ABSTRACT

KAULFUSS, ALEX RUSSELL. Autobiographical Pedagogy: A personalized approach to instruction in the English classroom. (Under the direction of Ruie Pritchard).

An important point which educational researchers have discovered and validated time and time again is that our students are different. They learn differently from adults, and they learn differently from each other. Most teachers know that they cannot teach all students the same way, that some difference in instruction and assessment are necessary in order for students not only to achieve their potential but also to succeed in the first place, and that students must be able to make relevant connections between themselves and the material being presented.

For this study, I designed, presented, implemented, and evaluated a holistic approach to teaching literature and writing, which combines elements of differentiated instruction, differentiated assessment, and narrative pedagogy, entitled The Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom. The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not a degree of success could be found with The Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom.

My subjects for this study were ninety-six 12th grade students, composing four English classes, two at the AP level and two at the academic level. Minority students accounted for about thirty three percent of the research population.

Several times during the course of this investigation, I measure the results i.e., grades, evaluations, opinions, etc., of The Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom. The goal of the study was to determine if the Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom was effective in the areas of student learning and attitudes.
I determined that not only were the grades that the students earned demonstrative of success but also that the students were responding with interest and enthusiasm, mainly because of their ability to offer input into their own assignments and assessment and also because of the connections made through narrative instruction. Also, The Autobiographical Approach proved to help students retain their learning, in that students were able to aptly reply to questions asked of material that had been taught using this approach greater than six months earlier.

Future research on this topic could include its expansion beyond the English classroom to other disciplines, as well as compare this approach to other pedagogical approaches in controlled studies; a study of its long term effectiveness beyond the six month period, even into the next school year would be valuable. Grade levels other than high school seniors could be included in additional studies of this pedagogical method.
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PEDAGOGY: A PERSONALIZED APPROACH TO INSTRUCTION IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

by

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of North Carolina State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

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DEDICATION

To my wife, Liz,
your encouragement and suggestions
have been a tremendous support to me,
and I am so grateful for them.

and

To my students,
who drive me,
thank you for your support
and enthusiasm.
BIOGRAPHY

Alex Russell Kaulfuss was born in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, to Herb and Julia Kaulfuss. After only a few short years in Wisconsin, a military move took the Kaulfuss family to San Antonio, TX, and then another to Raleigh, NC.

Though Alex had always enjoyed tutoring and helping others in school, he had not really considered teaching as a career until his junior year of high school. Alex applied for the prestigious Teaching Fellows Scholarship, and during his senior year, he was accepted to North Carolina State University’s English Education program as a Teaching Fellow.

After graduation, Alex was married and moved to Wake Forest, NC and began teaching at Needham Broughton High School in Raleigh, NC. He has taught, both in a traditional classroom and online, and worked as a private tutor for six years.

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After graduation, Alex will pursue National Board Certification and begin working toward his doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first thank the members of my committee for their ideas, support, feedback, and patience. Without them, I’m not sure that I would have been able to pull this off. Ruie Pritchard, thank you so much for the guidance and time that you put into the feedback and revisions of my writing. Your input and guidance have been invaluable, and I am indebted to you for them. Sidney Johnson, I cannot begin to adequately thank you for all that you’ve done for me. Your guidance regarding autobiographical writing and apprehension helped me to form the foundation for this research, and I am terribly thankful for that. Ron Honeycutt, your suggestions, instructions, and insight have been truly helpful. Your input was instrumental in helping me find my focus and get things organized properly. Candy Beal, I thank you kindly for agreeing to be a part of my committee and for the words of encouragement you’ve offered. Thank you all.

I’d like to thank my family and friends who graciously listened when I offered long-winded answers to the question, “How’s your thesis going?” Your encouragement and support have been crucial to this accomplishment.

And finally, I thank my students, for without them, there wouldn’t be a reason for all of this. Your help, work, and insight are very much appreciated.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Knowledge which is acquired through compulsion obtains no hold on the mind -- Plato

CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

Teachers, new teachers in particular, face a number of challenges which threaten to drive them from the profession: low pay, inadequate resources, diminished professionalism, lackluster support, to name a few. However, the balm for any and all of these adversities for many teachers is the thrill which comes from seeing a student succeed. Seeing a student make a better life for him/herself is worth more than public respect or administrative support. Changing a life is worth more than money. However, most teachers are affected just as strongly when a student fails as when one succeeds, and when teachers approach a lesson with a one-size-fits-all mentality, either because of logistic necessity or because of a personal educational philosophy, the needs of all students are not met, and what is truly gratifying about being an educator becomes corrupt.

The fundamental need to better understand, reach, and educate all students, not just the ones belonging to the majority, is the basis for this inquiry. The need to support beginning, as well as career, teachers with new ideas, coupled with the need to foster student success, pushed this inquiry forward.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A major problem facing educators at all levels is the keen awareness that students often feel detached from the content they are required to learn (Gardner, 2004; Tomlinson, 2004, 2001). Research from Pintrich and Schrauben (1992, in Paas, 2005) suggests that “important variables that have been identified as motivators for student
efforts are perceived importance, usefulness, and the value of engaging in a task," (27). With regard to History, for example, I have heard some students comment that teachers are foolish to expect them to remember a bunch of dates and facts about dead European guys, yet in the very next breath, some are able to recite the batting averages of every national leaguer since Jesse Burkett of St. Louis hit a .376 in 1901. Math presents a similar problem: students demand to know why they need to learn computations when a calculator is readily available to do whatever they could ever want or need, but they are able to deftly and succinctly tell you how to level off a section of ground and lay an 8-inch thick concrete slab capable of supporting more than three tons. If students believe that the effort expended is a waste of time or is unnecessary for success, they will not be motivated to exert sufficient mental effort (Paas, 2005). I could continue with examples, as the examples are as numerous as the students themselves, but I will simply point out that each student has a detailed knowledge of that which interests him or her and rejects content seen as irrelevant.

From a common sense standpoint, people understand themselves, pursue what interests them, and spend time doing what they enjoy. A man who enjoys fishing will learn the location of the best fishing holes, will research the best lures to use, will discuss techniques with friends, and so on. This fisherman, depending on the nature of his hobby, may expand his expertise to include waterways, synthetic materials, and boating equipment. When something is of interest to a person, he or she will explore it with zeal.

When JB, a student in my second period English class, starts talking about hunting, his blood starts pumping faster, his voice starts getting louder, his body becomes animated, and I’m thinking the whole time, Please, dear God, let him stop raving about
killin’ some deer, and sittin’ in trees, and smellin’ like dirt. I will do anything; just please let this end! I don’t say this aloud, of course, as I’m fairly certain that when my blood starts pumping about Macbeth, and when my voice gets louder about A Modest Proposal, and when my body becomes animated about Le Morte D’Arthur, JB is thinking something along the lines of, Please, dear God, let the bell ring. I will do anything; just let this literary madness stop! And frankly, I can’t blame him; if I have little or no interest in hearing about his passion (even though I fake it), then how can I really expect him to have any sort of interest in my passion? Many teachers trust the fallacy that if they are passionate enough about the subject matter, their passion will spread and draw forth some desire for mathematical, literary, scientific, or historical information buried deep within the souls of their students. I don’t care how much whoopin’ and hollerin’ JB does about hunting; I don’t care if his eyes fill with tears of passion and excitement; I just can’t get into hunting like he can. For this reason, I can accept that one day JB may say to me, “Look, I’m glad you like all this stuff, but I just don’t dig Shakespeare.”

In this give and take with JB, I am at a distinct disadvantage. Should he have the opportunity, and I the time, he could strap some camouflage coveralls on me, stuff my head into a bright orange hat, and drag me into the woods. I’d kick and scream the whole way, but I feel certain that should I come face to face with a deer or, better yet, a bear, adrenaline would shoot through my veins and I would feel, maybe just for a moment, the kind of excitement that JB feels about hunting. If I had some kind of time machine, I could strap a safety harness on JB, stuff his head into a cryo-helmet, drag him into my time machine, and transport him to the 17th Century. He’d kick and scream the whole
way, but I feel certain that once he was face to face with Shakespeare his blood would pump a little faster, too.

All jokes aside, JB is able to physically put me into his passion. I, on the other hand, have a much more difficult task in putting JB, and other students, into mine. To be an effective teacher, I must find a way to put each of them (not “the student”, but JB, TC, SP, CC, DT, et al.) into the literature. This is where my Autobiographical Approach to Instruction in the English Classroom comes into play.

**PURPOSE STATEMENT**

The purpose of this descriptive study is to propose a comprehensive, dynamic model of approaching teaching which I call The Autobiographical Approach to Instruction in the English Classroom. Throughout this paper I define and provide a rationale for this approach. Also, I provide support for this approach though the use of pre- and post-surveys, interviews, student work samples, student grades, as well as my reflections in field notes, and the written reflections and evaluations made by my students.

The overall goal, then, is to determine to what extent student learning and engagement derives from using the Autobiographical Approach. Some of the components of the Autobiographical Approach are supported by educational research on Learning Styles, Multiple Intelligences, Differentiated Instruction and Assessment, Teachers’ Awareness and Response to Differentiation, Narrative Pedagogy, and Flow. My aim is to determine if student engagement with learning is enhanced when these elements work in tandem.
NEED FOR THE STUDY

Research is needed to explore and identify effective ways to educate and foster success among students. As it stands now, many students graduating from public education systems do not acquire the skills necessary for success in the post-high school world. A survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (2004) on the number of students enrolled in post secondary remediation courses supports this point; according to this survey, 28%, almost one third, of post secondary students in 1995 and in 2000 were enrolled in remediation courses (See Appendix 7.2). Not only do these percentages not improve over time, but the situation gets worse; Appendix 7.3 shows a seven percent shift between 1995 and 2000 in the amount of time which students spend in remediation courses. This shift shows that seven percent of these students are spending a longer amount of time in remediation courses, which do not count toward graduation. Moreover, 42% of students who attend a two-year public institution, that’s almost half, did not acquire the skills and knowledge that they should have while at the secondary level.

If this high percentage of students is in college (or another post-secondary institution) and needs remediation because its needs were not met in high school, the percentage of students graduating from high school overall whose needs are not being met, a number which includes those students who choose not to further their educations, must be astronomical.

This study may help determine whether or not the Autobiographical Approach is an effective tool in reaching all students. Also, this research illustrates ways to implement
differentiated instruction, differentiated assessment, and narrative pedagogy into an integrated model.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The purpose of this research was to investigate to what extent student learning and engagement are evident as a result of employing the Autobiographical Approach to teaching English in a high school setting. Specifically, the research questions are:

*Research Question 1:* When teachers employ the Autobiographical Approach to teaching English, to what extent will students feel as though their learning needs have been met?

