I think even the Dickens books, *The Child's History of England*, I think he started reading that on his own, and I was surprised he could handle it. It seems like in year four he was reading about half of his books on his own, not because he couldn't handle the other half, but because I just didn't know if he could, so I was still reading them. Plus, I enjoyed reading it to him. I knew what he was reading. You know, it would be interesting to watch his reactions. (Elizabeth, personal communication, December 30, 2011)

Mason considered *books* to be the primary teachers of students, with the teacher working to put children in contact with the very best minds by choosing the very best books. Elizabeth noted that this was Charlie's experience:

You know, I remember when [Charlie] was applying to colleges, having a conversation and laughing and saying, you know, "They probably don't want to think that your only teacher has been your mom." And he said, "My mom *hasn't* been my teacher. My teachers have been C. S. Lewis, Madeleine L'Engle, Tolkien," And he was listing up all of the authors that he had been reading. He said, "*Those* have been my teachers." (Elizabeth, personal communication, December 30, 2011)

And Charlie seems to appreciate having been allowed to become intimate with those authors without having a teacher act as a mediator between him and the text.

C.S. Lewis was a *brilliant* man who studied history and literature, and thought

deeply about life and Christianity, and spent his entire *lifetime* writing, and became a very, very, very *masterful* writer who had a lot of *really* important things to say, and he'd say them really *well*. I want to know what *Lewis* said. I don't want someone to *tell* me what Lewis said, or to tell me what's important and what is not, or try to draw conclusions from several different things that Lewis has said, because that's something that I *can* do, but only if I know Lewis *myself*. And there is a *place* for a mediator. For instance, reading Spenser through the eyes of Lewis is a wonderful experience, because Lewis really, really understands Spenser. And it's not just that he can *interpret* Spenser; Lewis and Spenser almost think the same *way* on many things. So reading Lewis reading Spenser is almost like an extended version of reading Spenser. So there's definitely a place for *having* a mediator who understands, and has *thought* deeply about something, and expresses themselves well, when *they* have living thoughts, too, living ideas, but the original authors were *brilliant*, both what they thought and how they expressed it, and there's no need to create a *barrier* by placing something—or someone—in between them, as if the learner is incapable of gaining anything from it on their own. Kind of like [pause] if you had been an adopted child, and you didn't know anything about your biological parents, and you found out that they were still living and you could see them, and your new parents said, "No, no, just let me *tell* you about them. Your mother is like this and this and this, and your father is like this and this." Well, that's fine. Maybe they can tell you all about them. Maybe they're really good friends with your biological parents, and they could tell you things about them that even *they* don't know about themselves, like, "These things are really important to your father," or "Your mother always does

this and this and this.” And that’s great, but you don’t want to know *about* them, you want to *know* them. You want to *meet* them and have a *relationship* with them. And knowing *about* them doesn’t replace that. (Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

Elizabeth exposed Charlie to many ideas through the use of books, but she was also there as a scaffold, or a coach, when he needed her. For example, when Charlie was writing and he needed to know how to spell something, he would ask Elizabeth and she would tell him. She said that he did this frequently, as he did not want to make mistakes. While she also coached her other two sons on the use of capitalization and punctuation in their writing, she said that Charlie did not need that, because he rarely made mistakes. In examining his work samples, I did find that Charlie used capitalization inconsistently even through the age of 16, but his correspondence with me now shows that this has corrected itself.

Living books. Research suggests that students who read more are better writers (Krashen, 2004; Stotsky, 1983). I wondered about the degree to which it matters *what* a child reads. Krashen (2004) argued that free reading, where the child chooses and reads what he likes, is the most important factor, but Elizabeth asserted that the books children read need to be *good* books. This immediately begged the question, good by what standards? She then explained that Mason wanted children to read what she called *living* books. These are books that use a literary narrative style and are usually written by a single author who has thorough knowledge and great passion for the subject matter. Most textbooks do not fit this definition, as they condense an immense amount of information into a dry, factual format that has been filtered through a committee of writers. These books tend to distance the reader from the authors. Living books bring the reader and the

author into relationship with one another and with the subject matter. They contain much information, but the facts are clothed in the language of story. In a living book, knowledge is touched with the human imagination using rich, well-chosen language, which leads to a high level of engagement and delight on the part of the reader (Mason, 1925a; Mason, 1925b; Mason, 1925c).

Importance of the literary narrative. Charlie's school days were full of encounters with living books. Obviously there were many works of literary fiction, but there were also living books in content areas such as science and history.

Now when I think of history, I remember doing things like Dickens's *Child's History of England*. Or later on I started Churchill's *History of English-Speaking Peoples*. And my brothers, when they started, they were doing things like *Our Island Story*. All of that was very story-oriented, especially the early books. You would have a chapter that told a story about something. And then the next chapter would tell the next story. So, I feel like there wasn't as much of a distinction between the fiction and the nonfiction in that sense. Even the science—I remember reading *Madame How and Lady Why* or Fabre's books about the spider or *Parables of Nature*, that sort of thing—came more in story form at first.

(Charlie, personal communication, February 11, 2012)

With schools relying so heavily on non-narrative textbooks today, one might wonder at the absence of those books in this model. In his landmark essay about the structure of the narrative, Roland Barthes (1966) said that the narrative is one of the few characteristics that is common to all humans across all cultures. Abbott (2008) observed that the child's first use of narrative at around age three or four coincides with the first memories that adults can usually identify, essentially linking narrative to memory. He went on to

describe our seemingly instinctual tendency to look for a story in music and art; we tend to try to make sense of what we observe in our world through the use of narrative (Abbott, 2008). If narrative is the natural way that humans perceive and make sense of the world, it makes sense to use it in education. White (1980) echoed both Barthes (1966) and Kuhn (1962) when he observed the desire of the scientific community to remove the human element (narrative) from knowledge in an effort towards objectivity:

To raise the question of the nature of narrative is to invite reflection on the very nature of culture and, possibly, even on the nature of humanity itself. So natural is the impulse to narrate, so inevitable is the form of narrative for any report of the way things really happened, that narrativity could appear problematical only in a culture in which it was absent—absent or, as in some domains of contemporary Western intellectual and artistic culture, programmatically refused. (p. 5)

The literary narrative played an important role in Charlie's learning. The fact that he was learning from masters of both content and the English language carried him even further.

Learning from the masters. One idea that Elizabeth, Charlie, and I kept pondering throughout the study was *apprenticeship*. In the end we decided that the apprenticeship model did not exactly fit Charlie's experience as a developing writer, but there was no doubt that he had learned from master writers. Authors of living books have a command of vocabulary and style that captivates the imagination of the reader. Elizabeth suggested that if it is true that a river cannot rise above its source, it is important to make the source as high as possible.

Well, I think that the Charlotte Mason approach of *exposing* him to well-written books probably really nurtured his *development* of the language. I mean if we would have done A Beka [a home school curriculum based on workbooks and

basic skills], for instance, and he wasn't reading all of those books with the advanced vocabulary, how far would he really have gotten? And he would have done *well*. He would have answered all the comprehension questions, he would have aced it and done really well, and probably would have still gotten a scholarship or whatever in college, but I don't think that his language ability would have developed the way it has. (Elizabeth, personal communication, December 30, 2011)

Copious reading. The Ambleside Online curriculum, which will be discussed at length in the next section, includes what might seem an extraordinary amount of reading at every grade level (see Appendix D). Students of all ages generally study between 16 and 20 subjects and read many books concurrently. Some of those books are read in a single 12-week term, some extend through the whole school year, and a few span several school years. Children in year 1 read about 20 books over the course of the year, while students in year 12 read 28 books plus many short stories, essays, and three Shakespeare plays. Students are also expected to choose books to read in their free time. The content of the curriculum books spans from literature and poetry to narrative histories and sciences, philosophy, religion, biographies, and geography. I asked Charlie if reading so many books helped him build a vast amount of background knowledge on a wide variety of subjects that, then, helped him as a writer. He responded, "Maybe it adds subtly or unconsciously authentic perspective into how the different parts of the world fit together, but mainly, or consciously, what I can think of is that having a wide knowledge about a lot of things gives you a lot of sources of inspiration." In other words, copious reading gave Charlie something to say.

In addition to providing fodder for writing ideas, Charlie said that immersion in

masterful works of literature changed the way his brain perceived language and the world.

I think that not necessarily *wide* reading, but *copious* reading makes you more familiar with how writing works, how stories work, how essays work. And it keeps your brain in that mode, or makes it think that way.... “Too many books and it has turned her brain.” Just like watching a lot of films makes you start to see things in your head in terms of shots and angles, reading lots of books will make you think in your head in terms of sentences and descriptions and dialogue.

(Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

This comment seems to support Krashen’s (2004) and Stotsky’s (1983) conclusion that reading can be as good or better than writing practice for improvement in writing.

Curriculum. For years, scholars such as Alfie Kohn (2004) and Sir Ken Robinson (2001) have written about the importance of a wide and balanced curriculum. They have lamented the trend that raising the stakes of standardized testing leads to a narrowing of the curriculum to only those subjects that are tested. Under No Child Left Behind (2001), states were allowed to create their own standards and choose how to measure progress. Usually, this meant that students would be assessed in language and math, even though standards existed for all subject areas. Later, states began to also assess students in science. It looks as though Common Core may follow that same pattern.

While many may decry the overemphasis of standardized tests, few question *having* a set of standards at all. However, Elizabeth did not follow any set of standards, nor did she use behavioral objectives in her planning. She considered it her job to expose Charlie and her other children to a wide variety of knowledge contained in well-written

books, and then leave them to deal with that knowledge themselves. Mason (1925a) called this spreading the feast of ideas.

Spreading the feast. The word *feast* implies an abundant spread of rich and delightful food. The host prepares and offers the repast, but it is left to the diners to choose how much of each dish they will eat. They choose according to their appetites and preferences. Frequently using the food metaphor to describe her curriculum choices and methods, Mason (1925b) explained,

We spread an abundant and delicate feast in the programmes and each small guest assimilates what he can. The child of genius and imagination gets greatly more than his duller comrade but all sit down to the same feast and each one gets according to his needs and powers. (p. 183)

Charlie and his brothers sat down to the same curricular feast, but each took according to his ability, preferences, interests, and giftedness. According to Elizabeth, Charlie “took a whole lot from *everything*,” most likely due to his ability level and insatiable curiosity. One of Charlie’s brothers did not take very much literature, poetry, or writing, but he discovered in high school that he had a proclivity for economics. Elizabeth believes that the feast of advanced literature prepared him to understand college level economics books quite easily. While he developed a functional use of English, he did not become a *writer*. The youngest brother is still in high school. Elizabeth says that his natural language ability is comparable to Charlie’s, but his interest is much lower, so he has not progressed in writing to the point that Charlie had at that age. However, Elizabeth still thinks that immersion in great works of literature has benefited all of her children.

I *think* that if my other two had used some other method, I don’t think that they would have developed the way they did. [My middle son], for instance, read *The*

Count of Monte Christo. He read *Les Miserables*. He read books that, if we had done A Beka, he *never* would have read. He would have been doing the little reader kind of things. And yeah, he would have passed high school. But the richness of the books that he read, that never would have happened. And the same for [my youngest son]. [He's] reading books. I'm *making* him read them—he's not picking them up like *Charlie* did, because he wants to, but I'm making him read them. He understands them just fine. No problem. He's doing *The Count of Monte Christo* right now. He has absolutely no problem with it. (Elizabeth, personal communication, February 25, 2012)

Elizabeth believes that spreading the feast is imperative, because children's abilities and interests often emerge *after* exposure, and it is impossible to predict with any certainty toward which books or subjects each will gravitate: "And if you have a child who's naturally gifted in music, and you never expose [him] to classical music, you just killed [his] chances of ever getting to The Met, just by lack of exposure." However, exposure to a variety of *voices* is just as important as exposure to a variety of *ideas*. For that reason, Elizabeth decided to only use one or two books by a particular author in her curriculum. If Charlie really liked an author, he could (and often did) look to that author in his free reading; but Elizabeth did not choose *for* him by restricting exposure.

Ken Robinson (2001) said, "Creativity can be suppressed by the wrong medium" (p. 129). He explained that we are all most creative when we find the medium that fits us naturally, and then we work to master the technical elements of that medium while also feeling free to *play* with it. He lamented that, very often in school, students never have the opportunity to find their medium because of a lack of exposure.

Academic education, important though it is, gives priority to ideas that can be

best expressed in words and numbers. But some of our most important ideas can't be expressed in these ways and some of our creative abilities do not prosper in these modes at all. (Robinson, 2001, p. 122)

When I asked Charlie about the idea of spreading the feast, I asked him if he thought it was fine that his brothers have not progressed as far as he has in writing. His response echoes Robinson's (2001) words:

Of course it is. And one of the things I struggle with in thinking about writing, is *why* do we favor writing so much? Why is *writing* an integral part of the curriculum when music isn't? When film isn't? Because those are all mediums of communication, and they're just as important to society, to history. And there are some people who gravitate towards music. And Mozart knew how to write. He wrote letters to his father and his friends, but Mozart was not really a *writer*, and I don't think anybody would *criticize* him for that because his mode of expression was music. His *craft* was music. So a functional use of the language was fine for him, because he practiced art in another way. I'm trying to make sure I have the right name here. I think it was Stephen Spielberg who started making movies when he was in his teens. He's probably a good writer, having written some scripts through the years—a good storyteller—but he is not an accomplished poet. He's probably never written a dissertation or a long, serious analytical study of something, but that's *ok*, because his focus is on something else, and when he creates in *that* field, it's brilliant and wonderful. So we have privileged writing in the curriculum by saying that everybody needs to study writing, but they don't necessarily need to study music or film or any other modes of expression.

(Charlie, personal communication, February 11, 2012)

Charlie went on to say that the idea of spreading the feast is important because we will never master everything or form a deep relationship with every author. But spreading the feast enables students to *begin* to discover their medium and interests that they will *build upon* for the rest of their lives.

Natural progression. As discussed in a previous section, this model of education places the focus of responsibility for learning on the student, rather than placing the responsibility for teaching on the teacher. However, that does not mean that the teacher has nothing to do. Elizabeth scaffolded Charlie along his journey to become an independent learner. This scaffolding was the result of careful observation. She watched him, as well as his brothers, for signs of readiness and interest, and she increased her expectations accordingly. There was no specific formula for this; she just took what she perceived to be the next logical step. In this way, change occurred slowly and incrementally, in what both Charlie and Elizabeth described as a “natural progression.” When Charlie was younger, Elizabeth read all of his schoolbooks aloud to him and had him tell back, or narrate, the story orally. As he progressed in his abilities and interest, Elizabeth gradually transferred the responsibility of reading to Charlie (although a few books were reserved for family reading), and, later, he began to write his narrations. He hardly seemed to notice the transition.

I can’t remember any specific feelings, emotions, thoughts towards that. I can remember a time when my mom was doing most of the reading with me, and I can remember, I think I can remember doing Sonlight and reading some of the books myself. But even after I started reading my school books, after a while I got into the pattern where I would take my school books, and I would read a chapter from a school book and a chapter from this book and a chapter from this book on

my own, and that was my own reading, but we always had family reading in the morning, and we would read from the Bible, and we would read Plutarch and Shakespeare together, and my mom and I read books together—nonschool books—we still read books together in the evenings a lot. So again, it was never a sharp transition, as far as I can remember. (Charlie, personal communication, December 30, 2011)

Sometimes the indication that Charlie was ready to handle more of his own education came almost by accident. Elizabeth explained that the first time she ever asked Charlie to write a narration (at age eight), it was because she needed something to go in his home school record. She was not sure what to expect, since it was his first time, but she did not expect what she got—a one and a half page typed narration of the entire *Rescuers* book. From that point forward, Charlie wrote many of his narrations. I asked him how he felt about that.

I don't remember a lot about it. My memories of narration are more of doing written narrations than doing oral narrations. Although I also know that even after I was doing written narrations, my mom would sometimes have me give her oral narrations. So there was never a marked transition point when I was doing oral and now I'm doing written....I don't know if I remember narrating orally *prior* to narrating on my own writing. (Charlie, personal communication, December 30, 2011)

Charlie did not feel jarred by abrupt transitions. He was allowed to progress incrementally as he was able, because, as Elizabeth said, "It didn't make sense to hold him back." It is important to note, however, that Elizabeth did not then hold her younger children to Charlie's standard. Each child got according to what Elizabeth perceived as

need and readiness.

In 1974, Benjamin Bloom published an article suggesting that *time* was the most important variable in student achievement; that is, some students require about three times more time on task than their high-achieving peers in order to reach a similar level of competency. This sparked a frenzy of research on the idea of *mastery learning*. As shown in Guskey and Pigott's (1988) meta-analysis of 46 studies, the results of allowing children to move at their own paces, waiting until a skill was mastered before moving on to something else, demonstrate consistently positive results. Charlie and his brothers were certainly allowed to move at their own paces, and those paces varied widely. An important distinction between Elizabeth's practices and Bloom's (1974) model, however, is that there were never specific criteria imposed on the children from the outside. Each child progressed not only at his own individual pace, but to his own individual depth.

Balance between choice and direction. Daniel Pink's (2009) research on motivation revealed that people are most motivated when they have autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Mason (1925a) considered autonomy, including choice, to be an integral part of personhood. Therefore, as explained in the previous section, her model allowed children to take from the feast according to their needs, abilities, and interests. Krashen (2004) wrote at length about the importance of allowing children to choose their own books, citing extensive research that shows that free, voluntary reading lends as good or better results than direct instruction in reading comprehension, spelling, writing, and second languages. He stated that children should be allowed to find books that are understandable and enjoyable for them, such as comic books and light books, in order to hook them on reading enough to learn skills through immersion. However, he also said that children who read better books progress much further and faster than those who

continue to only read light books. Typically, access and exposure to better books is enough to make many children choose better books for their free reading (Krashen, 2004). Elizabeth's thoughts coincided with this to a degree. She noted that her other two sons had been exposed to the same curriculum books as Charlie, but their free reading choices, and hence their writing development, were much different. She stated that her middle son "read a lot in his spare time. It was not classic literature. It was more modern fantasy." Among his favorites were the Inkheart and Percy Jackson series. "And [my youngest son] has read the Harry Potter series over, and over, and over. That's pretty much all he'll read." Again, the idea of personhood emerges:

I think that someone who's a good writer is going to be naturally *drawn* to better books. I think they work hand-in-hand. I don't think that you're going to *make* a writer by making them read better books in their spare time. They're either born with a natural gravitation towards writing, or they're not....I think [the idea that children who are drawn to writing are drawn to *better* writing is] likely, but not necessarily guaranteed. Because I know there are kids who love writing who will read the *Twilight* series. And then, of course, when they're writing, they'll be writing like Stephanie Meyer. (Elizabeth, personal communication, February 25, 2012)

Regardless of what children read in their free time, free reading can help support assigned reading (Krashen, 2004). Elizabeth expressed observing this in Charlie:

Well, and I'm just realizing this as you're asking the question, it's the wide reading of books, but I think maybe it was more the books he was reading in his *free* time rather than the books he was reading for school. My other two students are reading the same books he was reading for school, but they're not taking off

with writing like he did. But they're also not really doing as much reading on their own. Once they're done with school, they're pretty much done with reading. So maybe it's the free reading that's making the difference. Or maybe it's the interest in language itself that makes him both write and then want to read in his free time.