*Research Question 2:* To what degree do students enjoy the Autobiographical Approach?

*Research Question 3:* How will students react/respond to differentiated assessments? To what extent will students be able to create meaningful connections with the material because of the personalization of assessment methods?

*Research Question 4:* To what extent will the narrative aspect of the Autobiographical Approach spark interest from the students?

*Research Question 5:* To what extent will students readily make personal connections to the literature?

*Research Question 6:* When answering questions from the literature, both immediately after the lesson and several weeks after the lesson, to what...
extent will students be able to recall and apply the material from the instruction?

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH

To fully understand The Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom, one must divorce the term “autobiographical” from the notion that it is solely a genre label. While some autobiographical writing will be a very helpful in developing and supporting the foundation of this approach for each student, the Autobiographical Approach is not really based upon the genre of literature from whence it borrows its name. I am using this term because this approach which I am proposing is one which students help to develop themselves (auto) based upon their own experiences, needs, and learning styles (biography).

The Autobiographical Approach to teaching literature and writing is an approach which combines the structure and dynamics of differentiated instruction and assessment and the personal, connections-driven instruction of narrative pedagogy. This approach is based largely on the research and writings of Carol Ann Tomlinson (1991; 2001), Howard Gardner (1993; 1995; 2004), and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1991; 1996). The Autobiographical Approach to instruction takes into account learner variance as well as preference, choice, and enjoyment, thereby attempting to bring the material being taught to the learner as opposed to trying to bring the learner to the material.

The Autobiographical Approach is fairly broad. I believe this is as it should be. In the past, many approaches to education have been presented with a narrow focus, concerning only instruction or only assessment or only student response or some
other singular aspect. Generally, this creates a “standard-AND” classroom setting, where
a teacher’s general approach to pedagogy and assessment remains the same with the
addition of some small, specific new educational characteristic. For example, suppose a
teacher has always taught a science-fiction unit, in which (s)he has students read three
H.G. Wells novels: The Time Machine, The Invisible Man, and War of the Worlds. Now,
with the remarkable innovation of student choice, the teacher allows the students to
choose one of the novels to read instead of reading all three; however, the instruction and
assessment that attend each book remains unchanged. While the practice of student
choice has proven successful (Daniels, 1994; Tomlinson, 1999, 2000), allowing it to
stand alone like this, renders the practice effectively useless.

Many studies and personal accounts support the claim that an autobiographical
approach to education fosters student achievement: “[e]ight studies…reveal that when
youngsters were taught with instructional resources that matched…their preferred
modalities, they achieved statistically higher test scores…”(Dunn, et al, 1989, p. 52).

If educators hope that students will achieve their maximum potential, more of an
effort must be made to tailor our curricula to their individual needs and create an
environment where “diverse students [develop] conscious strategies for narrative
reflection by drawing upon their own lived experiences to make sense of texts and
develop ongoing intertextual conversations…” (DeBlase, 2005).

Tomlinson (2003) adds in her article Deciding to Teach Them All that
differentiation can liberate students from stereotypical expectations.

James Nehring (1992) asserts,
We assume in this country that all kids are the same. Of course no educated adult would ever say that, but the assumption is clearly there. It is embedded in our school system... We force all kids through the same mold. If there is one thing on which both research and common sense agree, it is that kids are not the same, that they learn in different ways, that they respond to different kinds of incentives (p. 156 in Tomlinson, 1998).

Education is one of the most dynamic endeavors one may ever hope to undertake, for both the teacher and the student. Attempting to incorporate one simple idea or change one specific approach with regard to the whole of education is tantamount to throwing a bucket of water into the ocean. Were a person to stand on the corner of a street on a hot summer afternoon and have someone dump a bucket of water over him/her, the result would be considered dramatic; however, that same bucket of water dumped over the head of someone splashing around in the ocean would have little effect should it even be noticed at all. Dozens, if not hundreds, of important aspects go into each educational situation, each method of assessment, each pedagogical practice, each choice, each decision, each approach; they all come together to form an educational ocean, not a dry, stagnant, street corner.

It is for this reason, this undeniable characteristic, that The Autobiographical Approach to teaching in the English Classroom is a multi-faceted approach. It involves both pedagogy and assessment; it involves the teacher, the student, and the classroom community; it accounts for individual need and individual choice.
Consider, as a graphic representation of The Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom, the following diagram (Figure 1.1):

At the core of this approach lies the literary content. Fueled by literary content, the use of narrative, either from the student(s) or from the teacher, ignites and invokes other narratives from other members of the classroom community. Figure 1.2 illustrates
the array of connections created from the dynamic core of the Autobiographical Approach. Here, before the literature, or writing prompt, is even introduced, read, or explored, three essential groups of connections are created: (1) student to student, (2) student to teacher, and (3) teacher to student. After the literature or prompt is brought into the picture, two more essential groups of connections surface: (4) student to literature and (5) teacher to literature, along with a number of smaller, structural groups of connections: (6) student to literature to student, (7) student to literature to teacher, (8) teacher to literature to student, and (9) student to literature to self. (We will assume for the sake of argument that the teacher has already made the “teacher to literature to self” connection.)

The teacher and the students have constructed a stable network of interpersonal connections (shown in Figure 1.2) which combines individual and shared experiences. This serves to spark interest in the literature or writing (the core of Figure 1.1) before the students even realize that a piece of literature or a writing prompt is being introduced, and
indicates for the teacher prior knowledge, emotional responses, interests, and a number of
other things a teacher may need/use to guide instruction.

Figure 1.1 illustrates that the dynamic narrative core of the Autobiographical
Approach fuels the surrounding aspects of differentiated instruction and differentiated
assessment. The outer ring is designed such that differentiated assessment feeds into
differentiated instruction which, in turn, feeds back into the assessment. As Carol Ann
Tomlinson indicates “differentiated instruction is rooted in assessment. Assessment is no
longer predominantly something that happens at the end of a unit to determine ‘who got
it.’ Assessment routinely takes place as a unit begins to determine the particular needs of
individuals in relation to the unit’s goals,” (2001, p. 4).

The differentiated instruction aspect of the Autobiographical Approach carries the
individual connections and questions forward into the lesson by maintaining the input
that each student has offered, translating into a certain degree of student control over the
lesson and the learning.

Differentiated assessment rounds out the autobiographical trifecta by attempting
to create relevant, meaningful growth amongst the students. Generally, in a more
traditional (that is, non-personalized) approach to education, students leave behind what
they have “learned” from a given lesson if they see little or no relevant connection to
their own lives or their own educational growth. By using differentiated assessment, the
teacher carries through to the end of the lesson or unit the individual connections that
were created before the literature or writing was introduced.

The most important characteristic of The Autobiographical Approach is that it is
highly personalized. The model, as I have established it here, is a way that I have been
able to personalize instruction to a great degree. It is not necessary that each and every
lesson contain each aspect presented above; this approach is intended to be an overall,
holistic approach to the whole of a course or discipline, not something to be applied as a
lesson by lesson approach (though it could be). Again, the component or characteristic
that must be present is personalization, and a wonderful source of information to
personalize instruction is student input and choice.

SUMMARY

A passionate ideology resides within new teachers, an ideology which quickly
fades once they realize that their students do not particularly care about the same things
that they themselves care about. When teachers begin to realize that students see
knowledge of literature or science or math or history or French as simply hoops through
which one must jump, teachers, both new and experienced, begin to lose that glimmer,
and they begin to say things like, “Come on guys. I know it’s boring, but we have to slog
through it,” or “We’ve only got two more chapters to drudge through,” or “I don’t really
know why the state wants us to do this. But they do, and we are just going to have to
deal with that.” Pretty soon, teachers either leave the profession or become the teachers
they never wanted to become running classrooms where students are receptacles who
simply copy notes, listen to lectures, and wait for the bell to ring.

This chapter introduced the complex problem and issues contributing to students’
disengagement when learning content material and proposed a model for approaching
education, called The Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom, where the
content of the discipline, the interest and passion of the teacher, and the needs and interests of the students are combined to create an truly effective approach to education.

Through a variety of questions, lessons, surveys, interviews, and reflections, this study seeks to determine whether or not this proposed approach can cultivate an interesting, enjoyable, and effective pedagogy.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

To date, I have been unable to locate any previous research that specifically addresses the combined parts of The Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom; however, research has been conducted which supports the various aspects, claims, and foundations of my proposed model. While researching, I found that a few themes kept resurfacing in the different works, being said in different ways by different writers or researchers. I have condensed these themes and concepts into six categories which surround and support The Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom: (1) learning styles, (2) multiple intelligences, (3) differentiated instruction and assessment, (4) teachers’ awareness of and response to differentiation, (5) narrative pedagogy, and (6) flow.

LEARNING STYLES

Simon Cassidy (2004) describes a learning style as “the preferred way in which an individual approaches a task or learning situation” (p. 421), and in an Educational Leadership survey article (1989, p. 56), authors Dunn, Beaudry, and Klavas argue that “[e]very person has a learning style – [one that]’s as individual as a signature.” Carol Ann Tomlinson (1999, p. 1) states that our “students … span the spectrum of learning readiness, personal interests, culturally shaped ways of seeing and speaking of the world, and experiences in that world.” Put more simply: some “may respond to the challenge of a mountain peak but remain indifferent to the opportunity to learn a piece of music,”
while others “may jump at the chance to learn the music and ignore the mountain,”
(Csikszentmihalyi, 1991, pp. 8-9).

Though certain characteristics and qualities of learning styles have been researched for much longer, individual learning styles have been actively studied for about four decades. In his article, *Learning Styles: An overview of theories, models, and measures*, Simon Cassidy (2004) offers a discursive list of some popular learning style theories, which is “by no means exhaustive,” (p. 425). Following, I’ve included the list of learning styles he discusses as a means to demonstrate the sheer volume of consideration that this subject has received over the last few decades. For further information about or discussions of these learning styles, refer to Cassidy’s article, which appears in the August 2004 issue of *Educational Psychology*.

- Field dependence/independence: Witkin, 1962
- Leveller-sharpener: Holzman and Klein, 1954
- Holist-serialist: Pask, 1972
- Verbaliser-visualiser: Pavio, 1971
- Style delineator: Gregorc, 1982
- Assimilator-explorer: Kauffmann, 1979
- Adaption- innovation: Kirton, 1994
- Intuition-analysis: Allinson and Hayes, 1996
- Experiential Learning Model: Kolb, 1984
- Learning Styles Questionnaire: Honey and Mumford, 1992
• Learning Styles Inventory: Vermunt, 1994
• Surface-deep: Entwistle and Tait, 1995
• Study Process Questionnaire: Biggs et al., 2001
• Inventory of Learning Processes: Schmeck et al., 1991
• Conceptual level: Hunt, Butler, Noy, and Rosser, 1978
• Learning Styles Inventory: Dunn, Dunn, and Price, 1989
• Styles of learning interaction model: Reichmann and Grasha, 1974
• Child rating form: Ramirez and Castenada, 1974
• Edmonds Learning Style Identification Exercise: Reinert, 1976
• Cognitive Style Interest Inventory: Hill, 1976
• Learner types: Letteri, 1980
• Learning Style profile: Keefe and Monks, 1986

Another significant learning style theory, which was not included in Cassidy’s survey, is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), developed during World War II from the psychological theories of Carl Jung.

MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

Not only has attention been given over the years to the idea that each individual learns in a unique way, but several researchers have suggested that intelligence itself is expressed distinctly in individual learners.

Educational researchers, such as Robert Sternberg and Howard Gardner, have validated the influence of individual differences on learning. Gardner (1991, 1993, 1997)
proposed that human intelligence is multi-faceted and spans seven distinct intellectual categories: (1) Visual / Spatial Intelligence, (2) Musical Intelligence, (3) Verbal Intelligence, (4) Logical/Mathematical Intelligence, (5) Interpersonal Intelligence, (6) Intrapersonal Intelligence, and (7) Bodily / Kinesthetic Intelligence. Sternberg (1985, 1988, 1997) has grouped human intelligence into three separate categories: (1) Componential Intelligence, (2) Experiential Intelligence, and (3) Contextual Intelligence.

Even in the early 1900’s and before psychologists, theorists, and researchers were exploring the vast differences in human intelligence and learning. Charles Spearman, in his article *General Intelligence - Objectively Determined and Measured* (1904), attempted to define and explore what he called the ‘g factor’, one’s general intellectual ability, as it related to the ‘s factor’, an intellectual characteristic specific to an act and varying in strength from one act to another. In 1969, Arthur Jensen built upon Spearman’s ideas in his article *How Much Can We Boost I.Q. and Scholastic Achievement*.

Though Dolan and Hamaker (2001) concluded “that the Spearman correlation cannot be used to demonstrate the importance of ‘g’ in [black-white] differences with any confidence” and that “the validity of Spearman's hypothesis [is] an unresolved question,” (p. 63), the fact remains that people have understood there are differences in human intelligence and learning and have been exploring those differences for more than a century.
In the opening pages of her book, *How to Differentiate Instruction in a Mixed-Ability Classroom* (2001), Carol Ann Tomlinson offers several pages of description about what differentiated instruction is and is not. Following is a definition synthesized from that description: Differentiated Instruction is a pedagogical approach, rooted in assessment, which seeks to meet students where they are, using a variety of instructional strategies that address diverse student learning needs, interests, preferences, and abilities; it is an approach in which the teacher attempts to place the individual student at the center of the learning process.

Tomlinson provides a list of characteristics of differentiation: (1) proactive; (2) more qualitative than quantitative; (3) rooted in assessment; (4) provides multiple approaches to content, process, and product; (5) is student centered; (6) is a blend of whole-class, group, and individual instruction; and (6) is “organic”. In her 2005 article *Deciding to Teach Them All*, Tomlinson discusses the success of differentiation in four high school classrooms. She identifies success as when 9th grade geography students create connections to the material and to the teacher, when English students ask the teacher if they can do more work after lunch, when biology students can not only answer the teacher’s questions but demonstrate real understanding of the material, etc.

Also, in both of her books, *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms* (2001) and *The Differentiated Classroom* (1999), Tomlinson offers a number of qualitative examples of success with differentiation. She describes a reading teacher who has time, because of differentiation, to work with specific students on their particular reading needs. She discusses a math class where students pursue independent studies of
mathematical interest because they were able to opt-out of the lesson being taught by demonstrating the skills beforehand. She shows us a history class where differentiation has set a tone of cooperation and mutual success.

Differentiated classrooms address the challenges expressed through recent data on brain research. Three key principles arise from this research: (1) learning environments must feel emotionally safe for learning to take place, (2) to learn, students must experience appropriate levels of challenge, and (3) each brain needs to make its own meaning of ideas and skills. Differentiation meets these crucial needs. (Tomlinson, 1998)

Generally, in the literature, differentiated instruction and differentiated assessment are kept together under the term ‘differentiated instruction’ or the single term ‘differentiation’; take, for example, one of the characteristics Tomlinson offers: “Differentiated Instruction provides MULTIPLE APPROACHES (Tomlinson’s emphasis) to content, process, and product” (2001, p. 4). Typically one would associate content and process with instruction and product with assessment. The methodological approach of this research addresses the two as separate entities. For this reason, much of the definition of differentiated instruction applies to differentiated assessment.

Differentiated Assessment is an approach to assessment which employs the use of various methods in order to meet the diverse needs of learners. One important point to note is that differentiated assessment is used not only to assess, but also to guide further instruction.

Julian Rotter’s work on locus of control (1966) plays an important role in differentiated instruction and assessment. Basically, locus of control refers to a person’s perceptions of control over access to reinforcements, falling on a continuum between an
internal locus of control and an external locus of control. An individual with a high internal locus of control may feel that if (s)he did poorly on a test, that it was because (s)he did not study well enough or did not pay enough attention in class; whereas, an individual with an external locus of control may feel that the poor grade was because the teacher asked questions on the test that weren’t relevant to the material that was explained in class or even that the poor grade was because of a teacher’s dislike for him/her.

Differentiation offers students an opportunity to pull the locus of control toward the internal end of the spectrum. Because their interests, needs, learning styles, etc. are taking into account, the influence of external forces on the control of an assignment or lesson diminishes, allowing students who usually feel dragged along by the educational system the opportunity to take the wheel, so to speak.

**Teachers’ Awareness of and Response to Differentiation**

Despite the research on learning styles and multiple intelligences, a disturbing characteristic about our educational system remains—little is actually done in the classroom about student differences. Hamel (2003) asserts that “[u]nderstanding by teachers of student understanding…has received scant attention in the English education community” and “studies of how teachers (Hamel’s emphasis) conceptualize student understanding have been rare.” Before I move further into this research, let me point out that I am not making a claim that there are no teachers who make an attempt to respond to the differences in students’ learning styles and needs, but that there are, in fact, few who do. Ruie Jane Pritchard (1993) points to research conducted by James Marshall
(1989) where he indicates that “seventy-five percent of teachers’ questions focus on prompting of knowledge of the text, with only twelve percent eliciting a student’s background or prior knowledge,” (p. 24). In this same *English Journal* article, Pritchard, demonstrating that she is one of the few teachers who attempts to shift pedagogical approaches based on student input and need, reflects on some of her own literature lessons and proposes a three-step sequence of writing prompts which elicit connections between her students and the literature. After revisiting some literature lessons, “lessons that [she] considered to be pedagogically sound, enjoyable for students, and even ‘good for them’,” (p. 24), she saw that she “needed to modify some lessons because they did not give students’ voices priority in the classroom,” (p. 24).

Now, while there are a few educators who attempt to refocus their teaching, the fact remains that little is done, in general, to respond to varied learning styles and different needs. In fact, although a number of discrete types of learning are recognized, only three comprehensive models of learning style exist (Dunn, et al, 1989). Furthermore, “[i]n many classrooms, the approach to teaching and learning is more unitary than differentiated. For example, first graders may [all] draw a picture about what they learned…Fifth graders may all listen to the same explanation…high school students may sit through a lecture…” (Tomlinson, 2001).

Tomlinson (2004) points to findings by a variety of researchers (Delpit, 1995; Lasley & Matczynski, 1997; Perry et al., 2003; Burstein & Cabello, 1989) which indicate that students may find that their teachers are either unaware of or do not care about the aspects which make students different with unique educational experiences, backgrounds, races, and cultures. Furthermore, these students are not likely to receive any sort of
instructional modifications which would enable them to see themselves in what they are studying.

About half of the teachers interviewed by Moon, Tomlinson, and Callahan (1995) in a random study saw absolutely no reason to alter their instruction to respond to learner variance.

Howard Gardner, in his book *The Unschooled Mind* (2004), illustrates, simply as an example, a disturbing similarity between the seeming autonomy of US schools and the rigidly controlled schools of France. He asserts that despite the apparent autonomy US schools are afforded with local control of schools, schools “are subjected to many powerful pressures, from such bodies as teachers’ and administrators’ unions, school boards, state legislatures, and the voting public. These combined pressures make it difficult to operate with much autonomy or sense of empowerment,” (p. 139). As a result, our schools become like those Gardner describes in France where “students all over the country study the same topics in the same way and are tested on them with the same examinations,” (p. 139).

Carol Ann Tomlinson, as an educator, a researcher, and a theorist, is incredibly concerned with education and actively furthers her own learning whenever possible. It is for this very reason that I find the personal anecdote about a computer class which opens her 1998 article *Teach Me, Teach My Brain: A call for differentiated classrooms* so distressing. She says of her experience: “I know that the teacher lost a struggling learner who was highly motivated…” and “I have never taken another computer workshop.” The cause of this obvious anxiety? “[The instructor] had so much curriculum to cover, and so little time, that he saw no alternative to telling his students what he knew and assuming
they would get it.” He either saw no need or had no chance to respond to the individual needs of the different learners in the workshop.

Tomlinson sums the situation up nicely with the following:

As teachers, we make few, if any, modifications for struggling or advanced learners (Bateman, 1993; Westberg, Archambault, Dobyns, & Salvin, 1993 in Tomlinson, 1998). We often disregard student interests and learning profiles (Gardner, 1994). We do one thing in one way and hope for the best, but for many of our students, it will not be good enough (1998, p. 53).