(Elizabeth, personal communication, December 20, 2011)

She went on to explain that the fantasy and mythology books that Charlie loved to read in his free time actually helped support what he was reading in his school books, and vice versa, as he was able to make connections across disciplines. For example, the fantasy books by Tolkien and Lewis helped Charlie make sense of British history.

Elizabeth said that she encourages other home school moms to pay attention to each child's preferences. If a student absolutely hates a book in the curriculum, she advises parents to think about switching it out for something more enjoyable. Sometimes, however, there is benefit to seeing a difficult book to its completion. She explained that, when Charlie was about eight, they read *Secrets of the Andes* by Ann Nolan Clark, which Elizabeth described as an "esoteric book about this boy who goes up on a mountain, the Incas, and he talks to this old man, and he asks the old man questions, and the old wise man answers in these cryptic kind of things, and [Charlie] was so frustrated." She went on to say that they finished that one, thinking that there would be a point to it in the end, but they were both disappointed. Charlie also did not like Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, because he thought it dark. Elizabeth had him finish that one, but she allowed him to drop *The Complete Angler* by Izaak Walton, because "he got to a certain point where he could see where the book was going and it didn't really offer anything to him." In the end, it was clear that balance was key.

Well, as regards curriculum, I think *reading* really, really good books enables

students to pick really good books to read in their spare time. I also think that scheduling too much for school, you're going to burn them out. By the time they finish their school reading, they're not going to have any time. And if they do, the *last* thing they'll want to do is read. So I think there has to be a balance between how much they're assigned, and I think that *what* they're assigned needs to be *good*. (Elizabeth, personal communication, February 25, 2012)

Copywork was another area that afforded Charlie some choices. Copywork is a tool that Mason (1925a) used with children of all ages. It forces students to slow down and read carefully, paying attention to good models of spelling and grammar. It also was meant as an aid for students to develop relationships with books and authors, as they keep collections of their favorite poetry and book passages, carefully copying about two lines per day into their copybooks (Mason, 1925a). When Charlie was small, Elizabeth chose the passages that he was to copy. But as he got older and developed interests in specific books, he wanted to use those for his copywork. For example, he wanted to have a complete handwritten copy of Lewis's *The Magician's Nephew*, so he began copying that book a little at a time, and over the course of 2 years he had copied several chapters' worth. But Elizabeth wanted to ensure that Charlie maintained some balance, so they alternated. Every other day Charlie would write from that book, and on the rest of the days, Elizabeth would have him copy poetry, history, science, or literature. The choices she made had little to do with mistakes she had seen in his writing or with any sort of *mini-lesson* for grammar.

I was *never* that analytical about it. He wanted to write the Narnia books. He wanted to transcribe an entire book. I thought that he needed to *also* practice writing maybe some poetry and maybe some description. That's all it was. Or

maybe he should do something more factual. It was more of a style thing.

(Elizabeth, personal communication, February 25, 2012)

Charlie was immersed in the written word from infancy. He was raised in an atmosphere in which he saw reading as a valued activity. His mother carefully chose well-written books on many subjects and by many authors that used the literary narrative as a vehicle for knowledge. He was provided both choice and direction in his studies, but he was also allowed to take what he chose from the *feast of ideas* without any pressure from without. The next section explains what Charlie's mind *did* with those ideas.

Conditions. As noted earlier, the idea of personhood acts as a condition in many areas of this study, and immersion was found to be necessary, but not sufficient, for writing development. Each child brings with him his natural abilities, interests, and work ethic, and these are enough to prevent standardized writing development in children given the same conditions, evidenced by the fact that Charlie's brothers did not progress as far as he did in writing. These ideas are discussed further throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Processing and personal integration. The previous section described Elizabeth's part in Charlie's writing development: providing a curriculum that put him in contact with many different ideas, which were expressed by many different voices, all of whom were masters of both the content and the English language. Charlie was then allowed to take what he could (and would) from those books. His brothers had the same curriculum, but they each took different things, because they had different interests and abilities than Charlie. This section attempts to articulate how all of these ideas were digested and then integrated with Charlie's person so that they could emerge in his own expression.

In his 1958 classic, *Personal Knowledge*, Michael Polanyi built upon Gestalt

psychology to reveal the very personal nature of learning. The ideas expressed in this book, as well as in his subsequent works, have helped me articulate the results of this study, and will be referred to frequently in this section. To begin, Polanyi (1958) described two levels of perception: *subsidiary awareness* and *focal awareness*. When performing any task, whether dancing, writing, or riding a bicycle, there are some elements upon which we must focus our concentration. Other elements are also perceived, but they are held at the periphery. To illustrate this idea, Polanyi (1958) explained our attention when driving a nail:

When we use a hammer to drive in a nail, we attend to both the nail and the hammer, *but in a different way*. We *watch* the effect of our strokes on the nail and try to wield the hammer so as to hit the nail most effectively. When we bring down the hammer we do not feel that its handle has struck our palm but that its head has struck the nail. Yet in a sense we are certainly alert to the feelings in our palm and the fingers that hold the hammer. They guide us in handling it effectively, and the degree of attention that we give to the nail is given to the same extent but in a different way to these feelings. The difference may be stated by saying that the latter are not, like the nail, objects of our attention, but instruments of it. They are not watched in themselves; we watch something else while keeping intensely aware of them. I have a *subsidiary awareness* of the feeling in the palm of my hand which is merged into my *focal awareness* of my driving the nail. (p. 55)

He went on to explain the importance of keeping the focal and subsidiary in their proper places:

Subsidiary awareness and focal awareness are mutually exclusive. If a pianist

shifts his attention from the piece he is playing to the observation of what he is doing with his fingers while playing it, he gets confused and may have to stop.

This happens generally if we switch our focal attention to particulars of which we had previously been aware only in their subsidiary role. The kind of clumsiness which is due to the fact that focal attention is directed to the subsidiary elements of an action is commonly known as self-consciousness. (Polanyi, 1958, p. 56)

This idea is hugely important for understanding both this section and the next.

Charlie expressed that, when he was reading, his focal attention was on the storyline or the ideas contained in the book. However, in the periphery he was also attending to ideas about how language works, how stories are structured, how to build an argument, how to use words effectively, and how to spell things. Both Charlie and Elizabeth said that he seemed to “just absorb” those skills. Polanyi (1958) called this kind of learning, of which the learner is largely unaware, *tacit learning*, and the act of absorbing a particular skill without effort *subception*. Figure 5 illustrates the layers of learning. Subception is at the periphery, at the place of subsidiary awareness. Within that circle is a second layer, *labor*. While some ideas and skills are subcepted without much effort on the part of the learner, others do require focal attention and labor. Both types of learning occur simultaneously, and some skills are learned in both ways, as will be explained momentarily. Thirdly, there is *integration*, which is the assimilation of the knowledge, which has been learned through both subception and labor, to the degree that it becomes an inseparable part of the learner. Not all knowledge is integrated, however; each person integrates knowledge, whether consciously or unconsciously, according to his personality, background, interests, abilities, and beliefs (Polanyi, 1958).

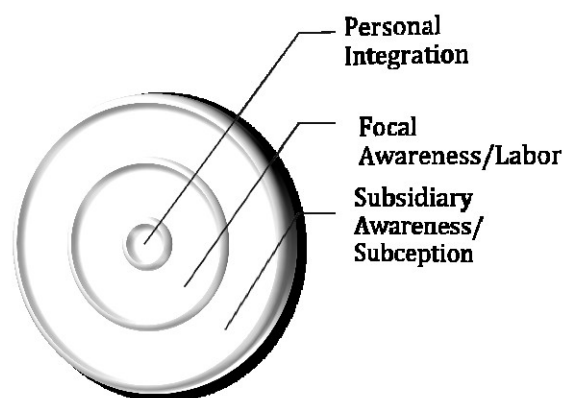


Figure 5. Polanyi's (1958) Model of Integration.

Polanyi (1958) wrote that subsidiary awareness is that which is kept at the periphery. Focal awareness involves the active attention and effort of the learner. Integration occurs when knowledge is assimilated into the personhood of the learner.

Tacit learning. In 2004, Stephen Krashen compiled a body of research on the value of free reading into a book entitled, *The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research*. The evidence contained in this book shows that free reading, that is allowing children to read books of their own choosing, is as effective or more effective than direct instruction in reading, writing, spelling, vocabulary, or grammar on development in those areas.

There is abundant evidence that literacy development can occur without formal instruction. Moreover, this evidence strongly suggests that reading is potent enough to do the entire job alone. The read and test studies reviewed earlier are among the most compelling cases of literacy development without instruction. Clearly, in these cases, acquisition of vocabulary and spelling occurred without skill-building or correction. Similarly, students in in-school free reading programs

who made gains equal to or greater than children in traditional programs have demonstrated acquisition of literacy without direct instruction. People with large vocabularies and good writing ability do not generally claim to have developed them through study. (Krashen, 2004, p. 20)

He explained that it is backward to think that children must develop discrete skills in reading and language before they can read or write. Instead, they should be immersed in language and learn to love books; they will then pick up vocabulary, spelling, and grammar incidentally, though perhaps not perfectly (Krashen, 2004). This is similar to Mason's model, in that she immersed children in ideas first and waited for skills to develop much later. Charlie explained that this was true of his experience.

You're reading, and certain words make an impression on you. And they enter your mind almost unconsciously. But then when you're having a conversation, suddenly they'll pop up again. And you realize, "Hey! I know that word! I can use that word right here!"...I think that I learned grammar experientially from reading, hearing words spoken and narrating.... Grammar is the way language behaves, and you learn the way language behaves by encountering the language and using it. When you learn the grammar, you're learning the principles and the rules that we've created to *explain* the way language behaves. But...it's just giving you a vocabulary for an analytical way to interpret an entity which already exists organically.... It's like studying anatomy. You know that the human body looks a certain way and moves a certain way and behaves in a certain way, but until you study the skeletal structure and the way the muscles are, you don't know why. (Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

Charlie did have formal instruction in grammar through the study of Latin in middle

school, but he said that this only made explicit what he already knew implicitly from such copious reading. Later, in eleventh grade, Elizabeth had Charlie work through a formal English grammar book in order to be sure he was ready for the SAT. She did not think it helped his writing at all, but Charlie disagreed.

...There are complicated cases where you need to know, “Hey, wait a minute. Do I put the pronoun here because it’s this, or do I put it here, and is it ‘who’ or is it ‘whom,’ and why? Because it’s relating to that verb?” or understanding, for instance, why it’s wrong to have a sentence that only uses a participle because it’s not actually a full verb. You know that it doesn’t sound right just to say it, but unless you understand the rules, it’s harder to pinpoint it and say, “Oh, *that’s* the offending word, right there. Let’s fix it,” and know how to fix it. (Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

In Charlie’s case, the formal study of language was never given a prominent role in the curriculum. Instead, Charlie was immersed in the masterful use of language, and then, as he approached adulthood, he was given the vocabulary to be able to wield language as a tool effectively. He feels that this approach allowed him to absorb, or subcept, the subtleties of the English language in a way that direct instruction would not have.

I think that [grammar study without immersion in literature] could help [students] to follow the rules, which is helpful to a degree, because if you don’t follow the rules then your writing can be unclear and look sloppy. But I don’t think it would help them develop a love for the language or the kind of subtle knowledge of the way that language behaves and the way it sounds that you need to be able to write well...It’s something that I’m realizing learning a foreign language. I studied some French, but I’ve just studied some vocabulary, conversational French, and

the grammar, so I have no idea how to say something, again, idiomatically, in French. And the only way I would really get a feel for that is if I were to read a lot of French literature and hear a lot of French speakers until I absorbed it more subtly, more tacitly. (Charlie, personal communication, February 11, 2012)

Knowing that Charlie received very little explicit instruction in language, and that it came at such a late age, it is remarkable to note that one of his professors at Oxford told him in a conference that he had a great “command of technique.” Since the word *technique* implies something that is learned, while Elizabeth attributed Charlie’s writing development to natural ability, I wrestled with this idea in one of my memos.

How does one tell the difference between natural ability and something that has been assimilated to the point of becoming an almost indistinguishable part of oneself? I think it is safe to say that people can have a natural affinity for language, but none of us are born with a “command of technique” in anything. That is learned. The question at hand is, *how* did [Charlie] learn it when no one sat down and taught it to him? Maybe [Elizabeth] thinks it is natural because it seems so effortless? Right off the bat, [Charlie] acknowledges his natural language ability, but he attributes that to wide reading. Again, if something develops as a result of something else, can you call it natural ability? At the same time, I’m not sure you could draw a direct cause-and-effect correlation here, because some kids who read a lot of quality literature, like [Elizabeth’s] other sons, do not turn out to be good writers. There is an internal process that happens in some kids and not others. I think it probably has to do with the affective domain and with the act of mental labor, since [Charlie] loved reading and writing and he had a drive to own it for himself. [Spencer, Memo 72]

This turned out to be a pivotal idea that ultimately led to the idea of structuring the results around Polanyi's (1958) idea of *integration*.

Conditions. Elizabeth noted that, while Charlie seemed to pick up spelling and grammar easily through his reading, her middle son did not. She said that even at age 12, his spelling was “embarrassing and humorous.” However, at around the age of 16 it began to improve because he was emailing and texting his friends. She laughed, “Suddenly, he was asking me to learn to spell.” There are two related implications here. First, this son had an authentic audience; second, this authentic audience made him want to learn to spell correctly. The third son is now 15, and, according to Elizabeth, he probably has the same ability as Charlie, but no interest in language. As will be seen in the next section, natural ability allows some students to progress further than others as long as there is also interest and will. In addition, immersion in the written word is absolutely necessary:

It seems reasonable to expect that only more mature students will be able to develop extensive conscious knowledge; it might be most efficient to delay this kind of direct teaching until high school. Given extensive free reading, however, and a genuine invitation to join the literacy club, readers will acquire nearly all of the conventions of writing. With enough reading, good grammar, good spelling, and good style will be part of them, absorbed or acquired effortlessly. (Krashen, 2004, pp. 131-132)

Labor. Krashen (2004) acknowledged that reading alone does not result in perfect spelling, punctuation, or grammar:

Why do well-read readers have gaps? What prevents the full acquisition of the written language? One explanation is that not all the print is attended to; that is

successful reading for meaning does not require the full use of everything that appears on the page. (pp. 129-130)

Mason (1925a) seemed to be of the same opinion when she wrote, “Illiterate spelling is usually a sign of sparse reading; but, sometimes, of hasty reading without the habit of seeing the words that are skimmed over” (p. 243). She stressed the importance of helping children form the habit of full attention very early through activities that require intense observation and precise description or duplication. Among these activities were nature study, picture study, copywork, dictation, and narration. To give complete attention to one thing is an act of *labor*. A student must be actively engaged in order to notice, process, understand, and retain knowledge. In this way, the knowledge is constructed by the learner. Therefore, while tacit learning is of vital importance, Polanyi (1958) stated that it is not the whole story:

We owe to Gestalt psychology much of the available evidence showing that perception is a comprehension of clues in terms of a whole. But perception usually operates automatically, and gestalt psychologists have tended to collect preferentially examples of the type in which perception goes on without any deliberate effort on the part of the perceiver and is not even corrigible by his subsequent reconsideration of the result...I believe this is a mistake. (pp. 97-98)

Charlie suspected that tacit and conscious learning happen in tandem, with conscious learning occupying the focal attention and tacit learning being kept at the periphery. One example was with copywork.

Copywork does take conscious effort, but it is not the same as spelling exercises or studying the rules of punctuation: with copywork the conscious effort is directed towards imitating your source, and the spelling and punctuation are

learned incidentally, almost without thinking about it—more tacitly. (Charlie, personal communication, March 9, 2012)

As mentioned earlier, Mason felt traditional methods place too much work on the shoulders of the teacher and too little on the student (Mason, 1925a). While Mason acknowledged that the teacher could not force children to educate themselves, there were a few simple methods that encouraged self-education. Among these methods are narration, copywork, and dictation.

Narration. Both Elizabeth and Charlie stressed the importance of narration, or telling back what has been heard or read, in Charlie's writing development. In fact, they both see narration as the primary tool for learning in Mason's method. Elizabeth explained,

I think the purpose [of narration] is to help you clarify your own thoughts, to solidify in your memory, to sort of create a mental picture in your own mind that you can recall later. Whereas if you don't narrate it, your eyes can gloss over it, and you may get just a vague idea of it, but then ten minutes later it's gone.

Narration is a way for [you] to make it something permanent in your mind.

(Elizabeth, personal communication, December 30, 2011)

It may seem an exaggeration to say that retelling can cause knowledge to become a *permanent* part of one's mind, but Charlie's experience with narration actually supports Elizabeth's statement.

I can really tell that things I remember from what I've studied, both in high school and in college, are the ones either that I have written about, like I was writing a paper on something so I really studied it on my own and was thinking out the ideas in my head and trying to put things together and synthesizing from different

sources and all that, *or* with things that I narrated and simply told back. (Charlie, personal communication, December 30, 2011)

At this point, it is impossible to know whether this is unique to Charlie, or students with similar learning styles, but he went on to describe how the act of narration actually changed the way he listened, read, and thought:

I think that after a while it becomes a habit, so you don't have to consciously remind yourself, "Oh, at the end I'm going to have to tell this back." It's just that's the way you listen. And I'm out of practice now. I haven't really been narrating in several years, and I'd like to get back into practice because I've lost that habit. I think you listen more actively when you know that you're going to have to narrate. With a story, it's a little different because if you're really paying attention in the story and you're engaged in the story, and your imagination is letting loose on that story, then you don't have to think about it. But by the end of it you remember it because it was so engaging. With nonfiction, with stuff that is more idea-based, when I know that I'm going to be narrating it at the end, it makes me engage in the ideas as I'm listening and try to work them out consciously as I'm listening instead of just hearing the words. It makes you more attentive. (Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

It is evident from this quote that *engagement* is critical. Charlie stated that, for him, it was always easier to attend to stories, because his imagination kept him engaged. When he read a text that he did not naturally engage with, narration became an aid for attention and processing. He also noted some metacognitive awareness that allowed him to self-correct his lagging attention as he got older:

I do remember sometimes, I feel like this happened with Plutarch. Sometimes

when I just wasn't paying attention or just really didn't understand, and then I wouldn't understand well enough to be able to tell back. I would have nothing. I'd be trying to remember: "There was this one guy and he did something, and then..." you know. That kind of thing. (Charlie, personal communication, February 11, 2012)

Narration also trained Charlie in the art of storytelling.

I think other benefits are that in narrating, you're forced to tell a story, even if it's not your original story, you're telling the story. So you have to think like a storyteller and think, like, "this part comes next" and "this part, well I can't give that bit of information yet because that would spoil this part." So it's training for storytelling. Or if it's nonfiction or more about ideas, then you're thinking, "OK. In order to get this idea across, I'm going to have to say this and then this and then this. Oh, and if I miss this, they're not going to understand the argument, so I'd better make sure I include this part." So it's training in argument or in thinking, because you're stepping in the footsteps of a greater thinker. (Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

Polanyi (1958) stated, "Nearly all knowledge by which man surpasses the animals is acquired by the use of language" (p. 95). Lev Vygotsky (1962) likewise said that language is more than a means of expression: It is our primary tool for processing so that we can *know*. Using language to articulate knowledge forces the learner to organize that knowledge and fully understand it. Krashen (2004) also recognized a dual purpose for language: "...We write to communicate with others. But perhaps more important, we write for ourselves, to clarify and stimulate our thinking. Most of our writing, even if we are published authors, is for ourselves" (p. 137).

As stated in the rationale for this study, there is a wide body of research supporting the use of retelling for reading comprehension. Morrow (1985) studied 59 kindergarten children who were randomly assigned to two groups. Both groups listened to stories, but one drew pictures to illustrate the stories while the other orally retold the stories. Afterwards, both groups of children answered comprehension questions. The findings showed that the children who orally retold the stories comprehended significantly more of the stories than those who drew pictures (Morrow, 1985). In 1989, Gambrell, Miller, King, and Thompson compared the effects of oral retelling with those of asking comprehension questions to fourth- and fifth-grade students. The group that orally narrated what they read comprehended significantly more than the group that was asked comprehension questions, as evidenced by performance on a posttest (Gambrell et al., 1989). Gambrell, Koskinen, and Kapinus (1991) conducted a quantitative study measuring improvement in comprehension and recall in both proficient and less proficient readers. The results showed that both groups benefitted significantly after just four retelling sessions. Brown and Cambourne (1987) suggested that the value of retelling may stem from the complex metacognitive process it requires. When reading attentively and retelling, the mind continually shifts between the whole text, individual words, and interpretation of phrases. The practice of continually moving between the global and the molecular makes for an agile mind (Brown & Cambourne, 1987). Oral narration was found to be an effective strategy for improving reading comprehension and recall even into high school and college (see Brown, Cooper, & Dunne, 1996; Tuncer & Altunay, 2006).

Interestingly, far fewer studies have been conducted on the value of *written* retelling or linking retelling with writing development. One study, conducted by Geist

and Boydston (2002), did evaluate written retelling as a strategy for writing improvement, as measured by the TOWL-2. The researchers assigned classes containing a total of 118 second-grade children in control and experimental groups. The control classes used the traditional approach to language instruction, while the experimental group participated in more of a whole language approach that was based on the writing process. Both groups employed written retelling for a total of 12 weeks. At the end of the study, the children's writing was assessed for improvement. The results showed that the children in the experimental group benefitted more from the intervention than the children in the control group, suggesting that written retelling could not be viewed as an add-on to the traditional approach. Rather, it must be an integrated part of a holistic classroom (Geist & Boydston, 2002).

Copywork and dictation. Other methods Mason used for helping children engage with their books included copywork and dictation. Charlie started copywork at the age of six.

I started doing copywork books that would have the shapes of the letters, and you would copy the shape of the letter. And you'd practice doing o's for one day, and next day you'd practice doing a's. That kind of thing. I don't know. There's something satisfying in being able to do the letter just like it's written and getting it right. (Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

When he had a firm grasp of penmanship, his mother began to assign him short passages to copy from the books he was reading. At first she set him about two lines of text per day, alternating between poetry, scripture, history, and literature. When he was a little older, he began to show an interest in choosing his own copywork.

I remember wanting to write down certain things that I liked, and *Magician's*

Nephew was part of those. I don't remember asking my mom. I just started writing it. But I remember for a long time I was writing passages from *Magician's Nephew* for my copywork. And wrote down several chapters' worth over the course of several years. (Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

Elizabeth said that, at that point, Charlie began to elect to write much more than two lines per day: "He would just go off and write until he wanted to stop and then come back with half a page or a full page. He *liked* writing." Mason (1925a) said that older children enjoy keeping collections of their favorite passages, and Charlie seems to agree:

I can remember when I was maybe 10 years old or so, creating an encyclopedia on Arthurian characters. And I think part of that was because I had read several different versions of the King Arthur story, and it didn't always say explicitly when it introduced a character, "Oh, this is this person, who was the cousin of this person, who did this and this." And the next one introduces, "Well, this person is actually the nephew of this person, but you don't learn about them until later on." So it was fun to, or it almost seemed necessary in a way, to find out all of that information about the characters and combine it and find out everything I could about each one for the encyclopedia...[But] I don't think it was to help me process. Do you remember what Tolkien said about hobbits?...Hobbits love to hear things that they already know said over again. They love family trees, and they know everyone's family trees, but they still love talking about the family trees. Or when Bilbo gives his speech, he says several very straightforward things about enjoying his party, and this was the sort of stuff that they loved because it was clear and they understood it, and it was something that they already knew. And I think Tolkien was getting to something, that we like hearing things that we

already know—that we like playing with knowledge that we already know....I feel like it's the same sort of thing as someone in the Middle Ages writing a bestiary. Why do you do it? It's not because you need to understand what all these different beasts are yourself, because they would have had different sources for that. They would have known about them from stories. And I feel like everyone probably already knew about beasts anyway. The stories floated around. But there was something really satisfying in taking that information and collecting it.

(Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

The theme of *satisfaction* appeared frequently when talking about copywork. Meeting Charlie's affective needs certainly helped him engage with his books, but there were also more cognitive benefits to copywork.

[Copywork] really makes you pay attention to spelling and punctuation. I think that I learned most of the basic rules of punctuation and a lot of my spelling from copywork... You have a feel for the written word when you've actually copied down the letters of each word or the whole sentence in your own hand and followed the punctuation and the word usage of whatever it is you're copying, that you don't get when you just read it. I would compare it to the difference between listening to a piece of music and actually learning to play that piece of music yourself. You can listen to the music as much as you want, but until you've actually tried to play it, and learned to play it, you won't have as deep an understanding. And there are some things you learn about a piece of music only as you're playing it. And I think in the same way, there are some things you realize about language, about sentence structure, only as you're copying it down.

(Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

From this quote, it sounds almost as though the act of copying brings some things that are normally observed at the periphery into the realm of focal awareness. In other words, as with grammar, perhaps copywork made explicit what was already known implicitly.

Mason's model also includes *dictation*. Dictation is similar to copywork, except that the model is removed from sight before it is written down. The student studies a sentence or short passage while having a conversation with the teacher about what kinds of things need to be given particular attention, like spelling of difficult words or unfamiliar ways of using punctuation. Then, when the child feels ready, the teacher calls out the passage slowly and watches as the child writes it down, ready to cover or erase any mistakes if they begin to emerge. In other words, mistakes are *prevented* as much as possible, rather than corrected later. There is some research that supports this idea. The traditional way of teaching spelling is through spelling lists. However, research has shown that reading is the very keystone for learning new words, what they mean, and how to spell them. And as the quality of reading increases, so does the quality of spelling and writing (Smith, 1998). Other researchers have shown that good spelling relies mainly upon one's ability to see words in the mind. Shah and Thomas (2002) suggested that attentively seeing words in print causes a mental orthographic image (MOI) to be imprinted on the brain. This is why good spellers can tell whether a word looks right or not. They recommend helping children develop a "spelling consciousness" (Shah & Thomas, 2002, p. 28) by observing words attentively in order to imprint those images in the memory. For the same reason, the researchers caution against presenting wrong spellings to students for them to correct. Each image, right or wrong, is imprinted, causing future confusion over which is the correct spelling (Shah & Thomas, 2002).

Elizabeth did not remember doing much dictation with Charlie. One reason was

because, when he was younger, she was just learning about Mason's methods, and so she was not really sure what to do. When he got older, and she became more familiar with Mason's model, she felt that he already knew the things that dictation was supposed to teach. However, she did use dictation with her other two sons, and had this to say about its value:

Dictation definitely helped with their spelling, and it helped them learn to pay attention to things that copywork didn't. Copywork is supposed to teach you spelling, for instance. You look at a word, you see it properly spelled, you look down, you reproduce the word properly spelled. So it's supposed to teach you that. It's supposed to teach you things like punctuation. But I think maybe with some kids, maybe they're lazy. They look down and they trace, maybe, letter to letter. Or they just do it to get it over with and it doesn't really stick. Dictation forces them to really look at it, to sort of memorize it, and then try to reproduce it. So I think maybe dictation does what copywork is supposed to do, but it forces a child who is a little lazier to do what is supposed to be done in copywork. That's off the top of my head. (Elizabeth, personal communication, February 25, 2012)

Charlie did remember doing some dictation, but he noted that it stopped fairly early because he was already spelling well and using correct capitalization and punctuation. In looking back at his work samples, it is clear that he did spell very well, but his use of correct capitalization was inconsistent well into high school. He also went through a period at around the age of 13 in which his writing was peppered with semicolons. I noted that this problem seemed to correct itself within a year or so, but then Charlie mentioned that one of the questions he asked his freshman composition professor was how to use a semicolon. Even if Charlie did not need the extra support for spelling and

grammar, he did observe some metacognitive benefit.

...I think [dictation] may have made me pay attention more, again, to punctuation and spelling. Maybe just to the extent that it made me realize that there was a right way to do things and a wrong way to do things....[That was] something I didn't notice as much prior to that. And it's easy to read something without paying attention to whether they put this clause between commas or not. But if you're dictating it, then you have to get a comma in the right place. (Charlie, personal communication, December 30, 2011)

Coaching as needed. Charlie learned much in the way of grammar and spelling through subception during his reading. Copywork and dictation then brought focused attention to these skills. While Charlie did not receive direct instruction in how to compose, he did read books on the subject, such as *The Roar on the Other Side* by Clark and Rhodes, and *Less Than Words Can Say* by Richard Mitchell. Again, this allowed him to learn from master writers and teachers of writing.

Elizabeth remembers calling Charlie's attention to a few things whenever she noticed mistakes in his narrations, which was not often:

I don't remember that there were very many [mistakes]. I think that in his narrations I overlooked them because it didn't seem to be a problem. I might catch one thing. I was happy to see him writing. He was doing copywork, I knew that he would ask me when he wanted to know how to spell something, so I knew that he *wanted* to spell things correctly, so when I would run across something, I would just let it go. I knew he'd pick it up later. (Elizabeth, personal communication, December 30, 2011)

When Charlie wrote, he frequently asked his mother how to spell things because he did

not want to make a mistake. Elizabeth said she always told him how to spell the word rather than have him look it up in the dictionary or spell it phonetically. She remembered needing to coach her other two sons a little more than Charlie, reminding them of things like the need to put periods at the ends of sentences. Even this direction was very gentle. Elizabeth trusted that the children would correct their own mistakes over time, even if that correction came in early adulthood, as was the case with her middle son. The final bit of coaching from Elizabeth came when Charlie was in tenth grade, just before he took the SAT. As with grammar, Elizabeth wanted to be sure that he knew everything that he needed to know for the test, so they looked at the practice tests online and looked up things Charlie was not familiar with. These were mostly specific formats, such as the Five-Point Essay. It was not to be, however, the last coaching experience Charlie would have.

Self-directed study. Earlier, I discussed the idea of Spreading the Feast and allowing each child to take according to personal need, ability, and interest. Charlie and his brothers read the same books, narrated, did copywork and dictation, and received infrequent and gentle coaching on their writing, but it is here that their experiences diverge. Charlie's brothers had other interests, so they were fine with developing a functional use of English. But Charlie loved writing. He was good at writing. And so he chose to write and actively sought opportunities that would help him grow as a writer. Elizabeth did not assign creative writing tasks for her children, but Charlie continued to write stories and poetry. When he was 12, he wrote a crossover fan fiction that included the characters from Narnia and Star Wars and a friend submitted it in an online Star Wars forum.

...People commented on it. And it's interesting thinking about my reaction to that

then, because it's maybe like an awareness, like "Oh. I can *write*. I can write stories and other people can *read* them."...And I would read their comments, and a couple would comment, "Oh, is this going to happen next?" or "Oh, I can see the plot starting to develop." And it made me think about what I was doing a little more consciously. I realized that "Yeah, plot. I guess that's important." (Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

Charlie never submitted anything else to online forums, but he did find a group of peers with whom to share writing. The group was called "The Second Inklings," after the writing group to which Lewis and Tolkien belonged. Originally, it was intended to be a group for all the students of the very large Ambleside Online support group, but it quickly evolved into a group for children who shared a love of writing. Charlie joined the group when he was about 13 and participated until late in high school, when many of the members got older and busier, or, to use Charlie's word, "distracted."

It was not until high school that he began to think of himself as a "writer." Before this point, he simply thought that writing was something people just *did*. He elected to take a creative writing class at his home school co-op at age 14, in which the students were given reading and writing assignments and were allowed to share their writing with the class. The teacher did not give specific feedback to help the students grow as writers, but Charlie did enjoy interacting with other students during group projects.

When Charlie was 15, he and Elizabeth created a blog together. Since Elizabeth is a prominent figure in the world of Charlotte Mason homeschooling, this blog was widely read. People began to compliment Charlie on his writing ability. It was then that his perception about himself changed: He moved from thinking of himself as *a person who writes* to thinking of himself as *a writer*. This is consistent with the findings of Benjamin

Bloom (1985). Bloom and his team of researchers spent 5 years interviewing people who had achieved the highest level of success in the fields of music, sculpture, swimming, tennis, and mathematics. There were several things that they all had in common, including natural ability, a strong work ethic, supportive parents, and good coaching. But there was also one experience that most of them shared: In their early teen years, people began to compliment them on their performance, and this changed their perceptions of themselves. They went from seeing themselves as “someone who plays the piano” to “a pianist,” from “someone who is good at math” to “a mathematician.” This was found to be a profound change that largely charted their courses from that point forward (Bloom, 1985). That is not to indicate that one can complement a child and *make* him a writer; the child has to already have that inside and be willing to work hard. Perhaps this is another example of making explicit what the child already knows implicitly.

The first time Charlie received significant feedback from someone on his writing was when he went away to college. He described the experience as something that took some getting used to. Although he respected his professor’s opinion and learned from her coaching, he had definite thoughts of his own.

It was a big change for me—writing a long piece of work, like a paper, and then having them come back and say, “Well, what about this? What about this?” or “Good job with that sentence there. But do these words actually fit in this sentence?”...And I found that helpful, but it also in a large part confirmed what I already knew or the process that I already went through. I can remember occasions when I would write things in a specific way because that’s the way I wanted to write it. I chose that word on purpose, and my professor would see it and comment on it, and say, “Are you sure you want to use this word here?” And

then we would actually sit down and have a discussion about it. “Yes, I really *do* want to use this word, because I’m looking for this specific sense.” And then she would say, “Well, it also has these connotations. Did you know that it had these connotations?” And so I would think, “Well, maybe that’s *not* the right word.” Or sometimes maybe it *was* the right word. Or it was the same kind of thing with where to put a semicolon, or how to use a semicolon. I learned sort of *technical* things from her, because I actually asked her about that. “I’m using a semicolon in this way in this spot. Is that actually how you use it?” And she explained exactly how you use a semicolon, which had been a mysterious and esoteric art until then [laughing]. But a lot of the decisions that I made were already conscious, and I had a reason for making them. So I would argue with her about some of my papers. “No, I *want* to do it this way. I know that maybe that’s not the cookie-cutter or the accepted method of writing, but that’s how that sentence needs to look.” And sometimes she was right. [Laughing] And sometimes I *won*, but I don’t know if I was *right*. (Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

Again, Charlie expressed that this kind of dialogue served to make explicit things he already knew implicitly: “You’re going from learning almost unconsciously by experience to a more analytical, conscious approach.”

Polanyi (1958) suggested that the personal nature of knowledge stems from the fact that, as persons, we experience disequilibrium from different things, according to our appetites, our interests, and our backgrounds. Those who have a strong drive to achieve equilibrium will struggle with those ideas about which they are passionate in order to satisfy an innate desire to know the truth or to understand the nature or reality. But, in essence, they are only working to answer questions that they have put to themselves. This

is what I think Mason meant when she said, “There is no education but self-education” (Mason, 1925b, p. 289): There is an act of will inside the learner that must take place before true learning—the kind that changes us—can occur. While a teacher can provide an atmosphere in which this kind of active engagement is encouraged, ultimately, it is the child’s *labor* that results in learning.

...Even someone who is being taught—has a teacher, is being instructed, is being given information—the *teacher* isn’t *teaching* them, the *child* is the one doing the *learning*. And the teacher can *facilitate* that, by helping them find the information that they might not otherwise have had access to, but the process that goes on in the learner’s mind has to be the same, whether they’re self-motivated and they go and observe a great painting and see how the master made the brush strokes and study the composition, or whether they have someone instructing them and pointing out those things. But in order for them to really learn it, and in order for it to become a part of how they think, and for them to be able to use the things that they’ve learned, their knowledge or their understanding of that painting, and the composition and the brush work, whether it was learned just by their own observation or with some help from someone else who knows a little more about the art of painting, it has to be learned in the same way. (Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

Charlie was passionate about writing, and so he looked for opportunities that would help him consciously grow as a writer. He thought that this was normal for all children who read widely.