The second part of the paradoxical claim above presents an even more disturbing characteristic of our educational system. When an individual is too individual, (s)he is labeled with one of an array of fancy letterings and sent off to see a specialist. The “regular” education teacher is somehow unable to deal with these students’ individual needs. The education system offers specialists for a whole spectrum of students with needs on both the “learning disabled” and the “academically gifted” side of the norm. (Tomlinson, 2004)

This educational dynamic bears many flaws itself, as Tomlinson illustrates in her 2004 article The Möbius Effect: Addressing learner variance in schools. She asserts, among other things, that (1) “the specialties created as we systematically segregate from the ‘normal’ students those whom we determine to be ‘not normal’ further deter us from addressing systemic educational flaws that must be corrected;” (2) “there is no evidence that students designated as ‘gifted’ are a homogeneous group with homogeneous needs;” (3) “the concept of the ‘remedial’ student suggests flaws within the learner rather than
within the educational system;” and (4) even a group of learners designated as ‘remedial’ demonstrate considerable variance in learning backgrounds and educational needs.

**NARRATIVE PEDAGOGY**

An approach to instruction based on Narrative Pedagogy helps to form the core of The Autobiographical Approach, so it is a little daunting that scant research has been done on narrative pedagogy outside of nursing education. This is not to say that there is no research on narrative instruction in the English / Language Arts classroom; however, a search for information about narrative pedagogy will generally take one down a medical path. I, personally, don’t see a problem with this; if we trust narrative instruction to support those whose hands will be inside of our chests, then why not trust it to support others, as well?

Narrative Pedagogy is an approach to schooling, learning, and teaching and a way of thinking about community practices that emerges when teachers and students publicly share and interpret stories of their lived experiences. (Diekelmann & Diekelmann in Ironside, 2003) Narrative pedagogy in the English classroom manifests itself in three main ways: (1) as literary content, (2) as a connection to the literature, and (3) as writing content.

Now, the idea of asking students to create connections to the literature is not new; in fact, one of the largest goals of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study is that students will make connections between the subject matter and their personal experiences. From Competency Goal 3 of Kindergarten Language Arts, which states that “[t]he learner will make connections [to the literature] through the use of oral language,
written language, and media and technology,” to Competency Goals 4 and 5 of Advanced Placement Literature and Composition, part of which states that a major goal for students is to “[make] connections between works, the self and related topics,” (NCSCOS, 4.05), the Standard Course of Study calls for connections between subject matter and the students’ lives. This call is not limited to Language Arts; Competency Goals 7 and 13 of sixth grade Social Studies, goal 5 of the National Educational Technology Standards for Students, the historical, social, and personal rationale for studying Science in school, to name a few, all contain references to the broad goal of helping students make personal connections to the subject matter. Further, Before-During-and-After (BDA) activities and Directed Reading/Thinking Activities (DRTA) have been utilized by teachers for years to help students create meaningful connections to the literature.

However, the point of narrative pedagogy is to create these connections with story and to use story as a means of presenting content. Often these types of narrative connections are created before the literature is even introduced.

Marsha Rossiter (2003) asserts that narrative instruction is “deeply appealing and richly satisfying to the human soul, with an allure that transcends cultures, centuries, ideologies, and academic disciplines.” Rossiter also claims, writing from research by Hopkins (1994), that the most effective way to reach learners with educational messages is through narrative constructions.

Neuhauser (1993) posits that stories are effective as educational tools because they are believable, memorable, and entertaining. “Stories allow students to see themselves in our work to participate within our literacy community, and, often, to take huge strides in defining themselves as readers and writers”; “these formerly unmotivated
readers [dive] into the bookcases and read actively in the library after school” (Kajder, 2004, p. 64)

Mello (2001) boldly claims that without interactive narrative experience, humans could not express their knowledge or thought. Story telling is how humans translate their individual private experiences of understanding into a public, culturally negotiated form (Bruner, 1986).

Here, I believe, is the best place to mention Louise Rosenblatt’s research on efferent and aesthetic reading (1978). Though her descriptions are not specifically tailored to narrative pedagogy, the goals of aesthetic reading which she discusses speak to the aim of narrative instruction. Rosenblatt claims that efferent reading is reading done to extract information e.g., reading a deep-sea fishing manual, while aesthetic reading is reading that engages the readers so that they live through the experience, thereby recreating the text e.g., reading Hemingway’s The Old Man and the Sea.

Some examples of prompts that would evoke these types of aesthetic reading connections are offered by Pritchard (1993):

Write a letter to someone whom you care about deeply, telling what you have never told that person, or what you haven’t said often enough. (I Heard the Owl Call My Name)

Have you ever stood up for something you believe is right? Tell me about it. If you haven’t, can you think of a time when you should have stood up, but didn’t? Tell me about it. In either case, tell me how you felt. (The Pearl or Huckleberry Finn)

(p. 25)
Flow

Flow is the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) Flow refers to an individual’s condition characterized by a deep satisfaction and optimal experience that arises from total engagement with the task at hand. Every flow activity pushes an individual to higher levels of performance, and flow activities lead to growth and discovery. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991)

To examine the overall effect of The Autobiographical Approach, we must turn our attention for a moment to the work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Flow, the concept around which Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of optimal experience is constructed (1991), is arguably the single most important goal of a person’s pursuit. Csikszentmihalyi notes that “even the simplest physical activity becomes enjoyable when it is transformed so as to produce flow,” (p.97).

Two claims, which are amazing and important for the pursuit of education, that rise out of flow research are these: (1) “every flow activity pushes the person to higher levels of performance,” (p.74) and (2) “it is this dynamic feature [that skills and challenges will increase together so flow remains intact] that explains why flow activities lead to growth and discovery” (p.75). I think few amongst education professionals would argue with my assertion that we label “growth and discovery” as success.

It is from these statements (among others offered by Csikszentmihalyi in Flow, 1991) that I have established the relationship among performance, enjoyment, and success in the upper portion of the diagram (Figure 2.1) shown below.
As mentioned, the goal of The Autobiographical Approach to teaching in the English Classroom is to increase enjoyment and match skills with challenges so that flow may occur. The relationship noted at the top of this diagram is the basic construct of what occurs in the “flow channel.” Below is a diagram from *Flow* (p.74) which explains
the flow dynamic. When the skills exhibited by an individual match the challenges offered, the individual may enter into flow, an optimal experience. When the challenges offered exceed the individual’s skill level, anxiety may occur; conversely, if the challenges offered do not meet the individual’s skill level, boredom may occur.

Csikszentmihalyi argues that “it is much more likely [than a spontaneous flow event] that flow will result either from a structured activity, or from an individual’s ability to make flow occur, or both,” (1991, p.71), Therefore, educators should strive to structure lessons so that students may experience flow. In order to do this task effectively, we must understand something of the nature of flow.

Csikszentmihalyi describes eight components of flow: (1) tasks are able to be completed; (2) there must be the ability to concentrate; (3) the task has clear goals; (4) the task provides immediate feedback; (5) one acts with a deep effortless involvement (zones-out, my term); (6) the individual is able to exercise a sense of control; (7) concern
for the self disappears, yet the sense of self emerges stronger after the flow experience had ended; and (8) the sense of duration of time is altered. While several of these characteristics are difficult to measure and even harder to control (i.e., that students are concentrating, that they zone-out, etc), The Autobiographical Approach which I have outlined and illustrated above speaks to each of these characteristics and allows students an opportunity to combine classroom assessments and the passions through which they may experience flow, such as choreographing a dance to retell the story of *Beowulf*. One must have input from students, i.e. the needs or students, the interests of students, the abilities of students, etc., to be able to fulfill these characteristics of flow. With the demands of these components addressed to some degree by The Autobiographical Approach, the dynamic created by introducing this approach makes conditions desirable for entering into an optimal flow experience where performance is increased and growth (success) is achieved. Consider the following (Figure 2.3):
The end result? Gardner says it best with this: “this state of affairs has seldom been acknowledged publicly, but even successful students sense that their apparent
knowledge is fragile at best. Perhaps this uneasiness contributes to the feeling that they – or even the entire educational system – are in some sense fraudulent,” (2004, p. 6).
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

BRIEF REVIEW OF THE ELEMENTS OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH

The Autobiographical Approach to Instruction in the English Classroom is a holistic approach to instruction and assessment. Literary content, a term which here also includes writings that the students create, as well as canonical literature, sparks narrative instruction. The personal narratives shared between the students and the instructor create the dynamic core which is the foundation for The Autobiographical Approach. This foundation is constructed of a network of connections between the student, the literature, the teacher, and the other students.

This core then fuels the differentiated instruction and differentiated assessment which make the classroom learning unique and meaningful for each student.

For a more detailed description of The Autobiographical Approach to Instruction in the English Classroom, refer to section 1.6 in Chapter One.

PARTICIPANTS

The site for this study was a local high (9-12) school with a student population of 2,127 and a staff of 147 teachers. This site was selected for this study because of its diverse population and access for the researcher. The school provides services for students from more than a dozen different countries.

Ninety-six 12th grade students, composing four English classes, were included in this study. At the beginning of the study 103 students were involved; however, during the course of the research seven students were ejected for one or both of the following
reasons: (1) the student transferred to another school or class or (2) the student was unable to complete one of the assignments for reasons such as illness or suspension.

The remaining ninety-six 12th graders were of mixed ability. Two of the classes were Honors/AP level, and the other two were Academic level.

Thirty percent of the research population was minority (22 African American, 3 African, 3 Hispanic, and 1 Middle Eastern).

Additionally, because of the nature of this educational approach, I have included two specific stories and responses (See Appendix 7.15) from Kate C. and Ahna A.

**DATA SOURCES**

Throughout the 2005-2006 school year, the following data were collected and analyzed: (a) pre- and post–surveys regarding a number of topics, such as writing apprehension, enjoyment, time spent on task, etc.; (b) interviews with a dozen students randomly selected for each portion of the study; (c) students’ work samples; (d) students’ grades; (e) students’ reflections; and (f) investigator field notes. The overall goal is to determine whether or not a certain degree of success may be obtained using the Autobiographical Approach.

**PROCEDURES**

The procedures for administration of this research are spelled out in this section; below I present two tables which show the general scope of the study (Table 3.1) and offer a general timeline of the study (Table 3.2):
### Table 3.1 Scope of Research Procedures

Alex Kaulfuss

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methodological Aspect</th>
<th>General Description (See section below for further explanations.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Differentiated Instruction | The Personal Writing Workshop  
  - Students set their own pace for work  
  - Students are offered choice of genres and formats  
  - FCA’s – Students are given feedback specific to them based on areas of need which they indicate |
| Differentiated Assessment | Arthuriand, Beowulf, and Balin & Balan Projects  
  - Assignments varied on a continuum of personalization  
  - Arthurian Assignment – Non-personalized  
  - Beowulf Assignment – Somewhat personalized based on student input  
  - Balin & Balan Assignment – Highly personalized |
| Narrative Pedagogy | Narrative Instruction with Le Morte D’Arthur, Shakespeare, and Writing  
  - Le Morte D’Arthur – Literary content as narrative  
  - Shakespeare – Introductory connections to Macbeth and King Lear  
  - Writing – Narrative as content |
| The Autobiographical Approach | The Canterbury Tales  
  - Introduced with narrative connections before material is presented  
  - Tales are explored through differentiated instruction, using student choice and small group discussions  
  - Unit is assessed through differentiated assessments, where products are varied by interest and audience selection. Also, students are offered choice of process and collaboration. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Literature Lesson</th>
<th>Methodological Focus</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 1 day</td>
<td></td>
<td>Differentiated Instruction and Differentiated Assessment</td>
<td>Administered Student Interest and Focus Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 3 weeks</td>
<td><strong>Beowulf</strong> – Literature</td>
<td></td>
<td>Presented using a variety of narrative and non-personalized approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1-2 weeks</td>
<td><strong>Beowulf</strong> – Assessment: Goal is to present a retelling of the first four episodes in the Beowulf Epic through a creative lens</td>
<td>Differentiated Assessment</td>
<td>Somewhat Personalized – teacher created with student input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1 day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Beowulf</em> Assessment – Surveys and Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2 weeks</td>
<td><strong>Le Morte D’Arthur</strong> – Literature</td>
<td></td>
<td>Presented using primarily narrative instruction with occasional non-personalized lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2 days</td>
<td><strong>Le Morte D’Arthur</strong> – Pellinore and Griflet – Literature</td>
<td>Narrative Instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 3 days</td>
<td><strong>Le Morte D’Arthur</strong> – Balin and Balan – Literature</td>
<td></td>
<td>Presented using a non-personalized pedagogical approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1-2 weeks</td>
<td><strong>Le Morte D’Arthur</strong> – Assessment</td>
<td>Differentiated Assessment</td>
<td>Non-Personalized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1 day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Le Morte D’Arthur</em> Assessment – Surveys and Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1-2 weeks</td>
<td><strong>Le Morte D’Arthur</strong> – Balin and Balan – Assessment</td>
<td>Differentiated Assessment</td>
<td>Highly Personalized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1 day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Le Morte D’Arthur</em> – Balin and Balan Assessment – Surveys and Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1 day</td>
<td>The Canterbury Tales (Part I) – The Pardoner’s Tale</td>
<td>Autobiographical Approach: Narrative Introduction</td>
<td>Assignments are differentiated by offering student choice based on interest and grouping based on themes presented in the various tales chosen.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>November 1 week</td>
<td>The Canterbury Tales (Part II) – students present general corpus</td>
<td>Autobiographical Approach: Differentiated Instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1-2 weeks</td>
<td>The Canterbury Tales (Part III) – Assessment: Project geared toward an elementary audience which explains a tale’s lesson and shows its application to today’s world.</td>
<td>Autobiographical Approach: Differentiated Assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1 day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Autobiographical Approach – Surveys and Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1 week</td>
<td>Narrative as Content – Writing</td>
<td>Narrative Instruction</td>
<td>Shared Sweet Candy Glass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1 day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Narrative as Content – Surveys and Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2-3 weeks</td>
<td>Macbeth – Literature</td>
<td>Narrative Instruction</td>
<td>Created connections to the literature before the day’s reading was introduced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1-2 weeks</td>
<td>King Lear – Literature</td>
<td>Narrative Instruction</td>
<td>Created connections to the literature before the day’s reading was introduced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March-May 7-8 weeks</td>
<td>The Personal Writing Workshop</td>
<td>Differentiated Instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1 day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Personal Writing Workshop – Surveys and Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1 day</td>
<td>Le Morte D’Arthur – Pellinore and Griflet – Assessment</td>
<td>Narrative Instruction</td>
<td>Assessment Six Months from Instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.2 (continued) General Timeline of Research Procedures

| April 1 day | Le Morte D’Arthur – Balin and Garlonde (from Balin and Balan) – Assessment | Non-Personalized Instruction | Assessment Six Months from Instruction |
| May 1 day | The Canterbury Tales | Autobiographical Approach | Assessment Six Months from Instruction |

Differentiated Instruction Administration: The Personal Writing Workshop

The degree to which a teacher incorporates differentiation into his/her classroom can vary immensely. For this aspect of the Autobiographical Approach, I wanted to ensure that I was using methods of differentiation that were more meaningful than, say, simple student choice, although student choice does play an important role in differentiation.

All students have very different needs where writing is involved. Some students come into a teacher’s classroom already writing beyond what the teacher would expect at the end of the school year. Others are not even writing at the level they should have been one or two grade levels ago. Some have grammatical needs, some stylistic, some organizational. Some have specific needs; some have general needs.

In order to address these individual writing needs, I developed a Personal Writing Workshop (See Appendix 7.8). To ease students into the use of this Personal Writing Workshop, I first conducted a round of small group revisions, wherein a small number of students and myself would read, edit, critique, and provide feedback for each student’s
essay. This allowed each student to get some personalized feedback, so (s)he would have some idea where to start once we began the Personal Writing Workshop.

Once the whole class had had the opportunity to participate in small group writing conferences, I explained the Personal Writing Workshop. The Personal Writing Workshop details ten short writing assignments; within each of these writing assignments, the students have the ability to make a variety of choices, e.g. twelve genres from which they may choose to compose three creative writing pieces.

For each of these writing products, the students may indicate one to three FCA’s (focus correction areas – see definition, Appendix 7.1). If I felt a need to call attention to a specific FCA (for example Student has developed a clear, focused thesis.), then I would do so; however, for the most part, the students were responsible for choosing their own FCA’s.

The FCA’s that the individual students indicated served two functions: 1) the FCA’s helped the students focus on specific issues in each piece of writing and 2) the FCA’s indicated to me which areas of feedback would be most meaningful for each of the students.

When the students turned in their notebooks with each new piece of writing, I first checked to see what FCA’s they had indicated. Then I read through the piece once just to get a general feel for what the student had said in the writing. Then, on the second reading, I marked the writing and made comments based only upon the areas that the student had identified. As mentioned above, if I found something in the piece which needed specific attention, I included it as an FCA for the next piece of writing.
Once the FCA’s had all been addressed, which usually required several drafts, I signed off on the writing, and the student moved to the next piece.

Not only did the student have some autonomy in choosing genre and content, but the timeframe for completing each assignment was, by and large, up to each student. I gave the students an overall due date for the whole Personal Writing Workshop, but the due date for each writing assignment and the rate at which the writings were completed were completely left up to the student.

Once the students had completed the writing assignments, I administered the “Writing Workshop Evaluation Survey” (See Appendix 7.9). I entered data from these evaluations into several tables. The results of these surveys will be discussed in Chapter Four. Additionally, I conducted twenty random surveys to gauge the students’ general feelings about the workshop.

**Differentiated Assessment Administration**

This area of differentiation can take on many forms, various quiz formats, for example. For this portion of the study, I employed and reviewed three larger product-based methods of assessment.

I designed three assessments where a degree of input over product and approach fell on a continuum from teacher and student, from non-personalized to highly personalized, respectively. These assessments were as follows:

1. *Arthurian Legend Assignment*:
   
   A. For this assignment, there was no personalization regarding the product, content, collaboration, and direction of the assignment.
B. Students worked alone to create a formal writing product which argued the influences of a specific character, culture, person, religion, or other aspect to the legend.

C. I chose this type of product because the formal writing product is one of the most commonly used methods of assessment. I speak further on this on page (93), where I discuss recommendations for further research.

2. *Beowulf Project*:

A. For this assignment, I used student input gathered from a “Student Interest and Focus Survey” (see Appendix 7.4) which I created to determine the product, collaboration, and direction of the assignment.

B. I then created a chart, like the one below (Figure 3.1), for each of the four classes from question four on the “Student Interest and Focus Survey” in order to determine project groups and group products. The letters down the y-axis are student initials; the letters across the x-axis correspond with selections from the survey. I shaded in the boxes which corresponded to the selections that each student had made. This allowed me to see how students could be placed based on interest. *Beowulf* exists as a story passed down through the generations; the students were asked to retell the first four episodes of the epic through the lens of their specific genre. How the students approached the project was up to them.
C. The products ranged from formal essays to creative stories to photography portfolios to interpretive dances. The products were assigned based upon their indicated preferences.

3. *Balin and Balan Project:*

A. For this assignment, there was a high degree of personalization regarding product, content, collaboration, and direction of the assignment.

B. Students were to present some aspect of the *Tale of Balin and Balan* including some analysis. Students decided whether to work alone or in

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*Figure 3.1 Sample Expression Chart Used to Differentiate Products*

A = Drawing, B = Painting, C = Sculpture, D = Music, E = Creative Writing, F = Poetry, G = Formal Writing, H = Photography, I = Dance, J = Speaking, K = Other

Alex Kaufiuss
groups; they also decided upon the product, direction, and content of the project.

C. The products ranged from formal writings to photography portfolios to three-dimensional collages. The products were selected by the students themselves.

Below is a table (Table 3.2) which summarizes the information outlined above:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT TITLE</th>
<th>LEVEL OF PERSONALIZATION</th>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>PRODUCT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARTHURIAN LEGEND ASSIGNMENT</td>
<td>NO PERSONALIZATION</td>
<td>ARGUE THE INFLUENCE OF A CULTURE ON THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND</td>
<td>FORMAL WRITING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beowulf Project</td>
<td>MODERATE PERSONALIZATION</td>
<td>RETELL AND BRIEFLY ANALYZE THE FIRST FOUR EPISODES OF Beowulf</td>
<td>VARIED BASED ON STUDENT INTERESTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balin and Balan Project</td>
<td>HIGH LEVEL OF PERSONALIZATION</td>
<td>RETELL AND ANALYZE A THEME OR EPISODE OF The Tale of Balin and Balan</td>
<td>VARIED BASED ON STUDENT INTERESTS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So as not to influence feedback, I did not give the assignments in the order of the degree of personalization. The Beowulf project (moderate personalization) was both assigned and due before the other two assignments. I assigned the Arthurian Legend (no personalization) assignment second and the Balin & Balan project (high personalization) third. Students had an average of two weeks to complete each of these assignments.
After the students had completed each assignment, they filled out an evaluation for each of the three projects (see Appendices 7.5, 7.6, and 7.7). I entered data from these evaluations into several tables and created a comprehensive table to compare project ratings, percentages of enjoyment ("flow," see Chapter 2, pg. 28; Csikszentmihalyi, 1991), and grades.