I think it’s a natural progression from *reading* stories and *loving* stories and *writing* stories and *pretending* stories, and then wanting to take those stories that

you've pretended or the ones that you've imagined in your head and writing them into a story like the ones you've read. (Charlie, personal communication,

February 11, 2012)

Elizabeth disagreed, saying that she had not seen that in her other two sons. In addition to seeking writing practice and coaching, Charlie continued to be immersed in the work of a variety of master writers, and thus he continued to absorb some elements of writing tacitly.

Earlier, I mentioned that the idea of *apprenticeship* kept emerging in our conversations, but that ultimately it was rejected as an accurate name for this process. Some similarities are striking. Nissani (1996) wrote about using the apprenticeship model for teaching writing. He said that in his own college level writing classes, he immerses the students in master works, allows the students to watch him write, gives them time to practice writing, and gives specific feedback or explicit coaching on an as-needed basis. It is assumed that students will progress at different rates due to “motivation, perceived relevance, feelings, attitudes towards the learning environment, social context, self-confidence, prior learning experiences, aptitudes, and learning styles” (Nissani, 1996, p. 290). While both Elizabeth and Charlie could see similarities to Mason’s model, Elizabeth said that it breaks down at the physical level, since children who learn this way really do not have a person that they are observing as the work is being done. They are immersed in master works, but the master is not physically present. Charlie lamented this point, saying that he felt he could have benefitted from having a writing mentor when he was younger. However, he also feels that he benefitted in other ways from Mason’s model.

Mason’s method has its own strengths in that respect, particularly the use of great

literature, which allowed me to learn history one-on-one with Churchill or study medieval literature with Lewis and Tolkien. They might not have been standing beside me physically, but the teaching that they provided—unmediated by another (and probably lesser) teacher—was irreplaceable. [Charlie, personal communication, February 1, 2012)

In the end, we decided that Charlie *did* have mentors in both writing and in life; they were just *indirect* mentors *of his own choosing*—C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien.

Self-directed study of particular masters. Charlie talks about Lewis and Tolkien in a strikingly personal way. He formed relationships with these two authors at a much deeper level than other authors he read. He described *meeting* books as similar to meeting people.

I think that the relationship is the most important part. There are certain books that I gravitated towards and I loved. And mostly they were fantasy. And I think that's just because of my character, my personality—something that's nature. And that's still the case—that most of those books that I loved then, I love now, and I love those kinds of stories in literature. I think one of the reasons that attention is important and narration is important is that, even if it's not a book that you love naturally, it makes you *respect* it enough. It helps to establish a *respectful* relationship, so that you'll at least *consider* it before throwing it aside. It's kind of like meeting people. You're not going to be best friends with everyone you meet, because you don't get along well enough. There are too many differences in personality, even if there aren't fundamental differences in beliefs, for you to become best friends. But with enough maturity, you'll be able to work with them and learn from them...I think [my interest in writing] really started with fan fiction

and having stories that I *loved* and having something that I *wanted* to write about—having a passion for the stories and wanting to make more stories like that or to try to imitate those authors. But it started with the love of something that I’d already read.... [If I had not had that,] I might be more of a linguist and less of a writer. (Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

Elizabeth again stressed the importance of *spreading the feast*, because it is impossible to predict which books a student will gravitate towards—which authors will become the masters under which a student will submit himself to study. Out of the hundreds of authors that Charlie read, Lewis and Tolkien (and perhaps Churchill) are the ones that changed him most profoundly, and he feels that he knows them very well on a personal level through their writing.

Narnia was the first book that I read of his that I fell in love with. And the way [Lewis] writes them, you feel like he’s telling you a story. And sometimes he’ll interject things or make comments about “kids today.” And he has this really friendly voice, so you get to know him a little bit. You get to know, “OK, he likes these kinds of things. He doesn’t like horrible, uncomfortable things. And he thinks that good clothes should be ones that fit you really well and are comfortable, as well as looking nice.” Or things like truths, and how much he loves mushrooms and eggs and onions right after breakfast. And “it makes it better if dwarves are cooking it, but dwarves are hard to come by.” [laughing] But I think part of falling in love with *Narnia* was becoming friends with Lewis, as I knew him from the stories that he told. And then, I don’t remember exactly the order, but I read *Mere Christianity* and it was the first time that I had ever really thought about my faith. And it was also the first time that I had done any serious,

analytical thinking. So reading that book opened up a whole lot of doors for me and made me realize, “Oh, you can *think* about things.” And I must have reread it several times, and again, he has a very conversational style. It’s easy to get to know him and a feel for what he’s like and what kinds of things he likes and doesn’t like. He’s very matter-of-fact. And from there I read most of his other works: *The Screwtape Letters*, the Space trilogy, *The Great Divorce*, *Till We Have Faces*, *The Problem of Pain*, lots of his essays, *The Discarded Image*, which is one of his nonfiction, academic works about the medieval view of the cosmos, and the more you read, the more I read of him, the more I got a feel for what he was like. And it’s like hanging out with a friend and having conversations with him. Or maybe more like having a friend at a long distance and writing letters back and forth. After a while, you start to know about what they think about things, or what things make them excited, or some of their experiences in childhood that formed who they are, or what they think about the really important things like matters of faith or love. And when you’re in a relationship like that with a person who has as great a mind and great a heart and imagination as Lewis did, it’s hard not to be influenced by him. And it’s hard not to *love* him. (Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

It is interesting to note here that only a few of the books Charlie mentioned were part of his curriculum. When he found an author with whom he connected, he *chose* to immerse himself in that author’s work and *allowed* that author’s ideas to change him. He had a similar experience with Tolkien:

Well the first thing that I read was *The Hobbit*, which is one of the best children’s books ever written. And then *Lord of the Rings* was a HUGE obsession for

several years. And *Lord of the Rings*, and *Silmarillion*, and *The Unfinished Tales*, and several books from the histories of Middle Earth, which were stories that Christian Tolkien collected after his father passed away and published. I read several of Tolkien's other stories, short stories: *Smith of Wootton Major* and *Farmer Giles of Ham*, I read some of his essays, like his essay "A Secret Vice," which was all about his passion for inventing languages, or "The Monster and the Critics" which was all about Beowulf and how *not* to interpret it, or his translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which is a pretty faithful translation, but it's also a very *Tolkien* translation. He uses a lot of his favorite words and has the same love of alliteration and old English that informs a lot of his fantasy. And again, after spending a lot of time in his world, I started to get to know *him*. And I probably don't know him as well as I know Lewis, even though in some ways Tolkien and I might have more in common as far as our personalities and our interests, but he loved beautiful things. He loves old things. He has this sense, and I don't know if this is just a Western European sense or if it's something that's common to humanity, but this sense of beauty that's ancient and piercing, pure like starlight or Elven singing or the cold wind blowing out of the North. And you keep getting gusts of that wind blowing in all through his writing. It was something that he loved, and he was looking and searching for it, trying to get a hold of it, and I don't know if it was reading him that *created* that taste in me, or if it was something that I had innately and Tolkien just *fed* it. But that spoke to me deeply. (Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

The concept of students choosing to allow an author or an idea to *change* them is very different from the concept of filling the empty vessel with facts, information, or skills. It

will henceforth be referred to as *personal integration*. Charlie believes that the formation of relationships with particular books or authors is natural: “It just *happens*, provided enough *reading* happens.”

Personal integration. My interviews with Charlie led me to think about knowledge in terms of degrees. Charlie frequently used phrases like “it becomes part of your ideas,” “it becomes a permanent part of your mind,” “it changes the way you listen,” and “it changes the way you think.” He was immersed in many ideas, which were presented in rich, masterful language. Some of the things he read made very shallow impressions on him and were fairly quickly discarded. Of the things that he retained long-term, there are some that he *knows* and some that he *is*—some things he *acquired*, and some things he *became*. For example, Charlie is *knowledgeable* about Marxism, but he did not become a Marxist. Other things, like fantasy stories, British history, music, philosophy, and writing, he engaged with at a more personal level, and thus he allowed those ideas to work a *change* within him. Those things became a part of who he *is*. The former group comprises the things Charlie *learned about*; the latter group comprises the things he *integrated*.

Polanyi (1958) described the phenomenon of integration in the handling of tools: While we rely on a tool or a probe, these are not handled as external objects. We may test the tool for its effectiveness or the probe for its suitability, e.g. in discovering the hidden details of a cavity, but the tool and the probe can never lie in the field of these operations; they remain necessarily on our side of it, forming part of ourselves, the operating persons. We pour ourselves out into them and assimilate them as parts of our own existence. We accept them existentially by dwelling in them. (p. 59)

Charlie considers things like vocabulary, the rules of grammar, and stylistic devices to be *tools* in the craft of writing—tools that he learned to wield through immersion, observation, subception, self-directed labor, and, to a lesser extent, instruction. They are such a part of himself that he rarely thinks consciously about them when he writes. If the integration of these *skills* allows him to compose his thoughts coherently, the integration of *ideas* that resonate with him gives him something worthwhile to *say*. And each time a new idea is integrated, his personhood alters a little. As explained by Polanyi (1958),

This is the sense in which I called denotation in art. To learn a language or to modify its meaning is a tacit, irreversible, heuristic feat; it is a transformation of our intellectual life, originating in our own desire for greater clarity and coherence, and yet sustained by the hope of coming by it into closer touch with reality. Indeed, any modification of an anticipatory framework, whether conceptual, perceptual, or appetitive, is an irreversible heuristic act, which transforms our ways of thinking, seeing, and appreciating in the hope of attuning our understanding, perception or sensuality more closely to what is true and right. (p. 106)

Expression. The things in which Charlie chose to immerse himself ultimately leaked into his writing. He described this as a *natural progression* that went from *loving* a book, to *living with* it, to *playing with* it, to the desire to *create* something like it. This is one reason that Elizabeth insisted that children should be exposed to only the best writing, because a river cannot rise higher than its source. She feels that if students are immersed in bad or trite writing, then even the ones with natural ability will write bad or trite pieces. The style of what one reads heavily influences one's writing.

I think that's one of the [things] that you have to become aware of as a writer, is

that what you read really influences you...As soon as I started reading Tolkien, my creative writing style changed drastically. And for about three or four years after reading Tolkien, most of what I wrote was in a very Tolkien-esque style. And I still like that style, although I can write in other styles now....So even now, if I've been reading a lot of Dickens, my writing is going to sound like Dickens. I remember with poetry writing, not all the time but a lot of times, what I was writing would flow out of the poetry that I was reading. Reading of poetry would spark my mind to want to write poetry. And I think that when that happened, it would be more in the style of what I had been reading. Like I had been reading Lucy Shaw, and I started writing in free verse, or reading Edna St. Vincent Millet and start writing ballads. (Charlie, personal communication, December 30, 2011)

Elizabeth expressed a similar sentiment:

I mean, you may even see it on email lists, where if somebody's reading a lot of, say, Sir Walter Scott, they'll start picking up phrases of his. Or if they start reading a whole lot of Charlotte Mason, you'll see it start coming out in their own expressions. They just start naturally using the things that they hear. We do it on the street. We hear a lot of people saying, you know, "Oh, that's cool." And the next thing you know, we're using that in our speech. So whatever's going into our minds is going to come out. So if we're reading the best things, *that's* going to be coming out. If we're watching a lot of TV, *that's* what will be coming out...It's just a natural way that we, I guess, exude our influences? They come out.

(Elizabeth, personal communication, February 25, 2012)

There could also be somewhat of a disadvantage to immersion in the classics today: The writing professor at Oxford, who told Charlie he had a "command of technique," also

said that he had a very “old-fashioned style, almost Victorian.” Charlie attributed this to the fact that he read and narrated so many of those sorts of books throughout his school years, but I suspect that it is also because he *enjoys* that style. If that is true, and if Charlie had the desire, then immersion in more contemporary literature would solve that problem.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to describing the three modes of expression that Charlie noted, as illustrated in Figure 6 below: creative play, oral expression, and written expression.

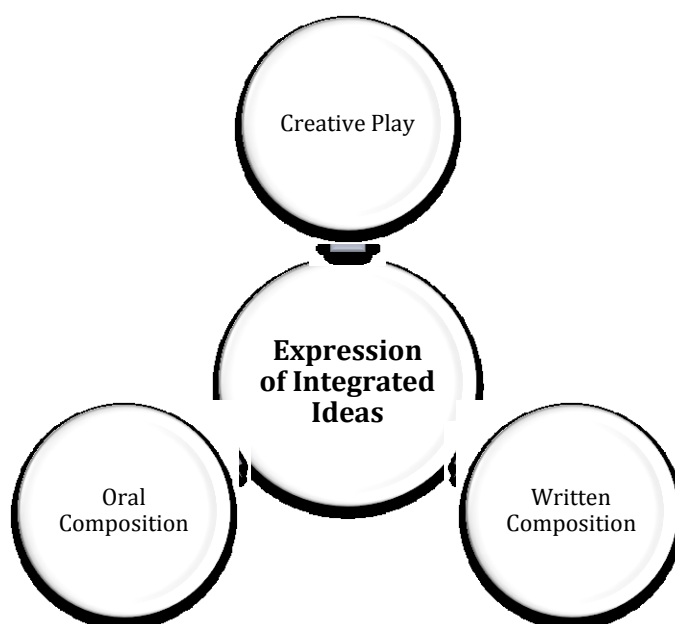


Figure 6. Charlie’s Modes of Expression.

Once ideas had been integrated, they emerged naturally in Charlie’s expression in three distinct ways: creative play, oral composition, and written composition.

Creative play as composition. The importance of play and the evidence of push-down in the Common Core were discussed in Chapter 1. Even so, the weight that Charlie placed on play in his own writing development came as somewhat of a surprise to me. It is well documented in the fields of education, psychology, and pediatrics that children

who are given more unstructured time for play are better adjusted than those who are not. The American Academy of Pediatrics stresses the importance of play for healthy development physically, emotionally, socially, and cognitively (Ginsburg, 2007). Yet, according to Almon and Miller (2011), “Policy makers persist in ignoring the huge discrepancy between what we know about how young children learn and what we actually do in preschools and kindergartens” (p. 1). The issue extends far beyond preschool and kindergarten, however. Another surprise that emerged in my conversations with Charlie was the length of time that he reported needing to play—until he was about 16 years old. Also, I knew that play was linked to creativity, but I had never considered the idea that play was actually a *form* of composition until Charlie brought it to my attention.

Both Charlie and Elizabeth thought that Charlie *grew into* his creativity as he matured. Elizabeth described 3-year-old Charlie as very serious and matter-of-fact. She said that she thought at that point he might grow up to be a scientist. She never thought he would be writing stories and poetry. Charlie’s early play was largely based on books he had read or television shows he had watched, and he did not stray much from the original storyline.

When [Charlie] was three, we used to watch a lot of *Lassie* reruns. I taped them. And we would watch those tapes over and over..He really identified with that character. He would play out those episodes. You know, we’d go to the grocery store. And he’d get in the car and say, “Come on, Lassie! Come on, girl!” You know, and buckle her up in the car, and then we’d get to the store, and they’d have, you know, those little pony rides, that you would pay a quarter to ride? And he’d get on the horse and he’d pretend that he was Timmy’s dad looking for

Timmy, going, “Timmy! Timmy!” He was always playing that. Because he was reliving episodes, I don’t know how “creative” that is. (Elizabeth, personal communication, February 25, 2012)

Shortly after that, at about the age of six, Charlie fell in love with Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little House* series. At first, Laura and Mary were his imaginary friends. Then he and his brother decided they would insert *themselves* into the story. They created their own characters, Jim Bhear and John Willow, and they *courted* Laura and Mary: “And they would go with us when we went places, and we would help them out of the car or walk around arm in arm with them.” Charlie went on to say, “And then we would role play, or play pretend, with all the characters from *Little House on the Prairie* and those books. I don’t think I ever wrote any of those stories down, but it was the same kind of process as with writing them. It was just going on at an earlier age.” Charlie described tracing the pictures in the *Little House* books, “maybe because I wasn’t quite *ready* to start writing a lot on my own.”

Charlie’s statement that *creative play* is the same process as *writing* was somewhat startling for me. I talked with several teachers and professors, and none of them had ever considered this idea before, either, although they were excited by it. Perhaps this connection has merely been overshadowed in recent years, since researchers in the 1970s and 1980s seemed to acknowledge the fact. For example, Cowie (1983) stated:

Whatever the link between symbolic play and language production or comprehension, there is another parallel with written, narrative language. Fantasy and sociodramatic play episodes are themselves acted-out narratives or stories. Several psychologists and linguists have discussed the narrative-like features of

fantasy play, the conventions governing sociodramatic play, and the fantasy/reality distinction. (p. 16)

In light of the fact that time for creative play is being increasingly replaced with written work in preschool and primary school, as well as the likelihood that the current adoption of Common Core will heavily influence classroom practices for another decade, the time has come to reexamine this idea.

As part of theoretical sampling, Charlie, Elizabeth, and I spent a good deal of time talking about creative play and its role in writing development. When asked to elaborate, this is what Charlie had to say about the parallel between play and writing:

Well, there are two things that are involved in writing. One is the content, the idea that you're presenting or the story that you're telling, and the other one is choosing the words to use to present that. And as far as the storytelling aspect, you're doing the *exact* same thing that you're doing when you play. You're thinking of a story in your head, and you're giving characters things to say and deciding what comes next. (Charlie, personal communication, February 11, 2012)

Elizabeth noted a change in Charlie's play when other children joined in.

At first it was just *him*. And in his mind, he's going over the episode, and he's kind of reliving some of the more dramatic parts, but then you have other children coming in—maybe his little brother, we would have friends come over with 2 or 3 kids, and all of a sudden there's this new element. They don't want to play that episode. They haven't even *seen* it. So they would say, "Well, no, I want to do it this way." (Elizabeth, personal communication, February 25, 2012)

The real spike in creativity came when Charlie, his brother, and his neighbors all read the *Narnia* series at about the same time. Not only was there ample fodder for imagination in

these stories, but the affective and social domains of the children were fully engaged. Charlie always played Peter, and his brother was Edmund. The neighbor children were Susan and Lucy, and, later, Charlie's smallest brother joined in as Eustace. This time, the children were not playing out the stories from the books; they were creating new adventures for the characters they loved so much. Charlie calls this his first foray into writing "fan fiction," which classroom teachers may know as creating "story extensions." Elizabeth helped the children find suitable costumes and props: a towel for a cape, a paint stir stick painted silver for a sword, and red candles for lances. Then they would go out into the yard or into the woods and play, sometimes for hours on end, until they were called inside for dinner.