After the assignments were graded, I conducted ten interviews with randomly selected students about each project.

Finally, I asked two other teachers to independently grade several of the assignments using the same rubrics with which I had graded the assignments to ensure that my grading of the products was not skewed. The results of this comparison are discussed later.

Narrative Pedagogy Administration

The third part of The Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom is narrative pedagogy, that is the use of stories and story-telling to foster instruction (For a more detailed explanation, see page 25.). This is, by far, my favorite aspect of teaching, and it peppers every lesson that I teach; however, for the purpose of this study, I focused on the narrative approach to three units: 1) Le Morte D’Arthur, 2) portions of my Shakespeare unit, and 3) writing instruction.

Generally, from a literature perspective, narrative instruction can be seen in two primary ways: 1) as literary content and 2) as an introductory connection to the literature. From a writing perspective, it serves to diminish writing apprehension by becoming the
content around which the writing is centered, thereby allowing students to focus on the process of writing rather than the content of their papers.

Narrative instruction is used in the classroom as literary content because a fair portion of the literature presented to students was never intended to be read. It was meant to be heard, to be seen, to be experienced. If a person tried to read a play as Shakespeare originally wrote it, (s)he would likely not understand much of it and may come to believe that Shakespeare was a hack. This is because the works of Shakespeare are meant to be seen and heard, not read. The original written form of these dramas was intended to be read only by the actors who would be reciting the lines. That is not to say, of course, that we ought not be thankful that Shakespeare edited his works and wrote versions for the reader, but the fact does not change that he intended for his works to be dramas, not novellas.

Other works of literature, likewise, were not intended for reading. The epic of Beowulf and the tales of King Arthur were designed as stories to be told around hearths boasting roaring fires and smoldering stews. The story of Beowulf takes more than six hours to tell, and it was designed that way! Geat and Danish warriors -characters in Beowulf- who wanted to unwind after many days at battle or who needed to dull the pain of a war wound would have to drink for literally hours, or even days, just to get a little drunk off of mead, the weak alcoholic drink of the time.

These warriors could not have a Star Wars DVD marathon or watch the game on the big screen to pass the time while getting drunk; they heard stories of great warriors and told stories of their own heroic accomplishments. These stories of great warriors and great accomplishments were not meant to be read silently by an indifferent audience; they
were meant to be told boldly from the mead-hall table tops, emboldened by the blazing fire, exaggerated for the cheering multitude, and punctuated by belching laughter.

The introductory narrative instruction is used to create connections between the literature, the student, the world, and the teacher before the students explore the material. I find it odd and ironic that the North Carolina Standard Course of Study calls for connections with the literature (and material from other disciplines) to be goals of a lesson, and I believe that these connections ought not be goals per se, but rather a specific method of instruction.

The idea of creating connections with the literature before its presentation is not new; teachers have been using before-during-after activities for years. However, the important characteristic of narrative instruction is that these connections are created using personal narratives specifically.

Should a teacher only strive to create connections with literature that students have already read, the task is so much more difficult. Students may have already decided that they don’t like the literature. They may have already decided to simply slog through and merely survive the literature. They may have already decided that the literature has no meaningful relation to their lives, society, the future, or anything else of any real importance.

Trying to convince the students that they can find themselves in the literature that they have just choked down, like it was rancid okra, is a joke, a joke at which the students may very literally laugh out loud.

On the other hand, when these connections (which the students do not yet realize are connections) are created before exploring the literature, students are already more
interested in the characters or plot or conflict or language. For example, asking this simple question: So, what do you think about cannibalism? Is it ever justified? will likely increase interest in reading and discussing Swift’s *A Modest Proposal* for a number of reasons: 1) students’ ideas can be presented free of comparison to Swift’s; 2) students are allowed the opportunity to “create” or independently discover the satire found in Swift’s work; 3) Swift’s essay is presented as an addition to the pool of knowledge rather than the focal point i.e., “the right answer”; 4) the students’ ideas become important, a source of knowledge rather than just a response to what Swift wrote; and the reasons go on and on.

I chose the following two examples for a very important, specific reason. I used narrative instruction for the entire duration of the *Le Morte D’Arthur* unit; whereas, I used narrative instruction only to introduce and create an initial connection to individual elements in the Shakespearean plays *King Lear* and *Macbeth*.

*Literature: Le Morte D’Arthur*

I could launch into any number of justifications about the manner in which I present the Legends of King Arthur; however, suffice it to say that the Legends of King Arthur are stories, and they need to be told as such. Like dramas which are read silently by one audience member, legends and heroic tales lose something coming from the page instead of the lips of a scop.

Because I feel this way, I present a fair amount of the heroic literature which one finds in a secondary British Literature classroom as a storyteller, interjecting occasionally as “the teacher”.

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On the third or fourth day of the Arthurian unit, for example, one may walk into my classroom, take a seat amongst the audience (not class), and hear the fascinating battle between Griflet, a newly-made knight of Camelot, and Pellinore, a seasoned, outstanding fighter (see Appendix 7.16) told as a story instead of as material.

I endeavor to employ all of the sound-effects, facial expressions, and body movements that a good storyteller ought to employ.

Determining and assessing the results of this particular aspect of the Autobiographical Approach are at the same time easily obvious and mysteriously troublesome.

They are easily seen in that the students enjoy this particular method of instruction. Standing at the front of the room, I can see that more students are more interested in the story than they would be for other regular literature lessons I have taught or observed. More students respond to questions; more of them interact; more of them laugh. As I have previously asserted, and will continue to assert, people are interested in that which they enjoy. People pursue, study, explore, things in which they are interested. The immediate, obvious response that I am given during a narrative lesson is more than enough to convince me that it is a good practice; however, in order to make a reasonable argument for this aspect of the Autobiographical Approach, I want to show some long-term, measurable effects of narrative instruction.

Therefore, I created a six-month measurement tool (See Appendices 7.10 and 7.11) to gather data for this part of the approach. The six-month measurement tool consists of two short assessments in a quiz format. Each of the assessments contains six
questions, one questions referencing each level of Bloom’s Taxonomy: (1) knowledge, (2) comprehension, (3) application, (4) analysis, (5) synthesis, and (6) evaluation.

The first of these assessments (See Appendix 7.10) regards the tale of the fight between Pellinore and Griflet, which is presented above. The eventual outcome of this story is that Arthur goes to fight Pellinore as payment for what he did to Griflet. In this fight, Arthur’s sword is broken, and he must find a new one. This quest brings him to the Lady of the Lake, who gives him the mystical Excalibur.

The second assessment (See Appendix 7.11) regards the fight between Balin and Garlonde from The Tale of Balin and Balan. In this fight, also, Balin’s sword is broken, and he must find a new one. This quest brings him face to face with his brother Balan. At first the two do not recognize each other because they are fully armored and Balin is carrying someone else’s shield. They fight, and only when both are mortally wounded, do they seek to know the other’s identity, only to discover that the other knight was a brother.

I chose to use these two stories, in particular, for several reasons: (1) Balin is introduced to the legend as the man who killed the Lady of the Lake, so she creates a connection between the two tales; (2) the two fights share a number of characteristics, which makes it easy to structure very similar questions (This is important in that the issue of easier vs. more difficult questions is avoided.); (3) I know that the students have explored both of these stories because I used one in a narrative lesson and the other was used for the differentiated assessment portion of this study; and, most importantly, (4) the story of the fight between Griflet and Pellinore was used as part of a narrative lesson, and the story of the fight between Balin and Garlonde was used as part of a non-personalized
lesson, where the students read the story, we talked about it in class, and then they used it to create a product.

These assessments were compared, and the results were entered into a table. The results of these assessments are discussed in Chapter Four.

*Literature: King Lear and Macbeth*

The second application of the narrative approach, which I mentioned above, was to create connections to the literature before reading or otherwise introducing the literature.

Both *King Lear* and *Macbeth* (in addition to a number of other pieces of literature) I begin with a story from my own experience. *King Lear* began with a story of bathroom sink pyrotechnics by my younger brother (see Appendix 7.17) about which he lied, and I took the blame.

After this, the students were encouraged to share their own stories of experiences where their siblings received preferential treatment because they were less than honest. After a solid story foundation had been established, I introduced *King Lear* by telling the students about the situation in which Cordelia finds herself because of her sisters’ less than honest declarations.

Similarly, on the second day of the *Macbeth* unit, I took my place at the front of the classroom, opened my copy of the play, groaned and sighed, closed the book, and asked for permission to rant for a few minutes. They, of course, obliged, and I begin with a story of how I felt like my accomplishments had been minimized because others, who I felt were less dedicated than I, had achieved the same things I had (see Appendix 7.18).
Many of the students had experiences with this sort of thing, and they were more than willing to share. After a fairly solid narrative foundation was established, I “redirected” the students back to the literature, and we began reading. I have used this method of introducing the day’s reading of *Macbeth* many times in the past; however, the reaction that I received this year was one of the best that I’ve ever seen.

In due time, we arrived at the section of the play where Duncan, the king of Scotland, is thanking all for their involvement in the victory over Norway. He tells Macbeth that the only way that he could fully repay his service is to give him the whole country, and Macbeth believes, as does much of the audience, that he is about to be named The Prince of Cumberland, the heir to the throne. However, Duncan names his son Malcolm heir to the throne. (Naming a son heir was not required during the time.)

Upon hearing this, JB (the very same JB from the opening of Chapter 1) literally jumped out of his chair, flung his hat from his desk to the ground, and let everyone know that what had just happened to Macbeth was just like what we had all been just talking about. The students, as of one mind, nodded, “mm-hmm’ed” their agreement, and offered some more anecdotes and insight.

More on this, however, when I discuss the results in Chapter Four.

After these lessons concluded, I conducted half a dozen interviews from each of the four classes about connecting to the literature in this manner. These interviews are synthesized in Chapter Four.

*Writing: Autobiography as Content*

As I noted above, the third manifestation of narrative pedagogy can be found as writing content. Using narrative instruction in this manner offers to diminish writing
apprehension thereby allowing students to focus more on the process of writing and less on the content of the paper. Utilizing this form of narrative pedagogy is fairly straightforward and has been used by many educators, albeit as a stand-alone activity.

For this portion of the study, I asked the students to undertake a fairly traditional or non-personalized approach to a writing assignment, i.e. brainstorming, drafting, proofing, revising, rewriting, and publishing; however, I asked that the content of the writings be an occurrence from their childhoods which happened in under an hour.

I shared a piece with them that I had written earlier following the same guidelines. I have included this story as an appendix (See Appendix 7.12).