As the children got older and their stories became more complex, their creative play began to involve characters from one story encountering characters from something else they had read. For example, Charlie recounted one dramatic interlude that took place at around the age of 11 in which Peter and Edmund found themselves in England during the reign of King Arthur. They travelled to Camelot, where they acquired horses and participated in a tournament, in which they tied with Lancelot and Galahad. Charlie noted, "We read Howard Pyle's *King Arthur*, and I think we had been reading *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* recently." He said that he had so much fun that day, and he loved the story they had created together so much, that he started trying to write it down when he came inside. However, he only got as far as the first few pages. When I asked him why he thought that was, he said, "because it wasn't as much fun replaying it in my mind as it was actually playing it out." There are several ways this statement could be interpreted. One is that perhaps Charlie was not yet developmentally ready to sit down and write a complete story. Another might be that he had not yet

developed the self-discipline necessary for seeing a large project through to completion. A third explanation comes from Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) idea of *flow*, which the author describes as the phenomenon of becoming completely lost in an activity that one finds enjoyable. Perhaps when he was young Charlie found it easier to get into flow when he was *playing* than when he was *writing*. This remained true, to lessening degrees, until Charlie was about 16 years old, although he was able to get into flow more when working collaboratively than alone. Still, play was an important factor into his early teen years. Even now, as an adult, Charlie finds it easier to write when he has had time to play; the difference is that now he plays with *ideas* rather than with toys or props:

One of my struggles as a writer has been to stop over-thinking the writing and to allow myself to write more freely. It seems like when I'm writing a story, and I've been trying to stop doing this lately, but I'll start writing a page or a scene, and I'll realize, "No, I have to think about that character's motives." And then, how is this plot point going to affect that plot point later on down the road, and this kind of structure wouldn't work there, and this dialogue needs to be better, and so I'll end up working on everything *but* the actual scene that I'm writing. [pause]

Whereas if I can just get into the scene imaginatively, and put myself there, and it just sort-of happens and it'll play out, and then once it's played out, or maybe even as it's playing out, you can realize, "Well, ok. Maybe that character wouldn't say that in that situation." So you change that later on. Or No, actually I think this would have occurred earlier because it fits the plot better. But it's more like *playing*? (Charlie, personal communication, February 11, 2012)

Charlie described going through the same creative process in play as a young teen as he did as a child, but he noted that "it might be a little more conscious as you get older.

You decide things about your character, or you think further ahead in the plot, but I do think it's the same process." When he was about 14, he and his friends spent the whole day in the woods playing a story about a prince and princess and their band of followers who were lost in a wood that was inhabited by a dragon. He said, "We *loved* that so much that we played it again several times. And we also started turning it into a script for a movie, which was a *very* ambitious project. It never got filmed." Although this sounds similar to the previous story, in which Charlie thought that *playing* was fun and *writing it down* was not, he was quick to correct that assumption:

No, not so much. Because with the Narnia and King Arthur, Jesse and I played it outside together, and then I started trying to write it down by myself. And the "by myself" part was part of what made it less fun. With the play that we did outside, after we were finished with it, we *all* loved it so much that we wanted to try to turn it into a script. So there were two or three of us working on it, and we made changes to the story and wanted to write the dialogue, which took quite a while. [We stopped the project because of a] lack of budget and time and experience and manpower. Because it was a very ambitious project, because we needed an army and a big camp of medieval tents that we could burn down, and a way to make a realistic-looking dragon and a cave that we could film inside, and good medieval costumes for all four of us, plus taller medieval costumes for all of the soldiers we had in the camp. And then we never really got the story to the way that we like it. Because again, it was a lot of fun doing it as a play, but the story didn't quite fit the medium of film. So we tried to think of ways that we could make it into a film, and we worked out a couple of things, but it was never really finished.... And that *might* have been one of the last really significant plays that we did. A

last hoorah. (Charlie, personal communication, February 11, 2012)

It was surprising that Charlie did not play as much with the Tolkien stories and characters. He explained that his brothers and his friends read those stories at different times, and so they did not share that common obsession. He did go on hikes, pretending to be those characters, but it was not the same collaborative story-building as before. This makes it seem that collaboration with peers is significant.

Charlie stopped playing as much when he was around 15. Like many teens, he spent much time alone in his room listening to music, thinking about the seriousness of life and the leaving behind of childish things. Then he met his current fiancé, who has a spritely imagination and who also loves to write. Together, they create fan fiction stories by acting them out and playing with possibilities.

And you're sitting there and saying, "Well, this could happen, this could happen," And you get really excited about a scene and so you start acting out the different characters, kind of the way you would if you were playing with Playmobil, and you move on from one thing to another, you build one scene, and then you stop and talk about, "Well, what should happen next?" "Well, they could do this," so, actually, the film *Northanger Abbey* that we're in the middle of working on right now started as a conversation where we said, "Wouldn't it be funny if such-and-such had happened?" And then our imaginations took off with it, and we started coming up with ideas for scenes. Like, "Wouldn't it be funny if that happened," "And then he would have said this and this and this," And having little conversations back and forth with the characters, and that was the germ that grew into the script for *Northanger Abbey: A Novel*. (Charlie, personal communication, February 11, 2012)

The *Northanger Abbey* project eventually involved several of their friends. The script was written and revised over the course of 2 years and was filmed last summer. Charlie has edited for the last few months, and the film will be ready for independent release this summer.

When asked about the decline of Charlie's interest in playing, Elizabeth said that the other brothers did not play as much after Charlie left for college because he was no longer there to lead. When I expressed my surprise to hear that Charlie was still playing with his brothers at the age of 18, Elizabeth answered,

I don't know that they were so much "playing" as they were doing things like making movies. Planning stories they were going to do. That kind of thing...It started transitioning to him wanting to be more formal about it and write stories and plays about it. And so the play sort of gradually transitioned, but it transitioned so slowly, and then at the end it's so hard to say how much of him really writing plays and wanting to make movies out of it, really, how much of that is "play," and how much is "writing"? It's kind of all the same thing.

(Elizabeth, personal communication, February 25, 2012)

Oral composition. Mason (1925a) emphasized oral composition in young children and saved written composition until the child was around 12 years old. Play, obviously, contains both a kinesthetic and an oral component. But Mason (1925a) also recommended that parents and teachers encourage children to talk by simply listening to the things they have to say. She recounts the experience of a child who has seen two dogs fighting in the street and immediately comes in to tell his mother all about it in vivid detail. Elizabeth followed Mason's recommendation by keeping a journal of Charlie's experiences, by having him draw pictures, and then transcribing his words as he told her

about what he drew. This journal began when Charlie was 4 years old, and it is interesting to watch his language develop. Mostly, the entries relay what Charlie had played that day, but he also included his daily experiences. Elizabeth had him make oral journal entries at least once per week, but entries are often more frequent than that. Here is one of the first entries from when he was four:

February 4, 1995

I went to the [name]'s house. We played boat. We played soldiers and football. I only got one point. It snowed today. I'm glad because it's pretty and we might go outside, but it's cold and the squirrels aren't there. [Drawings of "a short stick," "ax," "stick," and "shovel" used to play fireman, and his signature]

The following year, at age five, his sentences were becoming longer more complex:

March 9, 1996

For a few days we've been playing with little tiny Legos—[brother's name] and me. We had fun. I made a space station, and Mommy made a police headquarters and police station for me, and she made a fire station for [brother's name]. We also have two fire trucks and two policemen. One of the policemen's on a motorcycle, another one's on a helicopter. Mommy also made a spaceship for me that the space men can go in. I have a red spaceman that shows a spaceship going around a planet on his shirt.

At age six, Charlie began to label his drawings using some invented spelling, but Elizabeth continued to transcribe his oral account:

August 11, 1996

Two days ago was my birthday. We went for a picnic and fishing. I had fun. I had chocolate cake and chocolate ice cream. I was six. I got twenty-one dollars and

four presents. I bought a king, a carriage, a treasure chest and three soldiers [Lego] with it. In my card, I had to hunt for my presents. It was kind of hard. We watched a movie on my birthday, too. It was called *Lady and the Tramp*. I got two *Psalty* tapes—They're called "Pow-pow-power to Live God's Way" and "Psalty's Missing 9." I also got an astronaut book and a tape to go with it. Me and Jesse played Mommy and Daddy today. Actually, it's bear. [Drawing which he labeled himself: "cake with sprinkles and candels. The mising 9 tap. Get hot stay hot ooo be on fiere for the Lord—one of the songs."]

Elizabeth continued this oral journal through Charlie's seventh year, or second grade. His oral language significantly outstripped his written language:

October 23, 1997

A few days ago, Daddy put a roof on our fort. He put a tarp over some pieces of wood to make a triangular shape. The tarp's blue. I'm reading a book called *Annie Oakley*. It's a good book. It's about a true life time story. I haven't finished it yet. She can shoot six glass balls in the air before they touch the ground. A couple of weeks ago we went to a gathering for Columbus Day. [List of names] We went over to an island and then hiked around it. It was fun! Everyone was supposed to dress up as an explorer. [Name] dressed up as Napoleon, [brother's name] and I were mountain climbers. We were the first people to get to the top of Mt. Everest. [Name] was Daniel Boone. A few days ago me and [brother's name] played football. [Brother's name] won twice in a row. A few days later we played forest rangers. We dressed up in hard helmets, binoculars, hiking boots, backpacks, rifles. We went in the yard. There was one "fire." We spent time more or less making sure no one cut down endangered plants. [Drawing he labeled himself:

“main-land” “river” “path”]

When Charlie was six, he also began to orally narrate the stories he and his mother were reading. Unfortunately, Elizabeth did not transcribe these oral narrations, so it is impossible to make any statements about how oral narration aided Charlie’s language development. However, it is clear that he absorbed vocabulary from his reading, as literary and technical language sometimes leaked out into his oral journal in words like thrice, sheath, and granary. As much focus was put on his oral language development, he was learning to write through copywork and, to a lesser degree, dictation. It was not until he was 8 years old and in third grade that he began writing at any length, and that began with written narration.

Written composition. As mentioned earlier, Charlie began typing his own narrations when he was eight and in third grade. This piece was on the book *The Rescuers*, and it was about a page and a half in length. The first paragraph of that narration shows that Charlie had at least tacit knowledge of proper nouns and the use of commas:

It’s about how this one prisoner is in the Black Castle and the Prisoners Aid Society, which is mice, is going to rescue him. And the prisoner is Norwiegian [sic]. So they want one of the mice, whose name is Bernard, to tell Miss Bianca to see if she can find the bravest mouse in Norway. She was an ambassador’s son’s mouse that was a poet and she lived in a porcelain pagoda. That had a birdcage-like cage around it, where there were swings, even a pretend fountain.

The sequence of this piece is mostly fluid, and it has a definite beginning and resolution. A year later, at age nine, Charlie was still writing lengthy, accurate narrations that had a clear, conversational style. It was then that he wrote his first fan fiction, based on *The*

Chronicles of Narnia and dedicated to C. S. Lewis. This piece is three and a half pages long and shows that Charlie was still writing in a conversational style, although there are a few glimmers of literary style beginning to emerge:

While King Peter was King in Narnia, he attacked the giants that lived in the north. I am sure that you have heard about this from other books. He did this in the 14th year of his reign, the year 1014, Narnian time. He took them by surprise on the edge of the river Shribble. The foolish giants gave way easily, one of them slain by Peter and a couple more by his men when they wouldn't give up at first. He then marched with one thousand of his men to the castle of Harfang, where he camped on a flat hill. The giants of Harfang were at a disadvantage because the castle of Harfang was not built to stand up against an attack. Since he caught them by surprise they did not have time to stock up on food. They had a bit of food in the castle, enough to last them almost a month. So Peter, after stocking up on a bit of food himself by having his men pick the few plants that could be found there, and shooting some geese and a couple of rabbits (not talking rabbits, of course) he set out to siege the castle.

Generally, Charlie showed a grasp of conventions and sentence structure, although his writing did contain some fragments and run-ons. His spelling was good, but it is difficult to tell whether this is because he knew how to spell the words or if he asked his mother how to spell them. In fourth grade, Charlie's writing began to mature a good deal. Here is an excerpt from a history narration he wrote at age 10:

When Richard became king, Henry Tudor, son of Lady Margaret, was in Brittany, the king well paid by Edward IV to keep him there. As payment from Richard, Brittany demanded help from England in her wars. When Richard refused, Henry

was sent to England with 15 ships and 5,000 soldiers. He would meet a force of English soldiers to help him under Buckingham! At first, Buckingham wanted to try to make himself king, but when he learned that Henry Tudor, Lancaster, was to marry the daughter of the old queen, York, putting an end to the Wars of the Roses, he decided to help. But then he learned that Richard now paid Brittany to keep him, and he sped to France. There he got help from Anne, who, remembering her father's strategy of poking the English wars along to keep France out, lent him enough forces to attack England when word should come from Margaret that the time was ripe.

It is impossible to conclude a direct causal relationship between the literary narrative style of the *living* books Charlie was reading in history and the style of this writing, but it is clear that Charlie clothed the facts of this historical episode in story. The following excerpt, written about Bulfinch's *The Age of Fable* at age 11, also suggests that the style of the book heavily influenced the writing in his narration:

Once upon a time there was a woman names Dryope. She had a sister named Iole, and was married to a man named Andraemon. One day she and her sister were out looking for flowers to crown the altar of the Nymphs with. She (Dryope) had her baby with her. And Dryope picked some lotus flowers. Iole was about to do the same, when she saw that there was blood dripping from where her sister had picked the flowers. It was none other than the Nymph Lotis, who had turned herself into a lotus to hide from a base pursuer. Suddenly Dryope started to become a tree.

Contrast that with this excerpt comparing Dr. Jekyll with Victor Frankenstein that Charlie wrote at the age of 12 in response to an exam question. The style is much stiffer, seeming

to reflect the voices of Stevenson and Shelley:

Both men grew up loved and respected. Both had scientific curiosity which led them to make great discoveries. Both had weaknesses which are mentioned in their stories: the young Frankenstein was ambitious, and the respectable Jekyll had a taste for less respectable pleasures. They both tried to play God and failed. (Like many people, they did not understand that what one can do is not always what one should do. The ability to create life does not make it right, just as the ability to kill does not make murder right. Other things must decide the moral question.)

The age of 12 marked a turning point in Charlie's writing, as this was the age at which he read Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Charlie said that this meeting changed his writing drastically, and that for several years afterward he continued to try to write using Tolkien's style. Perhaps more significantly, he also wrote a fan fiction that year that was six chapters in length, called *The Ring*. This story has a definite literary style, as well as an attempt at resonance. Rather than relaying action through the voice of a narrator, he begins to use dialogue to develop his characters and move the story along:

"Have you heard the news of last night's battle?"

"Yes, sir. I talked with one of the elves who was there."

"Good, then we all know the situation. Now listen. I think it is very likely that the dragon will attempt to return when his wings have healed, if only to avenge his injury. I also know, for a fact, that he will be much less powerful until his wings are healed. Therefore, I think it would be wise to attack him now, while he is weak, and not wait for him to attack us when he has gained his full strength. To this purpose, I suggest that we send an army to the dragon's lair to kill him."

“But,” interposed Captain Elreem, “how are we to find his lair?”

“That is easy,” replied Airafir. “When the dragon retreated he had to run on his feet. I do not think his track will be hard to follow. I agree with the king.”

“And you,” said King Elfled, talking to Elreem, “what do you think of the plan?”

“I think, your majesty, that it is an excellent one. I have only one suggestion to make: I think some of the dwarves would be willing to help us fight the dragon, especially since some dwarves were killed in the dragon’s raid a couple nights ago. I think it would be wise to ask them to join us, for the dwarves are excellent archers, as well as having good commonsense, and I do not doubt that their presence would be a great help to the expedition.” [Excerpt from Chapter Three]

Charlie continued to write original pieces using Tolkien’s style. After he read *The Silmarillion* at age 14, he wrote his own creation story for the fantasy world he had created. His writing at this age had attained that resonance and epic flavor he seemed to be striving for at 12:

In the Beginning there was void, and there was Enai, The One. And Enai said, “Time, be!” and it was. This was the beginning of time; for before there had been none, but all times were one. And the Enai said, “Light, be!” and it was. And the far corners of the World were filled with light, where before all had been darkness.

And Enai looked upon the World He had made, and was pleased; for it was good. But as He looked out over the vast expanse, he saw that it was bereft of living things; and he wished for others with which he could share His world. So

He created Beings like unto himself, intelligent and able to communicate their thoughts to one another. And, though He had created them, their thoughts and actions were not commanded by him; and though Enai had power greater than theirs, ruled them as Lord, yet they moved and thought of their own free will.

These Beings were the *Aiaroth*: The Mighty Ones.

Charlie's writing samples from the age of 15 include assignments from the creative writing class that he took at his home school co-op. There are poems, commentaries that show a sense of humor, and an original murder-mystery story in the vein of *Sherlock Holmes*, entitled, *The Proof is in the Jell-O*. Charlie captures the tone of Doyle in this tongue-in-cheek excerpt:

They soon arrived at Joseph's apartment. Joseph immediately went into the kitchen, which doubled functions as a laboratory, and began boiling and banging away, muttering to himself. Haggai found a tolerably empty chair, removed the second volume of the History of Chemical Biology, and sat down with his book. He was soon engaged in a mystery involving Lord Peter Wimsey and the calumnious case of criminal cunning, and did not notice the time passing until he had to turn on a light—which involved a trepidous journey across the Alps of Scientific Weekly to the lamp and back again. He ventured a peek into the kitchen.

This story is among the last in the collection, although there are many that are undated and may have been written later. The only samples from age 16 are a collection of narrations of Martin's *A History of the Twentieth Century*. These narrations contain an extraordinary amount of detail, including this one, from October 13, 2006:

There was great unrest in Russia as war-weariness increased. There were many

strikes and desertions, and a great clamour for the Tsar to end the war. He would not, and finally in 1917 the Mensheviks, a revolutionist party, took control of the government and the Tsar abdicated. The Mensheviks still favored continuing the fight against Germany, but more and more soldiers deserted, and later in the year the Bolsheviks, a socialist revolutionary party led by Lenin, took over the government. They quickly proclaimed an end of the war, called the troop home, and asked for terms with Germany. Germany offered harsh terms which the Bolshevik government at first refused, but as the German army advanced farther and farther into Russia they were at last forced to accept. A huge amount of territory that had been part of the Tsar's empire was ceded to Germany.

Charlie frequently used the British spellings of words, such as "clamour" in this narration. This could have been a conscious choice because of his love for British writers, or it could be an indication that his immersion in British literature caused him to tacitly learn these spellings.