During class, after I had shared my writing for them, they brainstormed and drafted. Over the next two days at home, they were asked to proof, revise, and rewrite their pieces. The following class, the students had an opportunity to share what they had written.

After we had completed the writing process, I administered the Narrative Content Survey (See Appendix 7.13) and recorded the results in several charts. These results are discussed in Chapter Four.

*The Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom (The Overall Approach) Administration*

The success of each of the components of The Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom is supported both by research (Chapters 3 and 4) and by the literature (Chapter 2). In order to determine whether or not some success may be found with the Autobiographical Approach, I opted to use my unit plan for Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* for study.
I began the unit in the narrative fashion, not indicating that I was introducing new literature; in fact, I suggested the opposite, claiming that I was setting the literature aside for a bit so that I could deal with some very disturbing news that I’d heard about my students. I tell *The Pardoner’s Tale* as if my students were the ones involved (see Appendix 7.19).

After the story, in which the characters are badly hurt, I paused and stared out into the bewildered faces of my students; of course, none of them have heard any of this before. After a few moments of silence, some looked around and realized that everyone is present and that no one seemed seriously injured. One or two of them cautiously asked if I was serious, and when I smiled, they all breathed huge sighs of relief and chastised me for messing with them.

Someone asked me if I made that up, and I replied, “I wish that I had; however, that story is called *The Pardoner’s Tale*, and it was written by an amazing writer named Geoffrey Chaucer.”

The next part of the lesson involved whole class instruction wherein I first gave some notes about the life of Chaucer and about *The Canterbury Tales*, and then we discussed the themes and misguided morals behind the Pardoner’s story.

At the end of the first class, they were given their project assignment. This assignment was riddled with choice. The basic assignment was that they were to tell one of the Canterbury tales as a story-teller, as opposed to a story-sayer, while playing the role of the pilgrim taking the trip.

They were given access to very brief summaries of the tales, so that they could choose the one that most interested them. They used a number of resources to gather
information about the pilgrims which they were going to portray: the text’s *General Prologue* and character prologues, the Internet, myself, each other, other teachers, illustrations from the work, etc. Also, they chose whether to tell the tale as Chaucer told it, to modernize it, or to embed it, as I did. Moreover, they chose to work alone or to interlace their work, as there is some interaction between the tale-telling pilgrims.

During the next two classes, I showed a film which follows *The Knight’s Tale* from *The Canterbury Tales*. The students used guided viewing sheets during the film, and I periodically paused the film for whole group and small group discussion. This allowed the students about a week (We are on an A/B schedule.) to gather information, plan presentations, and prepare stories.

Before presentations, students who had chosen the same tale were given time to meet as a small group and discuss the plot, themes, characters, and lessons of the tales. No tale that was told had only one student; had this occurred, I would have met with the student(s) and discussed theses elements.

During the next two class periods students presented their stories in costume, acquiring the proper affectation, such as the pardoners rat-like nature or the Summoners schlick character. After several presentations, I paused stories so that we could discuss the ones which we had just seen as a class. Then the tales were continued, and so on.

Once the tales concluded, the sixth day of the unit brought the assessment for *The Canterbury Tales*. I asked the students to generate a product which would expand upon one of the lessons from the tales. This product was to be geared toward an elementary audience. Again, choice peppered the assessment. The product could have been anything which they desired, e.g. a children’s book, a pamphlet for parents of youngsters,
a puppet show, etc. They could have either worked alone or in groups of up to four people.

In this product, I asked to see three specific things: (1) an explanation of the lessons learned from one or more of the tales, (2) an application of the lesson to modern times, and (3) an indication of something that they knew now, which they had not known before the unit.

After these products were turned in, for which I had allowed presentation time if anyone so wanted, I conducted twenty random interviews. Also, six months later, as I did with the Arthurian Legend, I administered an Autobiographical Approach Six Month Measurement (See Appendix 7.14).

The results of these interviews and the six month measurement are discussed in Chapter Four.

DATA ANALYSIS

DATA COLLECTION FROM INTERVIEWS

At various points throughout the study, I conducted a variety of student interviews. To ensure that the information gathered from these interviews was properly presented, I recorded field notes directly after each interview had concluded.

DEFINITION OF “CORRECT” RESPONSES

Lower level questioning based on Bloom’s Taxonomy can offer simple right or wrong answers; however, as the questioning becomes more complex, moving into deeper levels of thought, simple yes-or-no, right-or-wrong answers are not appropriate. In this
chapter, when I refer to a response from one of the Six Month Assessments as being correct, I mean that the response is either correct, appropriate, or both.

For the Six Month Assessments, students were asked to indicate whether or not they had absolutely no clue as to what the answer to a question would be by writing an “I don’t know” response (e.g. “I don’t know,” “No idea,” “No clue,” etc.). This is a fairly fine distinction to make; however, consider this hypothetical example from a Chemistry class: Q: What is the atomic number of Oxygen? A: 9 (The student had jotted in the margin “the number of protons, also electrons.”) Nine is the wrong answer (The answer is eight.), but the teacher can clearly see from the information jotted off to the side that the student has a fair grasp of the material and was simply one number off. While this answer is still wrong, there is a big difference between a student who simply put the wrong answer and a student who has no idea what an atomic number even is. A blank response indicated that the student may have heard some bells ringing off in the distance regarding the question but could not recall the answer. An “I don’t know” response indicated that there were no bells ringing anywhere regarding that particular question. A wrong answer would apply to one of the lower level questions; whereas, an inappropriate response may apply to higher level questioning. An example of this would be a response of simply “I support this.” when asked to support or challenge an assertion.

**Validity Issues**

Some of the most important aspects in conducting research are that the presentation of the results is reliable and valid and that the processes used to gather and analyze those results are ethical. During this study, I attempted to gather quantitative
data wherever possible. In these quantitative cases, validity refers to the degree to which an instrument measures that which it claims to measure and also whether the inferences based upon the data are meaningful, useful, and appropriate (Anastasi; Gall, Borg, & Gall in Honeycutt, 2002). Though I attempted to gather as much quantitative data as possible, because of the nature of the study, much of the data are qualitative. Following are brief explanations of five different types of validity as they relate to this study.

Construct Validity

For a study to be valid in terms of construct validity, it must employ instruments which are designed to address the construct being researched. This study sought to determine success, so the standard markings of student success, grades, were compared and analyzed. Also, the study was concerned with students’ reactions to the literature, assignments, etc., so questions were asked about their reactions to the material. Further, the study sought to measure enjoyment generated by The Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom, so students were asked to offer feedback about their level of enjoyment.

Internal Validity

Internal validity is “the trustworthiness of inferences drawn from the data” (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1994, p. 27) as they apply to the observed sample. Internal validity for this study was addressed by member checking when the researcher held two small group interviews for each of the four classes with randomly selected students who were included in the study, shared with them the inferences he had drawn from the data gathered, and asked for their feedback as to how accurately the conclusions at which the researcher had arrived matched their own conclusions, observations, and opinions.
**External Validity**

External validity is “concerned with how the findings in a study can be generalized to other similar groups” (Honeycutt, 2002, p. 47). Many of the responses gathered as data for this study examine the feelings and enjoyment of individual students, so the results may be limited; however, since the sample includes high school seniors on both honors and average tracks, from a variety of races and ethnicities, the results may be applicable to a larger portion of the student body.

**Democratic Validity**

Democratic validity refers to the extent to which the researcher collaborates with and takes into consideration the multiple views and interests of the various stakeholders in the problem that the researcher is examining (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1994). The primary stakeholders in this study are the students themselves. By interviewing, surveying, and consulting these students, I am ensuring that they have a chance to express their views, ideas, and concerns about the subject of the study i.e., the literature, writings, assessments, etc. Teachers, also, have an interest in exploring various pedagogical approaches which could help their students achieve success. In order to make sure that teachers’ interests were served in this research, I asked two other teachers to assess some of the more subjective products using the same rubrics that I used originally. The grades that the other teachers provided were either the same or close to the same. Moreover, I, the researcher, am a stakeholder; I hope to improve my own teaching and to share any results gathered from the study with other educators. Parents are stakeholders in this research, as well. They have a vested interest in the success of their children.
Process Validity

Process validity “refers to the ‘dependability’ and ‘competency’ of the study” (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1994, p. 31). This type of validity is established by employing a variety of data collection methods. To ensure that I was not over-applying information gathered in one area or from one data source, I employed, compared, and analyzed data from a variety of sources: (a) pre- and post- surveys regarding a number of topics, such as apprehension, enjoyment, time spent on task, etc.; (b) interviews with individual students randomly selected for each portion of the study; (c) students’ work samples; (d) students’ grades; (e) students’ reflections; and (f) field notes. I also shared findings, outcomes, and assumptions with other professionals in order to gain feedback and further interpretation.

Reliability Issues

Reliability refers to the criterion concerned with the stability, consistency, and equivalence of the findings and interpretations of the study. It is the extent to which repeated administrations of a measure will provide the same data, or the extent to which a measure administered once, but by a different person, would produce equivalent results. (Honeycutt, 2002)

For subjective assignments, I created rubrics by which to evaluate the products to ensure that all products were evaluated using the same structured criteria. Also, as I mentioned earlier, these rubrics were used by two other teachers who graded the products so that I could compare the grades between teachers.
This study investigated ways in which students responded to The Autobiographical Approach. To make sure that the students involved in the study agreed with the findings and conclusions of the study, personal and small group interviews were conducted. The study included data and feedback from a wide variety of high school seniors ranging from AP level to average level. Also, a variety of majority and minority students were represented in the study.

**LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Although there are a number of benefits presented by this study and a variety of validity techniques were employed, a few limitations do surface. One of the most significant limitations is that this study relied on self-report and observations. With self-reporting, the possibility exists that respondents may not provide accurate answers to survey and interview questions. This study is designed to learn from students’ own feeling about their needs, interests, and successes; however, many of these students may not have considered these types of issues before, so may not have provided full or accurate responses or reactions. Also, in questions where scales were used, the rankings may have meant different things to different people. For example a six on a scale of one to ten may be above average for one person; while for another it translates to an “F” (60%) on an educational grading scale. Another limitation, along these same lines, is that I was both the researcher as well as the teacher presenting the lessons studied herein.

Furthermore, even though the population was fairly diverse and ranged from AP/Honors level to Academic level, the population came from one high school and one grade level. Studies in which other grade levels and other schools are researched could
be conducted in the future to determine whether or not the perspectives presented here apply to a larger population.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

The Personal Writing Workshop

The Personal Writing Workshop evaluation (See Appendix 7.9) asked the students to provide feedback for three specific areas: (1) level of enjoyment, (2) percentage of needs met, and (3) self-perceived growth.