This chapter described the factors that contributed to Charlie's development as a writer. His immersion in the written word allowed him to absorb many things tacitly, while he had to labor with other things. Elizabeth spread a feast of ideas for him, and he took according to his needs, interests, and ability. Charlie learned ideas to varying degrees. The ones that resonated most with him were fully integrated into his person and emerged naturally in his expression. As a young child, Charlie expressed his ideas through play and through oral journals and narrations. He gradually transitioned to writing, although play and oral narration continued to be important parts of his writing development at least through his teen years. The next chapter concludes this study with a discussion of the implications suggested by the results and a critique of the *Grounded*

Theory of Personal Integration.

Chapter 5: Reflections on Findings of Inquiry

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore how Charlie, a student who learned under holistic teaching methods which eschewed writing instruction, developed as a writer. Interviews with Charlie and his mother, as well as examination of writing samples from his school years and the extant literature, were used to build a theory that is grounded in data. This chapter is organized into the following sections: a brief summary of the theory as outlined in detail in Chapter 4, the significance of the theory, implications for the field of education, a critique of the theory, recommendations for future research, and the conclusion.

Summary of the Theory

The grounded theory that was developed through this study, entitled *Personal Integration Theory*, illuminates the process that led to Charlie's development as a writer. It consists of three broad stages: *Immersion*, *Processing/Personal Integration*, and *Expression*. The theory was influenced by Stephen Krashen's (2004) work on the importance of free reading, as well as Michael Polanyi's (1958) seminal work, *Personal Knowledge*. In brief, Charlie's formal education began with *immersion* in the written word. While he did have choices about his free reading, Elizabeth worked to provide a wide curriculum of classic literature and well-written, narrative content area books. She also tried to foster a love of reading by having many books in the home, by modeling a lifestyle of reading, and by making reading a treasured family activity.

Charlie *processed* what he read in two ways: one was *tacit*, while the other was *conscious*. In tacit learning, the mind seems to effortlessly absorb some skills, such as grammar and spelling, and hold them at the periphery while focal attention is placed on

the story or the ideas contained in the book (Polanyi, 1958). Conscious learning requires *labor* on the part of the student, and so Charlie narrated, or told back, what he read.

Activities like copywork and dictation also helped him process ideas and skills. *Attention* was an important condition.

As Charlie worked his way through the curriculum, he gravitated toward certain ideas, subjects, and authors above others. Among the ones he particularly enjoyed were language, fantasy stories, British history, and writing. He chose to immerse himself further in these on his own time, and they ultimately became an almost indistinguishable part of himself. This process of *personal integration* gave Charlie things that he *wanted* to write about, something to *say* about those things, and a *style* that he could mimic as he worked to find his own voice. At the same time, the skills he absorbed tacitly and, later, the formal study of grammar helped him write using correct conventions. Charlie and Elizabeth noted that writing style is also integrated and leaks into one's writing, so one should be careful to read things that are written using a style in which one would like to write.

The ideas and stories that Charlie integrated emerged naturally in his *expression*. From the time he was a young child through his early teens, Charlie expressed them mainly through *play*, which both Charlie and Elizabeth said was the same process as creative writing: In play, the child develops a setting, a plot, characters, and dialogue in a more concrete, kinesthetic way than pencil and paper can provide, but he or she goes through the writing process just the same. Elizabeth also worked to develop Charlie's *oral language* by having him dictate journal entries and narrate what he read. Charlie said that narration helped him learn to "think like a storyteller." When Charlie did begin to write, it was with written narration when he was eight. Later, as a teenager, he enjoyed

and benefitted from *collaboration* on stories with his peers. Charlie still considers collaboration and play to be important to his writing.

Significance

Charlie's case is significant because he learned to write well without receiving direct instruction until high school. He *created* plenty of stories as a young child, but most were play-acted and not written down. In other words, he went through the creative *process* without having any *product* in the end. The idea that creative play makes the mind go through the same process as creative writing is highly significant in an educational culture that is reducing time for play to make space for more academic tasks. If children can learn to write tacitly through copious reading, as Krashen (2004) suggested and this study supports, and they can get practice creating through play, then there is no reason early childhood classrooms should have to use methods that are widely regarded as developmentally inappropriate.

What is perhaps more interesting is the fact that Charlie continued to create stories through play into his teens. While most concede that children in preschool and kindergarten need time for play, the argument that older children also need time to play is rarely heard. Play takes time, and time is in short supply already. One could argue that older children can play when they get home, but researchers like Richard Louv (2008) argue that even playtime at home has diminished in recent years. He stated that this decrease in time for play, especially outside, stems from several causes. One is parental fear about letting their children play outside. Louv (2008) wrote that parents fear abduction, even though this threat is irrational based on crime statistics. The findings of Veitch, Salmon, and Ball (2010) support this statement. They surveyed parents and children from varying socioeconomic strata and found that wealthier parents who raised

their families in suburbs with low crime rates actually restrict the outdoor play of their children more than parents in more crime-ridden neighborhoods (Veitch et al., 2010). Louv (2008) cited fear of litigation as a cause for the reduction in places where children can play outdoors. He also laments that children's time is frequently monopolized by adults through over-scheduling in extracurricular activities. These are not the same as play. In order for any activity to be considered *play*, the children themselves must choose and direct it (Bergen & Fromberg, 2009). Bergen and Fromberg (2009) went on to stress the importance of unstructured play time for children in upper elementary school, arguing that play at this age offers the same physical, emotional, cognitive, and social benefits as play in preschool and kindergarten. Charlie was not ready to give up creative play, where he and his brothers and friends went outside and created stories for hours on end, until he was about 16. It is not clear at this point whether this is typical. More research would have to be conducted on this topic to see, although I predict that few 16-year-olds who are in school would have the kind of time that Charlie had to engage in such activities.

It is also important to note that Charlie's earliest experiences in *writing* were with penmanship. Then he moved to copywork and some dictation. Although he kept a journal from the time he was four, it was completely oral except for his drawings and a few captions. He began writing in third grade with narration, which allowed him to rely completely on someone else's story while giving him practice in storytelling. His early creative writing pieces were fan fictions, in which he *extended* someone else's story. He did not have to create everything from scratch. The characters were already developed, he was familiar with the setting, and there was a back-story that gave a starting point for the plot. This was a high level of support for a fledgling writer toddling in his first composition. Later, as a teen, Charlie seems to have benefitted from collaboration with

his peers on writing projects. Perhaps this, too, lent some scaffolding for him, because he did not have to create everything himself. It also made the projects more enjoyable.

Another significant idea that emerged from this study is that writing is more than a technical skill. Although there are technical skills involved, a writer must have something worthwhile to *say*. The wide reading that Charlie did from the time he was small provided ample fodder for the imagination and many sources of inspiration. The social domain again emerges as important, in that it seems Charlie's interest in creating stories (through both play and writing) were escalated when he and his brothers and friends were reading and enjoying the same stories at the same time. These were not curriculum books, however; they were books that the children *chose* to read together. It is not clear why this should be, although it does support what Krashen (2004) wrote about free reading. What is clear is that, for Charlie and his friends, shared reading of books often led to shared obsession with those books, which led to shared play, which then led to shared writing experiences.

Perhaps the most unwieldy idea that emerged as significant in this study is that of *personal* knowledge. For more than a decade, our education system has been focused on standardization. The concept of *spreading the feast*, with its emphasis on providing many good choices for students, leaving the handling of the material to them and freeing children to grow in different directions, runs directly contrary to *standardization*, which seeks to promote sameness and, arguably, conformity. While there are many who criticize a heavy emphasis on standardized testing, few voices are heard in protest of the standards themselves. Alfie Kohn (2004) is one of those few. In his book, *What Does It Mean to Be Well-Educated?*, Kohn published a series of scathing essays about testing, standards, grades, homework, and behavior management systems. He suggested that

while politicians and big business benefit from the standards craze, children, teachers, and schools do not. Kohn (2004) cited several reasons standards are undesirable. One is the *one-size-fits-all* nature of standards, when it is common knowledge among educators that children do not learn at the same pace. Another is the reduction of the curriculum to outcomes that can be observed and quantified, which frequently leads to *teacher coverage* of skills that are *less* important rather than *student exploration* of ideas that are *more* important (Kohn, 2004).

The idea of *personal knowledge* (Polanyi, 1958) is radical in the current education climate. It is not like *individualization* or *differentiated instruction*, because those still focus on objectives created by a teacher. *Personal knowledge*, or what Mason referred to as the “act of knowing” is the answering of a question put to the mind by the mind itself (Mason, 1925b, p. 17). As more states adopt Common Core this is a timely topic for discourse. If Common Core follows the precedent of the state standards adopted under No Child Left Behind, it is likely to remain in place for the next decade—another entire generation of children. Therefore, it seems logical to ask now whether standardization of curriculum and assessment, and *ipso facto* teachers and students, is really what is desired.

Implications in the Field of Education

The implications of the results of this study could be considered liberating or terrifying, depending upon one’s paradigm. Readers who embrace the social constructivist model of learning will most likely be made more comfortable than those who adhere to a more behavioral model. The results definitely point toward the need to immerse children in vast quantities of quality literature throughout their school years. Perhaps both the behavioral and social constructivist camps would agree with that. Beyond this point, however, there will be a significant philosophical schism.

It seems that there are two sets of factors that most contributed to Charlie's writing development. The first set includes the things that teachers can provide to encourage writing development: immersion in quality literature, a wide and varied curriculum, time to play, choices and time for free reading, opportunities for collaboration with peers, facilitation of oral language development, and individualized coaching when needed. The second set of factors includes laboring with ideas, forming relationships with books and authors, seeking opportunities for practice and growth, and personal integration. These are *personal* to the child and largely depend on his or her abilities, interests, attention, work habits, and will; they cannot be orchestrated by the teacher.

The results of the study also imply that standardization of learning is neither possible nor desirable, especially if the skills specified in the standards draw focal attention to things that should be held at the periphery. As Stacy (2011) noted, mastery of these discreet skills does not equate to mastery of writing, but rather mastery of something that is *not* writing. Charlie noticed the same thing in his college composition classes:

Because a lot of the writing classes I've taken and the books that I've read focus more on the mechanical *rules*, and those things are important on *one* level, for reasons of clarity, but the whole process of imagining a story and then putting it into words, and then putting those words on paper, or thinking deeply about an idea that matters to you until you have something to say about it, and then expressing that with the right words, is not something that you can *teach* by teaching the rules of grammar and spelling... There is the technical element—the rules of grammar, the theory of writing, and someone who's very serious about

writing can study that... Writing history or literary history and learning about different kinds of writing, and also forming relationships with specific authors, specific works. So maybe a writing class is difficult to address because we think of writing in terms of the technical aspect of it: If you're studying writing, then that *means* you're studying the *technique* of writing, which is kind of like saying that if you're studying *music*, then you're studying music *theory*... Whereas all of the other things—collaboration, writing practice, and the familiarity with specific works of writing, relationships with books and authors, chronology, different genres, and what other writers have done with writing in the past—all comes into play. Writing with other people—*playing* with other people—and inventing stories and the experience of sharing imagination and inventing things collaboratively: Writing is *all* of them. (Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

Charlie questioned whether it was the job of a teacher to make every student into a *writer*, arguing that a functional command of the language is enough for most people. However, he felt that the ability to use writing as an aid to thinking would be valuable for anyone. When asked what he thought teachers could do to facilitate writing development, he said that perhaps the best thing they could do would be to start early in suggesting “the right books to *read*.”

I think that a lot of the writing classes that are offered in schools today, including the introductory writing classes that I took in college here, are basically just damage control—trying to teach you quickly what you really should have absorbed slowly when you were younger... I don't think that we can just get *rid* of writing courses because there are students who *need* them. [sighing] And they

do *help*, but I do think they're more damage control and second best to what *writing*—the *craft* of writing—*learning* the craft of writing—is... Maybe there are two goals [for writing classes]. Maybe one is the damage control, to fix the technical aspect of their writing, to get the students to the point where they can write functionally and express their ideas, at least enough to communicate, and the other goal is something that happens at a much slower pace, and that's starting to form those relationships with the books and the slow process of thinking or imagining that goes into really *thoughtful* writing. (Charlie, personal communication, January 28, 2012)

In browsing books on how to teach writing, it is clear that there is no unifying theory of writing instruction. Some books, such as Ruth Shagoury's (2009) *Raising Writers: Understanding and Nurturing Young Children's Writing Development*, still focus on the child's natural development. Others, like Graves and Kittle's (2005) *Inside Writing: How to Teach the Details of the Craft*, focus more on distilling what good writers do and then teaching those things explicitly. A few, such as Ellis's (2000) *From Reader to Writer: Teaching Writing Through Classic Children's Books* acknowledge the importance of good literary models as a springboard to writing. However, regardless of the approach taken in the books, they all seem to emerge from an assumption that the teacher can orchestrate learning if only the correct sequence and methods can be found and implemented. That is what sets Charlie's story apart. His education was not focused on what his teacher did or did not do. Instead, the central focus was on personal interaction with ideas. Writing development was not the *goal*, but it was the *result*.

Critique of the Theory

Strengths and limitations. This study of a single case is not widely generalizable. However, as discussed earlier, wide generalizability is not really the purpose of qualitative investigations; rather, the researcher's focus should be contextualizing findings and identifying similar groups to which those findings might apply (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The focus on contextualization also naturally limits the common measure of reliability; that is, the degree to which this study can be replicated and obtain the same results. Again, that is not the purpose of qualitative investigations. It is more important that the findings be consistent within the current study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). To enhance reliability within this study, I checked Elizabeth and Charlie against themselves by repeating and reframing questions both within the same interview and during subsequent interviews. Interview responses were also checked against Charlie's writing samples when appropriate.

As discussed previously, validity in the context of this study involves the degree to which the descriptions and findings are true to the phenomenon being studied (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). To keep inferences and conclusions as close to the data as possible, I tried to clarify meanings by asking probing questions during the interviews and following up on ideas in subsequent interviews. I also sent transcripts, along with narrative summaries, to Elizabeth and Charlie after each interview and asked them to comment. This resulted in several clarifications via email. At the end of the study, I presented the findings to Elizabeth and Charlie once more to be sure they accurately represented their experiences. After discussing the debriefing statement (Appendix C) with Elizabeth, she said that she was satisfied that this portrayal of her experience was

accurate. She was very interested in the results and eager to reflect on how she could use them with the two children she still homeschools. Charlie also agreed that his experience was represented accurately, although he did express some frustration at the difficulty in articulating with precision such an organic, intuitive process.

Data was analyzed with a critical eye toward inferences, conclusions, and personal bias. Reflexive journaling was a regular part of analysis in order to keep bias in check. Data was triangulated through interviews with Elizabeth and Charlie, document analysis, and examination of Charlie's work, as well as further review of literature. Transcripts and codes were also sent to a colleague after each interview for feedback.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggested that it is imperative for any grounded theory study to be true to the method for the sake of credibility:

Methodologies are designed to do certain things and, with usage over time, have attained a certain degree of "credibility" when used in a manner consistent with the design. To mix up different methodologies, or use only certain procedures and not others, erodes at that credibility. For example, though there are many versions of "grounded theory," the procedures that are consistent with the different versions are the "constant comparative" method of analysis, the use of concepts and their development, theoretical sampling, and saturation. (p. 303)

All of these procedures were utilized in this study. The constant comparative method simply means that each new piece of data is compared to previously collected data as the study moves along in order to try to find similarities and differences (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Then these data are used to develop concepts that can be organized by hierarchical relationship as far as the data suggests, and then confirmed or refuted by future data. The study included a theoretical sampling of these concepts in that I followed up on ideas that

seemed most relevant through conversations with the person I felt would be most likely to have the information sought.

At the outset of the study, I worried that saturation might not be reached in a small number of interviews. I conducted three interviews with Charlie, and by the end we kept coming back to the ideas of immersion, integration, and expression. The two interviews with Elizabeth pointed in the same direction, and the debriefing session yielded support for the theory. Therefore, I feel that we did, in fact reach a point of theoretical saturation, at least with these two participants, and I feel comfortable presenting these findings as a substantive theory. I envision this project to be the starting point of a much larger work involving many more participants, as it is impossible to generate a sufficient, well-rounded formal theory from the brief examination of a single case. However, the results from this study can be used to frame that future work.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) offered criteria for judging the quality of grounded theory studies. These include fit, applicability, concepts, logic, depth, variation, creativity, sensitivity, and evidence of memos. Assessing fit means determining whether or not the findings resonate “with the experience of both the professionals for whom the research was intended and the participants who took part in the study” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 305). The findings certainly resonated with Elizabeth and Charlie, as evidenced by the debriefing session. To further test for fit, I consulted one other student who was homeschooled using Mason’s model, one public school literacy instructional coach, and two professors of education. They each said that the model made sense and expressed excitement over the articulation of the idea.

Assessing a theory for applicability entails the identification of new insights and explanations that can be used to influence practice and policy (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

This work has challenged the adoption of standards, including the Common Core and the stripping of playtime in favor of teacher-centered academic pursuits, especially in the early school years. These two concepts are supported elsewhere and suggest an immediate change in policy and practice. Other concepts, such as the need for unstructured playtime for older children (including at the middle and high school levels) may prove less plausible and, therefore, less applicable. However, more research in this area could lend better insight.

Assessing for concepts includes looking to see that all of the findings have been organized around concepts and themes, and that they demonstrate both substance and context (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The findings in this study were organized around one central theme, *personal integration*, delineated into the process of *immersion*, *processing*, and *expression*. Each of these was broken down into dimensions, and appropriate conditions provided context.

Assessing for logic means looking for “gaps or missing links in the logic that leave the reader confused and with a sense that something is not quite right” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 306). One area that may seem illogical is the idea that learning cannot be orchestrated by the teacher and that it must ultimately depend on the interest and will of the learner. I believe this is a paradigm issue, as opposed to a flaw in the theory. The highly personal nature of learning, as expressed by Polanyi (1958) and Kuhn (1962), reflect a constructivist paradigm. Therefore, readers who favor a more behaviorist paradigm may be left with an uncomfortable feeling that the findings of the present study do not make sense, while those who favor constructivist theory may not. In any case, the findings were logical to the participants and to the researcher.

The depth of a study is assessed by examining the detail and richness of the

descriptions provided by the researcher (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The interview data included in the findings of this study provide significant detail and richness. Of course, greater depth could have been provided through a wider sample of participants. It is hoped that this can be addressed in a future study.

The same is true for variation. A study is assessed for variation by looking to see if it includes negative cases and if it shows “differences along certain dimensions or properties” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 306). While the properties of the concepts were delineated, variation could have been enhanced by including more than one case. However, going into greater depth with a single case had its own benefit for this particular study and better fit the timeframe within which I had to work. Elizabeth’s comparisons of Charlie and her other children lent some degree of variation, even though her two other sons were not interested in participating in interviews themselves or having their work examined.

The creativity of a study is judged according to the degree to which the findings “say something new, or put old ideas together in new ways” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 306). The topic of this study provided a unique perspective on writing development from the outset. The new *grounded theory of personal integration* brings the philosophy of epistemology, ontology, and the nature of science into contact with empirical research on child development, linguistics, play, and literacy in a way that has not been done before.

Assessment for sensitivity involves determining the degree to which the study was driven by “preconceived ideas or assumptions that were imposed on the data” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 306). I disclosed at the beginning my suspicion that wide reading and narration played important roles in Charlie’s writing development. What I found was that this was only scratching the surface. The ideas about play, a balance

between choice and direction, and self-imposed apprenticeship came as delightful surprises to me. Also, the process of Charlie's writing development was much less linear and much more complex than I had anticipated.

Finally, Corbin and Strauss (2008) stated that there should be evidence of memos in the final report, and that those memos should "grow in depth and degree of abstraction as the research moves along" (p. 307). In fact, my first memos mirror the process of open coding, in that I recorded hunches as they occurred and tried to identify every possible trail upon which I could follow up. Some of the concepts that emerged at this early stage, such as the differences in motor skills required when either writing by hand or typing, were dropped early as irrelevant. Here is an example of one of the earlier memos:

Memo 41: Copywork for Writing

How does copywork help a child develop writing skills? Elizabeth brings up mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and sentence structure/syntax).

The books provide excellent models for how to use language. She also mentions that it trains attention, as kids learn to "reproduce it faithfully." I wonder if attitude about whether or not spelling "counts" influences development. Same thing with grammar. Is awareness that there is a right way and a wrong way to speak/write an important issue? If so, could invented spelling or journal writing before good models of these things are encountered undermine development?

As the study progressed and concepts kept reemerging as important, the memos and the coding became more focused. They also shifted into less pragmatic and more philosophical content as ideas became more synthesized:

Memo 74: Spreading the Feast

Over the last couple of days, I have been thinking a lot about the difference

between “apprenticeship” and “instruction.” Instruction connotes a “filling up” with information from the outside. Apprenticeship connotes a “coming alongside” of a master, being immersed in the work, observing and then getting lessons and coaching in the craft. Today, apprenticeship is used more in the industrial context. But in the Renaissance, it was used heavily in the arts and crafts. [A colleague] made a comment asking if I was sure that natural ability needs instruction in order to be realized. She asked if anyone taught Michelangelo. In looking that up, I found that he grew up in a stone yard and “drank in” the use of a hammer and chisel as a small child. At 13 he was apprenticed to a master painter, and he spent the next 3 years copying the work of the masters. Of course, his natural ability allowed him to go farther than other students who were doing the same thing. That made me think about Mason’s idea that it is not the teacher’s business to teach *all* about anything. Instead, he/she is to “spread a feast” of literature, arts, maths, and sciences. While everyone studies each, some will take more of one and some will take more of another, because they bring their *personhood* to the table with them. In other words, standardization is not ever a goal. Elizabeth spread the same feast for all of her boys, but Charlie took more from the language and literature than his brothers did. I want to further explore this idea of apprenticeship.

In the end, I had written a total of 110 memos and 36 reflexive journal entries that led me to the final theory.

One last critique of this study’s resulting new substantive *grounded theory of personal integration* should come from comparing it to Peirce’s (1981) *Architecture of Theories*. As discussed in Chapter 1, according to Peirce (1891), well-rounded theories

always consist of three elements that work in connection with one another. The First is the idea that some truth or occurrence exists independently of everything else. The Second is the idea of being relative to and in reaction with something else. The Third is the element of mediation, through which the first and second are brought into relation. My rationale for conducting this study was that I did not perceive a unifying theory of writing development that operated within Peirce's (1891) idea of the Third. I believe that the *grounded theory of personal integration* offers an answer.

In my previous discussion, I explained that any theory that exaggerated emphasis on the First would say that writing development is a matter of chance; there is no law governing it, and so it cannot be orchestrated. Any theory with exaggerated focus on the Second would stem from a Dualistic philosophy that accepts only observable data as fact. Therefore, proponents would attempt to identify the specific, predictable pattern and then devise the appropriate system, technique, or standards through which writing development could be orchestrated.

What was missing was a sufficient Mediator that would allow pattern and variation to co-exist—a *means* of writing development that is natural, that is simple, and that appeals to common sense. In this study, the use of grounded theory allowed me to uncover this Mediator: *Personal Integration*. Figure 7 on the following page shows where the concepts fit in light of Peirce's (1891) First, Second, and Third.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are several areas in which future research can be recommended based on this study. First, more students who learned under Mason's method should be located and interviewed in order to test this theory. Participants should include both students who did become good writers and those who did not in order to distill the differences and

similarities and add dimension and variation to the theory. It is also important to investigate whether or not other children who learned under this model did indeed develop at least a functional use of English in writing. An interesting addition might be to study students who are currently learning this way in order to find further evidence supporting or negating the findings of this study. One could also study students who became great writers under other models through the lens of the *grounded theory of personal integration*.

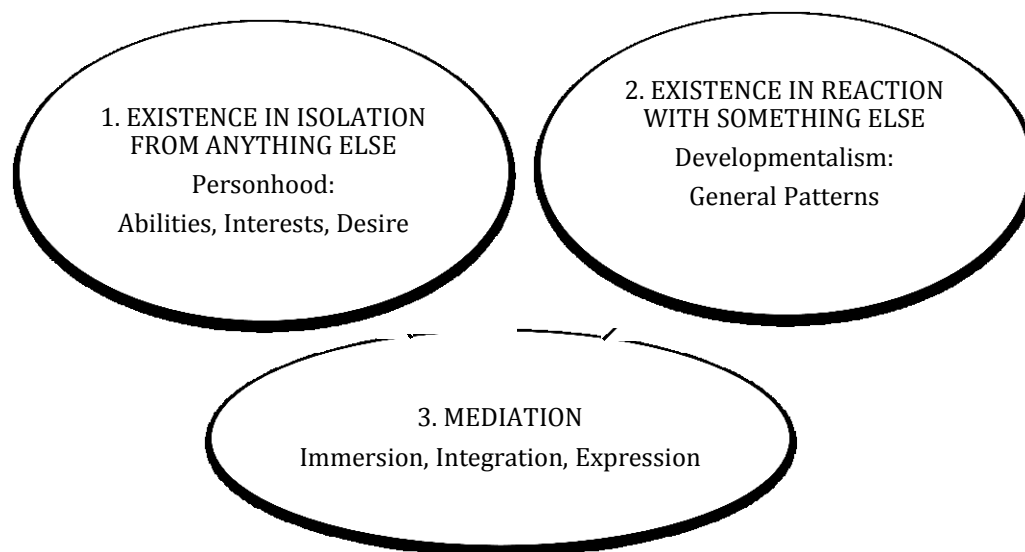


Figure 7. Theory of Personal Integration within Peirce's (1891) Architecture of Theories.

This diagram shows where the concepts of the *grounded theory of personal integration* fit within Peirce's (1891) *Architecture of Theories*. First is the idea of *personhood*. Charlie brought his own personality, abilities, interests, and desires. Second, he did follow some generally accepted patterns of development. Third, that development

was reached in his own time, and ideas were integrated in his own way before being expressed through his play and oral and written language.

Another area for future research might include investigation of play as a form of composition. Although this was done in the 1970s and 1980s, the current education climate may warrant renewed interest in this as regards rigor and developmentally appropriate practice. A related study might compare students taught with a bottom-up approach (in which instruction in discrete skills builds and culminates in the child's ability to engage with ideas) with those who, like Charlie, were taught using a top-down approach (in which they engaged with ideas from a very young age and were allowed significantly more time for skills to develop more tacitly).

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore how one student developed as a writer under a holistic model that includes only very scant instruction in composition in the later years of schooling. The new *grounded theory of personal integration* emerged from data collected through qualitative interviews and qualitative document analysis to provide insight into how Charlie's writing developed. While this theory is substantive and more research is needed before a formal theory can be posed, it does have important implications for teachers and policymakers, including the reexamination of standards in writing and reevaluation of the trend in preschools and primary schools to replace unstructured play with more academic activities like writing. This new perspective opens exciting and liberating avenues for further research in a time when education is perceived to be in crisis.

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Appendix A
Informed Consent Form

Dear _____ and _____,

I am currently completing work toward a doctoral degree at Gardner-Webb University. One of the requirements for my degree is to write a dissertation. The topic I have chosen to research is how writing develops in students taught using Charlotte Mason's methods when her model does not include direct instruction in composition. Since I know that _____ was educated using Mason's model and that he grew into a very capable writer, I would like to ask you both to participate in the study. My vision for the dissertation project is to focus on you as a single case. Later, the project may be expanded to include other students in a post-doctoral study. The larger project will be guided by the information gleaned in this smaller study with you. This project has several potential benefits to you and to society. The process of reflection and the drawing of connections that occur during the study could help you with the education of the other children in the family. The findings of the study could also enhance understanding of writing development both within the Mason community and in the education mainstream.

You will be asked to participate in no more than three one-hour interviews, which may be conducted in person or via email, telephone, or Skype, over the course of the next three months. These interviews may be conducted with you both at the same time or individually. The interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes. At the end of the study, these recordings will be kept on a flash drive in a locked box at my home. You will also be asked to provide samples of _____'s writing from his school years. I would also like to see any journals, diaries, or lesson plan books that you kept that might provide information on _____'s writing lessons or development. Original materials will be returned to you at the conclusion of the study. Copies of some of the more significant documents may be kept in a locked box at my home to aid me in future research.

The possible risks to you for participating in the study include some inconvenience for you and/or your family and the chance that some members of the Mason community who read this work could infer your identity. To minimize this risk, I will write using pseudonyms for you and _____ and will try, to the best of my ability, not to include information that would make you easily identifiable. All information obtained in this study will remain confidential and anonymous. Participation is voluntary, and you have the right to ask questions or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You also have the right to comment on and/or refute any findings and have those comments published as part of the study. There will be no remuneration for participation. If you have any questions, please contact me by phone at (864) 761-6484 or by email at spencerjw1@gmail.com. Questions specific to the research requirements of the university should be directed to Dr. Sydney Brown, my dissertation chair, at (704) 406-3019.

If you are both willing to participate in the proposed study, please sign below. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Jennifer C. Spencer
 Doctoral Candidate, Gardner-Webb University

 Parent's signature

 Date

 Student's signature

 Date

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Initial Interview Questions for Elizabeth

1. The purpose of this study is to explore how Charlie developed as a writer under Mason's model. Do you have any initial thoughts about what elements may have contributed to his writing development?
2. I would like to understand how you used Mason's methods and ideas with Charlie. Can you please describe how you did copywork?
3. How did your use of copywork with Charlie change as he got older?
4. What would you say is the purpose of copywork?
5. How do you think copywork helped Charlie in his writing?
6. How did you use dictation with Charlie?
7. How did your use of dictation change as Charlie got older?
8. What would you say is the purpose of dictation?
9. How do you think dictation helped Charlie in his writing?
10. Can you please describe how you used narration?
11. What would you say is the purpose of narration?
12. How do you think narration contributed to Charlie's writing development?
13. When did Charlie begin to write narrations?
14. How did you decide when he was ready to begin writing narrations?
15. Can you describe Charlie's transition experience when he began to write narrations?
16. Did Charlie show interest in writing before you began asking him to write narrations? If so, please tell about it.
17. How was Charlie's spelling when he first began writing narrations?
18. How did you deal with mistakes in spelling and grammar in Charlie's written narrations?
19. Did Charlie's spelling and grammar usage improve over time? If so, please describe the timeline.

20. When did Charlie learn to read?
21. When did he begin reading his books for himself?
22. How did you decide when he was ready to do his own reading?
23. When did you begin grammar instruction with Charlie?
24. How did you teach him grammar?
25. How do you think grammar instruction helped Charlie grow as a writer?
26. How did Charlie seem to feel about the books he read in school?
27. How do you think the use of books contributed to his writing development?
28. Did you ever use a program specifically to teach writing? If so, please tell about the program(s) and results.

Initial Interview Questions for Charlie

1. How would you describe your ability as a writer?
2. In looking back on your years at home, what factors do you think contributed to your development as a writer?
3. I would like to understand what it was like for you as a student learning under Mason's methods. Can you describe narration?
4. What would you say are the benefits of narration?
5. How did you feel about narration during your home school years?
6. How have your feelings about narration changed since graduation?
7. How do you think narration helped you develop as a writer?
8. What was the transition like when you began writing your narrations?
9. Do you remember trying to include specific words from a text in your own narrations?
10. Do you remember examples of playing with words from the books you were reading in your conversations?
11. Tell me about the books you read. How did you feel about them?

12. How old were you when you started reading your books for yourself?
13. How did you feel about that?
14. How do you think the books you read influenced you as a writer?
15. Can you cite any instances when you played around with the style of an author in your own writing?
16. How did you feel about copywork as a student?
17. How did you choose passages to use for copywork?
18. How do you think copywork contributed to your development as a writer?
19. How did you feel about dictation?
20. How do you think dictation contributed to your development as a writer?
21. How did you feel about grammar instruction?
22. How do you think learning grammar helped you as a writer?
23. How did you learn to spell words correctly?

Questions for Charlie's Second Interview

1. How would you describe your learning style? How do you think you generally learn or remember things best: Things you *see* (as in reading or viewing), things you *hear* (as in listening to a lecture or conversation), or things you *do* (as in projects or models)?
2. How did being able to type your narrations and stories help you?
3. What do you remember about the writing exercises in the Sonlight curriculum?
4. In what ways did such wide reading help you as a writer?
5. Tell me about your experience with keeping lists of names, etc., from your reading and playing with creating a new language. Where did you get that idea? What effects did it have on you?
6. Do you remember being creative as a small child? Or do you think your creativity developed over time? Do you think you are in any way analytical?

7. When and how did you come to view yourself as a writer?
8. In our last interview, you said you considered writing to be a “craft.” Can you elaborate on that?
9. Thinking about writing as a craft made me think about the difference between receiving direct instruction from a teacher and participating as an apprentice under a master. What thoughts do you have about that?
10. What is the difference between “memory” and “assimilation”?
11. In our last conversation, you said that internal processing is similar to, but not exactly the same as, narration. I would like to explore that. Can you describe the act of processing things? How do you think that contributes to one’s ability to write?
12. How did reading Adler’s book have an effect on you?
13. Were you assigned stories, poems, letters, and essays to write? Or is that just something you chose to do in your free time?
14. How much feedback, coaching, or instruction did you receive in writing? From whom?
15. You said that writing your first fan fiction (*The Golden Age of Narnia?*) gave you something you “wanted to write about.” Tell me what you remember about your experience writing that story.
16. You also said that playing pretend was a similar process to writing. Can you explain what you meant by that?
17. Tell me what you remember about literature influencing your play as a child.
18. I was looking through your early writing samples. It looks like you were dictating journal entries about your day to your mom when you were 4. Do you remember that?
19. You started writing some on your own at age 6 (captions for pictures). Do you remember whether your mom helped you with spelling, capitals, and punctuation? Did she prompt you to tell more?
20. Tell me about Roxaboxen.
21. Do you remember having your mom edit pieces you dictated to her?

Questions for Charlie’s Third Interview

This time I want to focus on hearing the stories of your experiences in detail.

1. I am very interested in how play affected your creativity and writing. Can you “reconstruct” for me one or two significant play experiences?
2. I am also very interested in your relationship with authors who are important to you. In our last interview, you used the phrase “before I met Tolkien,” implying a very personal ‘relationship’ with him even though you never physically met. Then, in your response to the narrative summary of our last interview, you said:
3. Have you had any new thoughts about the apprenticeship model v. Mason’s model since our last conversation? How does this idea relate to #2 above?
4. I’d like to hear more about your participation in online forums and how that affected you and your writing.
5. Last time, you said you thought Mason said that attentive reading of good literature was as good as writing practice. Can we try to ‘unpack’ that idea a bit? Do you think your experience supports this?

Questions for Elizabeth’s 2nd Interview

1. Do you think Charlie would have been successful in *any* program simply because he has natural ability?
2. Are Charlie’s brothers *bad* writers, or did they just not progress as far as he did? And are they *bad* spellers, or do they just have more mistakes than Charlie?
3. Charlie and I talked about “spreading the feast of ideas,” and how he took more from the literature and writing. What would you say ____ and ____ [Charlie’s brothers] took more of?
4. Can you describe Charlie’s playing as a young child? Did he seem creative in his play prior to starting school? What are some things you remember him playing at that age?
5. Compare Charlie’s playing to his brothers’. Were there any notable differences? When they played together, did one take the lead?
6. How did Charlie’s play change when he started reading fantasy books?
7. At what point do you think Charlie stopped engaging in creative play?
8. In our first interview, you said that you did not notice Charlie’s “creative side” until he was about 9. What do you mean by “creative side”?
9. Charlie and I talked a good deal about the idea of being indirectly “apprenticed”

in writing under master authors. What are your thoughts about this?

10. How did you decide when Charlie had told you enough in his narrations?
11. Did you encourage Charlie to narrate in his own words rather than those of the author?
12. How did you choose Charlie's copywork? Was it led by mistakes you noticed in his writing? Or was it for ideas? Or to expose him to new things (like quotation marks or semicolons)?
13. Mason did not include creative writing in the school curriculum until at least middle school. As a leader in AO, do you often notice children choosing to write stories and poems well before then?
14. When did you start including creative writing assignments in his school curriculum?
15. When did you realize that Charlie was a "writer"? Did that realization cause you to do anything different in order to help him in that direction?
16. In our last interview, you said that you were starting to realize through our dialogue that Charlie's free reading probably had more of an effect on his writing development than the books that were assigned to him. Have you thought more about that? Can you expand on that idea?
17. How frequently do you remember Charlie asking you how to spell words?
18. Did you coach Charlie in the use of complete sentences, capitals, and punctuation in his writing when he was little?

Appendix C
Debriefing Statement

April 15, 2012

Dear _____ and _____,

Thank you for your participation in my research project on writing development. Interviews and document analysis were used to aid in the development of a theory about how _____ developed as a writer under Charlotte Mason's education model. Information gained from interviews with _____ and _____ were compared with one another and with evidence that was observable in _____'s work samples. Current research on literacy was consulted throughout the study in order for the researcher to gain insight.

Some of the salient ideas that came out of this study were the importance of immersion in excellent models of the written word, the highly personal nature of learning, and the idea of play as a form of creative composition. Your participation was important in helping me understand how writing development progresses under Mason's model.

The final report will be available from me by June 1, 2012. You may contact me at (864) 761-6484 or at spencerjw1@gmail.com with any questions or to receive an email copy of the final report. Your participation will remain absolutely confidential, even if the report is published. Thank you again for participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Jennifer C. Spencer
Ed.D. Candidate
Gardner-Webb University

Appendix D

Ambleside Online Curriculum Book List

Year 0 (suggested read-alouds for children ages birth to six)

Winnie the Pooh series by A. A. Milne
 Beatrix Potter series
The Little House by Virginia Burton
The Story About Ping by Marjorie Flack
The Little Engine that Could by Watty Piper
Blueberries for Sal by Robert McCloskey
Make Way for Ducklings by Robert McCloskey
One Morning in Maine by Robert McCloskey
Ferdinand by Munro Leaf
Ox-Cart Man by Barbara Cooney
Stone Soup and other folk tale retellings by Marcia Brown
Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney
The Story of Little Babaji by Helen Bannerman
Brer Rabbit books by Joel Chandler Harris
Poems and Prayers for the Very Young by Martha Alexander
A Child's Garden of Verses by Robert Louis Stevenson
 A good collection of classic folk tales (Grimm or Andersen)
 Aesop's Fables
 A good collection of Mother Goose nursery rhymes
Poems for Young Children edited by Caroline Royds
A Child's Books of Poems by Gyo Fujikawa
The Golden Books Family Treasury of Poetry selected by Louis Untermeyer
The Oxford Book of Children's Verse edited by Peter and Iona Opie
The Church Mice series by Graham Oakley
Hiawatha by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
My Shadow by Robert Louis Stevenson
Just So Stories picture books by Rudyard Kipling
Roxaboxen by Barbara Cooney
The Tale of Three Trees illustrated by Angela Elwell Hunt
Wynken, Blynken, and Nod illustrated by Susan Jeffers

For early readers:

Frog and Toad readers by Arnold Lobel
Little Bear readers by Else Homelund Minarek
George and Martha series by James Marshall
Frances books by Russell Hoban
Henry and Mudge series by Cynthia Rylant

The books listed in Years 1-12 are curriculum books only. There are hundreds more listed as suggestions for free reading.

Year 1

Trial and Triumph by Richard Hannula
An Island Story by H. E. Marshall

Fifty Famous Stories Retold by James Baldwin
Viking Tales by Jennie Hall
Benjamin Franklin by Ingri D'Aulaire
George Washington by Ingri D'Aulaire
Buffalo Bill by Ingri D'Aulaire
Paddle to the Sea by Holling C. Holling
James Herriot's Treasury for Children by James Herriot
The Burgess Bird Book for Children by Thornton Burgess
A Primary Reader by E. Louise Smythe
A Child's Garden of Verses by Robert Louis Stevenson
Now We are Six/When We Were Very Young by A. A. Milne
A Child's Book of Poems by Gyo Fujikawa
Little House series by Laura Ingalls Wilder
The Blue Fairy Book by Andrew Lang

Year 2

An Island Story (continued from Year 1) by H. E. Marshall
A Child's History of the World by Virgil Hillyer
This Country of Ours by H. E. Marshall
The Little Duke by Charlotte Yonge
Joan of Arc by Diane Stanley
Tree in the Trail by Holling C. Holling
Seabird by Holling C. Holling
The Burgess Animal Book for Children by Thornton Burgess
Pagoo by Holling C. Holling
 Poetry of Walter De La Mare
 Poetry of Eugene Field and James Whitcombe Riley
 Poetry of Christina Rossetti
Tales from Shakespeare by Charles and Mary Lamb
Pilgrim's Progress Book 1 by John Bunyan
Parables from Nature by Margaret Gatty
Understood Betsy by Dorothy Canfield Fisher
The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Grahame
Robin Hood by Howard Pyle

Year 3

An Island Story (cont.)
This Country of Ours (cont.)
A Child's History of the World (cont.)
Da Vinci by Emily Hahn
Bard of Avon: The Story of William Shakespeare by Peter Vennema and Diane Stanley
Squanto by Feenie Ziner
Secrets of the Woods by William J. Long
 Poetry of William Blake
 Poetry of Sara Teasdale

Poetry of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
American Tall Tales by Adrien Stoutenburg
Tales from Shakespeare (cont.)
The Heroes by Charles Kingsley
Pilgrim's Progress (cont.)
The Princess and the Goblin by George MacDonald
Men of Iron by Howard Pyle
Children of the New Forest by F. Marryat
The Jungle Book by Rudyard Kipling

Year 4

This Country of Ours (cont.)
George Washington's World by Genevieve Foster
Poor Richard by James Daugherty
Abigail Adams: Witness to a Revolution by Natalie S. Bober
Minn of the Mississippi by Holling C. Holling
Madam How and Lady Why by Charles Kingsley
The Storybook of Science by J. H. Fabre
Poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson
Poetry of Emily Dickenson
Poetry of William Wordsworth
The Age of Fable by Thomas Bulfinch
The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe
Kidnapped by Robert Louis Stevenson
The Incredible Journey by Sheila Burnford
The Legend of Sleepy Hollow by Washington Irving
Paul Revere's Ride by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
Rip Van Winkle by Washington Irving
Three plays by William Shakespeare
Three Lives from Plutarch

Year 5

This Country of Ours (cont.)
Abraham Lincoln's World by Genevieve Foster
What Everyone Should Know About the 20th Century by Alan Axelrod
Of Courage Undaunted: Across the Continent with Lewis and Clark by James Daugherty
Passion for the Impossible: The Life of Lillas Trotter by Miriam Huffman Rockness
Carry a Big Stick: The Uncommon Heroism of Teddy Roosevelt by George Grant
Explore the Holy Land by Ann Voskamp
Wild Animals I Have Known by Ernest Thomson Seton
Madam How and Lady Why (cont.)
The Story of Inventions by Michael J. McHugh and Frank P. Bachman
Great Astronomers by R. S. Ball
Talking Wire by O. J. Stevenson

Biography of George Washington Carver
 Poetry of Rudyard Kipling
 Poetry of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
 Poetry of John Greenleaf Whittier
 Poetry of Paul Lawrence Dunbar
Age of Fable (cont.)
King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table by Roger Lancelyn Green
Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens
Kim by Rudyard Kipling
 Three plays by William Shakespeare
 Three Lives from Plutarch

Year 6

The Story of Mankind by Henrik Van Loon
What Everyone Should Know About the 20th Century (cont.)
Augustus Caesar's World by Genevieve Foster
Story of the Greeks by H. A. Guerber
Story of the Romans by H. A. Guerber
Genesis, Finding Our Roots by Ruth Beechick
Never Give In by Vautier Golding
School of the Woods by William J. Long
The Sea Around Us by Rachel Carson
It Couldn't Just Happen by Lawrence Richards
Secrets of the Universe series by Paul Fleisher
Albert Einstein and the Theory of Relativity by Robert Cwiklik
Archimedes and the Door of Science by Jeanne Bendick
Galileo and the Magic Numbers by Sidney Rosen
 Poetry of Robert Frost
 Poetry of Carl Sandburg
 Poetry of Alfred Noyes
Age of Fable (cont.)
The Hobbit by J. R. R. Tolkien
Animal Farm by George Orwell
Black Ships Before Troy by Rosemary Sutcliff
 Three plays by William Shakespeare
 Three Lives from Plutarch

Year 7

Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis
The Pursuit of God by A. W. Tozer
The Pursuit of Holiness by Jerry Bridges
The Birth of Britain by Winston Churchill
Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People
 William of Malmesbury's account of the Battle of Hastings
 The Magna Carta

In Freedom's Cause by G. A. Henty
History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea by William Tyre
The Daughter of Time by Josephine Tey
The Life of King Alfred by Asser
Personal Reflections of Joan of Arc by Mark Twain
The Brendan Voyage by Tim Severin
How the Heather Looks by Joan Bodger
Whatever Happened to Penny Candy? By Richard Maybury
Ourselves by Charlotte Mason
The Once and Future King by T. H. White
The History of English Literature for Girls and Boys by H. E. Marshall
The Age of Chivalry by Thomas Bulfinch
Watership Down by Richard Adams
A Taste of Chaucer by Anne Malcolmson
The Oxford Book of English Verse edited by Arthur Quiller-Couch
 Poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson
 Poetry of John Keats
Our Mother Tongue: An Introductory Guide to English Grammar by Nancy Wilson
The Grammar of Poetry by Matt Whitling
Lay of the Land by Dallas Lore Sharp
How to Read a Book by Mortimer Adler
The Story of Painting by H. W. Janson
Fearfully and Wonderfully Made by Paul Brand
 Three plays by William Shakespeare
 Three Lives from Plutarch

Year 8

Saints and Heroes by George Hodges
Evidence that Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell
The Mind of the Maker by Dorothy Sayers
Desiring God by John Piper
The New World by Winston Churchill
 Martin Luther's defense before the Diet of Worms
 Queen Elizabeth's speech to the Spanish Armada
 John Donne's funeral address
A Man for All Seasons by Robert Bolt
The Life of Sir Francis Bacon by William Rawley
The Voyage of the Armada: The Spanish Story by David Howarth
A History of Plymouth Plantation by William Bradford
Johannes Kepler: Giant of Faith and Science by John Hudson Tiner
The Life of Dr. Donne by Izaak Walton
A Coffin for King Charles by C. V. Wedgwood
Galileo's Daughter by Dava Sobel
Oliver Cromwell and the Rule of the Puritans in England by Sir Charles Firth
Christopher Columbus, Mariner by Samuel Eliot Morison
Kon Tiki by Thor Heyerdahl

Whatever Happened to Justice? By Richard Maybury
I, Pencil by Leonard Read
Ourselves (cont.)
Utopia by Sir Thomas More
 Essays by Sir Francis Bacon
The History of English Literature for Boys and Girls (cont.)
Simonds American Literature
Everyman: A Morality Play
Westward Ho! By Charles Kingsley
The Diary of Samuel Pepys
I Promessi Sposi by Alessandro Manzoni
The Holy War by John Bunyan
Fairie Queene Book 1 by Spenser
 Poetry of John Donne
 Poetry of George Herbert
 Poetry of John Milton
The Roar on the Other Side: A Guide for Student Poets by Suzanne Clark
Our Mother Tongue (cont.)
Rural Hours by Susan Fenimore Cooper
William Harvey and the Discovery of the Circulation of the Blood by Thomas Henry Huxley
How to Read a Book (cont.)
 Three plays by William Shakespeare
 Three Lives from Plutarch

Year 9

Christian Life by Sinclair Ferguson
The God Who Is There by Francis Schaeffer
The Practice and Presence of God by Brother Lawrence
The Age of Revolution by Winston Churchill
 Transcript from the Salem Witch Trials of 1692
 Declaration of Rights (1765)
 The Declaration of Independence (1776)
 The Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence (1775)
 Articles of Confederation (1777)
 Treaty With Great Britain (1783)
 Constitution of the United States (1787)
The Federalist Nos. 1 and 2
Letters to His Son by Lord Chesterfield
 Patrick Henry's *Give Me Liberty* speech
 Edmund Burke's *Plea for Conciliation with the American Colonies*
Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God by Jonathan Edwards
John Wesley Denounces the Doctrine of Predestination
 Washington's First Inaugural Address (1789)
 Treaty with the six Nations (1794)
 Washington's Farewell Address (1796)

Treaty With France (Louisiana Purchase) (1803)
 Treaty With Great Britain (End of the War of 1812) (1814)
Miracle at Philadelphia by Catherine Drinker Bowen
The Invasion of Canada by Pierre Berton
 Speech on the Slave Trade by William Wilburforce
Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation by Joseph J. Ellis
Founding Father: Rediscovering George Washington by Richard Brookhiser
The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin
John Adams by David McCullough
Napoleon Bonaparte by Johh S. C. Abbott
London to Land's End by Daniel Defoe
A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland by Samuel Johnson
Are You Liberal, Conservative, or Confused? By Richard Maybury
The English Constitution by Walter Bagehot
Common Sense by Thomas Paine
The Rights of Man by Thomas Paine
Reflections on the Revolution of France by Edmund Burke
Ourselves (cont.)
An Essay on Man by Alexander Pope
The Four Loves by C. S. Lewis
The Problem of Pain by C. S. Lewis
War of the Worldviews by Gary DeMar
Postmodern Times by Gene Edward Veith
History of English Literature for Boys and Girls (cont.)
Simond's Literature (cont.)
Isaac Bickerstaf and *Days with Sir Roger DeCoverly* by Richard Steele
Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift
Tale of a Tub and *Battle of the Books* by Jonathan Swift
The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia by Samuel Johnson
She Stoops to Conquer by Oliver Goldsmith
The School for Scandal by Richard Sheridan
The Count of Monte Christo by Alexandre Dumas
Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen
Faust, Book 1 by Johann Wolfgang Goethe
 Poetry of Alexander Pope
 Poetry of William Cowper
 Poetry of George Gordon
 Poetry of Lord Byron
The Elements of Style by Strunk and White
The Microbe Hunters by Paul de Kruif
The Land of Little Rain by Mary Austin
 Henri Fabre's *Insect Lives*
Love is a Fallacy by Max Schulman
The History of Art by H. W. Janson
The Arts by Hendrik Van Loon

Year 10

Knowing God by J. I. Packer
The Attributes of God by A. W. Pink
The Imitation of Christ by Thomas a Kempis
 Selections from *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*
The Great Democracies by Winston Churchill
Arguing About Slavery by William Lee Miller
Killer Angels by Michael Shaara
 The Missouri Compromise
 The Dred Scott Decision
 The Emancipation Proclamation
 The Confederate Constitution
Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee by Dee Alexander Brown
The Story of Abraham Lincoln by Helen Nicolay
Queen Victoria by Sarah Tytler
The Spirit of the Age by William Hazlitt
The Autobiography of Frederick Douglass
Up From Slavery by Booker T. Washington
Unconditional Surrender by John Lord
The Oregon Trail by Francis Parkman
Evaluating Books by Richard Maybury
The Law by Frederic Bastiat
The Vision of the Anointed by Thomas Sowell
On Liberty by John Stuart Mill
Graves of Academe by Richard Mitchell
Character is Destiny by Russell Gough
One Blood by Ken Ham, Carl Wieland, and Don Batten
Sesame and Lilies by John Ruskin
The Deadliest Monster by Jeff Baldwin
How Should We Then Live by Francis Schaeffer
Les Miserables by Victor Hugo
Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe
Frankenstein by Mary Shelley
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson
Silas Marner by George Eliot
Moby Dick by Herman Melville
 Essays by Montaigne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, Frederick Douglas, and G. K. Chesterton
 Poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge
 Poetry of Elizabeth Browning
 Poetry of Ralph Waldo Emerson
The Book on Writing by Paula LaRocque
Microbe Hunters (cont.)
Six Easy Pieces: Essentials of Physics Explained by Its Most Brilliant Teacher by Richard P. Feynman
 Henri Fabre's *Insect Lives*

How To Read a Book (cont.)

The Fallacy Detective by Nathaniel Blueborn and Hans Blueborn

How to Read Slowly by James Sire

Three Lives from Plutarch

Three plays by William Shakespeare

Year 11

The Holiness of God by R. C. Sproul

The Cost of Discipleship by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The Pleasures of God by John Piper

A History of the Twentieth Century: The Concise Edition of the Acclaimed World

History by Martin Gilbert

Theodore Roosevelt's Letters to His Children edited by Joseph Bucklin Bishop

Testament of Youth by Vera Brittain

Some of Us Survived: The Story of an Armenian Boy by Kerop Bedoukian

Ethiopia Through Russian Eyes by Alexander Bulatovich

Speeches of Teddy Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Lou Gehrig, Winston Churchill,

Edward VIII, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur, Martin Luther

King, Jr., John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Mother

Theresa, Queen Elizabeth II, Clarence Thomas, Elie Wiesel, and Billy Graham

The Men Behind Hitler by Bernard Schreiber

Mein Kampf by Adolf Hitler

The Nuremberg Trials

The Hungarian Revolt by Richard Lettis and William Morris

The Americanization of Edward Bok: The Autobiography of a Dutch Boy

Georges Vanier: Soldier edited by Deborah Cowley

Black Boy by Richard Wright

Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank

Mao Tse-Tung and His China by Albert Marrin

The World: Travels 1950-2000 by Jan Morris

Under the Tuscan Sun by Frances Mayes

Economics in One Lesson by Henry Hazlitt

Autobiography of Slander by Edna Lyall

Seven Men Who Rule the World from the Grave by David Breese

Amusing Ourselves To Death by Neil Postman

Modern Fascism by Gene Edward Veith

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald

All Quiet on the Westward Front by Erich Marie Remarque

The Chosen by Chaim Potok

Brideshead Revisited by Evelyn Waugh

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

Short Stories

Essays

Norton's Anthology of Modern Poetry

On Writing Well by William Zinsser

Less Than Words Can Say by Richard Mitchell
The Book Nobody Read—Chasing the Revolutions of Nicolaus Copernicus by Owen
 Gingrich
 Henri Fabre's Lives of Insects
Our National Parks by John Muir
A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf by John Muir
The Life of the Caterpillar by Henri Fabre
 Three plays by William Shakespeare
 Three Lives from Plutarch

Year 12 (still under construction)

Histories by Herodotus
The Code of Hammurabi
History of Rome by Livy
The Ruin and Conquest of Britain by Gildas
The Greek Way by Edith Hamilton
The Echo of Greece by Edith Hamilton
The Roman Way by Edith Hamilton
How the Irish Saved Civilization by Thomas Cahill
 Four Lives from Plutarch
Italian Journey: 1786-1788 by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
Ourselves (cont.)
The Gift of Fire by Richard Mitchell
Orthodoxy by G. K. Chesterton
From Socrates to Sartre by T. Z. Lavine
Pensees by Blaise Pascal
 Three plays by William Shakespeare
Till We Have Faces by C. S. Lewis
Oedipus Rex and *Antigone* by Sophocles
Medea and *Hippolytus* by Euripides
The Aeneid by Virgil
The Man Who Was Thursday by G. K. Chesterton
Beowulf
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight translated by J. R. R. Tolkien
 Short Stories
 Essays