The first two questions asked students to rank on a scale from one to ten their enjoyment from (1) a non-personalized writing assignment and (2) the Personal Writing Workshop. The first chart (Figure 4.1) shows the comparison of reports of enjoyment between a non-personalized writing assignment and the Personal Writing Workshop.

The enjoyment reported for the Personal Writing Workshop was more than 17% higher than a non-personalized writing assignment. In the interviews that I conducted after the survey, the general thought was that the students were asked to compare one non-personalized writing assignment with the ten assignments from the Personal Writing Workshop. Even knowing that, the students responded favorably to this survey question.
Bear in mind that it is not necessarily my intent to create a point of comparison between the non-personalized writing assignment and the Personal Writing Workshop assignment, but in order to determine whether it had a beneficial effect or not, I need some point of comparison.

The second chart (Figure 4.2) shows a “needs met” comparison between a non-personalized writing assignment and the Personal Writing Workshop. The issue of “needs” was left intentionally ambiguous on the survey. I did not want to indicate on the
survey what the students’ needs were or what they ought to be. If the individual student had specific needs, then the term would have spoken to him/her. There was one student who wrote in the response “What are my needs?” and another who wrote in “I have no needs.” All other respondents simply ranked both questions.

The rating of how well the Personal Writing Workshop met the students’ needs is about 25% higher than the rating of how well a non-personalized writing assignment meets students’ needs.

Figure 4.2 “NEEDS MET” RATING FOR THE PERSONAL WRITING WORKSHOP
Alex Kaulfuss
Again, even though the results suggest a comparison between the two approaches, that is a matter for another study. My intent is to determine whether some degree of success can be found in this part of the Autobiographical Approach.

The third chart (Figure 4.3) shows self-perceived growth between a non-personalized writing assignment and the Personal Writing Workshop.

The perceived growth from the Personal Writing Workshop is about 24% higher than that of a non-personalized writing assignment.

Figure 4.3 WRITING GROWTH RATING FOR THE PERSONAL WRITING WORKSHOP

Alex Kaulfuss
DIFFERENTIATED ASSESSMENT

*Arthurian, Beowulf, and Balin and Balan Projects*

By and large, the findings from this study come in two forms: (1) specific numerical ratings both from the students regarding the project and process and from the teacher regarding the evaluation of the product(s) and (2) opinion-based feedback from the students on the process as a whole.

*Assignment Ratings*

One of the questions on each of the evaluations asked students to rank the assignment on a scale from one to ten: “one” being “I hated this, and I hope that we never do anything like it again.” and “ten” being “I loved it, and I wish that everything we did was like this.” Figure 4.4 displays the ratings for each assignment.

![Comparison of Assignment Ratings](image)

*Figure 4.4 DIFFERENTIATED ASSESSMENT: COMPARISON OF ASSIGNMENT RATINGS
Alex Kaulfuss*

The ratings for the *Beowulf* (moderate personalization) assignment and the *Balin & Balan* (high personalization) assignment are about the same, with less than 1%
difference between the two. However, the ratings between the *Arthurian* (no
personalization) assignment and the *Beowulf* and *Balin & Balan* assignments are much
more dramatic, showing a 65% higher rating for the assignments where students exerted
some control.

Moreover, during interviews and on the evaluations, students responded fairly
negatively to the Arthurian assignment. In fact, when I was collecting evaluations for the
Arthurian Legend Assignment, RN, a student in my second period class, began a petition
to do away with essays. When I intercepted the petition, I laughed about it, and she
offered, “We like it better when we get to choose how we do the assignment.”

Another student, AN in my seventh period class, wrote on his evaluation, “I hate
writing essays.” CC, a student in my second period class wrote on her evaluation, “I do
not like to write, so I hate [essays].” Fewer than 20% of students made positive
comments about this assignment either on their evaluations or during interviews, while
32% made some sort of negative comment. Forty-eight percent did not comment either
way; they just marked their evaluations numerically.

*Enjoyment Percentages*

The next set of questions from the evaluations sought to compare the percentages
of enjoyment, a major component of “flow”, for each assignment. Researcher Mihaly
Csikszentmihalyi describes a flow activity as “an activity that… is so gratifying that
people are willing to do it for its own sake…” (1991, p. 71). As I illustrated with the
hobby-fisherman and my student, JB, in the introduction (Chapter 1), when one finds
enjoyment in an activity, (s)he will pursue it just for the sake of experiencing the activity
itself.
I believe the importance in studying enjoyment percentages for these assignments comes from some of the characteristics which Csikszentmihalyi includes in “The Conditions of Flow,” chapter four of his book *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience* (1991): every flow activity (1) provides a sense of discovery, (2) transports a person to a new reality, (3) pushes one to higher levels of performance, (4) makes the self more complex, and (5) causes one to grow. These are exactly the sorts of characteristics which educators attempt to elicit from their students when they give an assignment. It is in these moments of flow that true, lasting learning takes place. Figure 4.5 displays the results of enjoyment ratings:

![Comparison of Enjoyment Percentages](image)

**Figure 4.5 Differentiated Assessment: Comparison of Enjoyment Percentages**

Alex Kaulfuss

Possibly the most striking piece of data from this chart is that students reported experiencing 20% less enjoyment on the Arthurian assignment, which offered no personalization, than the *Beowulf* project and 28% less than the *Balin & Balan* assignment.
Reported enjoyment for the assignments which offered students some degree of personalization was 69% and higher. I believe that this could be considered a clear indicator of the success of this portion of the Autobiographical Approach. Most teachers, like myself, would probably be thrilled for students to report such high levels of enjoyment over an assessment product.

Additionally student comments from both evaluations and interviews pointed to such positive experiences that flow may have occurred. For example SS, a student in my fourth period class reports of the Beowulf assignment, “I really enjoyed this assignment because it incorporated one of the things I love doing the most.” Also, JE, a student in my first period class, wrote, “I enjoyed the freedom to interpret however I wanted.” Another student, JP, from my seventh period class, made it a point to come to my room during his lunch to let me know that “even though those groups ones took more time, [he] liked those better; [he] hated that Arthur project.”

Grades

Finally, I recorded and compared the grades for each task (Figure 4.6). This may be the most striking portion of the results for this section because it represents the assessment of others over the products; whereas, the other two charts show reflection from the students themselves.
The difference between the grades for the *Beowulf* and *Balin & Balan* products was small, differing by only a percentage point. However, the difference in grades for the assignment which gave no personalization (Arthurian) and the ones which were personalized to some degree (*Beowulf* and *Balin & Balan*) is larger: a 14-15% increase in assignments utilizing student input.

The interviews demonstrated a completely different level of confidence about the assignments as well. For example, AH, a student in my seventh period class speaking about the *Beowulf* project said, “I know I did a good job because I enjoy art, and I got the opportunity to share it.”

All in all, opinions of the projects which offered students some personalization were overwhelmingly positive. JE, from my first period class, remarked on her Beowulf project evaluation that the “project was awesome;” BO, another student from my first period class who worked on projects geared for children in both her *Beowulf* and *Balin & Balan*
Balan projects, commented that she “enjoy[ed] the project because she got a different perspective.”

Grades from Other Teachers

As I noted above, I asked two other teachers to look at the products for the Arthurian Legend assignment and the Balin & Balan project. While there were some small differences between the grades themselves, I believe that this fact is far less important than the discrepancy between the Arthurian Legend assignment grade and the Balin & Balan project grade. Once again the grades jump from average, below average, and failing for the Arthurian Legend assignment to above average for the Balin & Balan assignment.

These two other educators, who do not know and have not worked with these students, could see a vast difference in the organization, thought, and effort put into the two products. Both teachers were a little surprised that the same students had created both products.

Narrative Pedagogy

Literature: Le Morte D’Arthur

As I indicated earlier, the results for this portion of the Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom come from two assessments administered six months after the material was taught and explored.

The first chart (Figure 4.7) shows the comparison of correct responses from the two different assessments. The percentage of correct answers from the non-personalized Balin and Garlonde lesson is only 3%; whereas the percentage of correct answers from the narrative Pellinore and Griflet lesson is 47%, almost 16 times greater. Of course 47%
is not necessarily a stellar score; however, I am looking for some degree of success, and when the narrative lesson provides 44% more correct responses, I believe that success can be found here.

The second chart (Figure 4.8) shows the number of “I don’t know” responses from the two lessons. The Balin and Garlonde assessment saw 84% of the questions answered with some kind of “I don’t know” response. The Pellinore and Griflet
assessment, on the other hand, only saw 34% of the questions receive an “I don’t know” response.

The third (Figure 4.9) and fourth (Figure 4.10) charts show the percentage of correct responses aligned with the percentage of “I don’t know” responses from the two separate lessons. In addition to these striking percentages, several students responded with an “I don’t know” response to the whole assessment, writing IDK at the top and drawing an arrow down the whole page. I’ll discuss this further in Chapter Five.
Figure 4.9 Percent Correct Compared with “I Don’t Know” Responses for Balin & Garlunde

Alex Kaulfuss
The results for this portion of the study come in the form of overall feedback, synthesized from two dozen interviews, half a dozen from each of the four classes.

As I noted earlier in Chapter Three, when I arrived at the point of Macbeth where King Duncan names his son heir instead of Macbeth, JB literally jumped out of his chair and “discovered” the link between my “rant”, the stories the class had told, and the literature. During a brief interview after the lesson, JB told me that he especially liked
the lesson because “it was like finishing a puzzle. You know how you think the puzzle
looks cool when you’re working on it, but then once you finish it, you’re more excited
about it than the whole time you were working on it? It was like that.”

Another student KP, from my second period class, said of the lesson, “That’s so
funny when you do that, how you make us think about the story, and we don’t even know
it. I like it better that way.”

The general consensus from the students that I interviewed said that they were
able to create some kind of connection to the way that Macbeth was probably feeling at
the time.

*Writing: Autobiography as Content*

One of the questions on the Narrative Content Survey (See Appendix 7.13) asked
the students to indicate which aspect of the writing process they felt the most
apprehension over. The results from this question are found in the graph below (Figure
4.11).

The highest ranking category, coming in with 40% of the students indicating that
it was their most troublesome area, was creating content. The distant second and third
areas which troubled the students most were planning (23%) and writing (21%), coming
in at almost half of the creating content aspect.
The purpose of the writing aspect of narrative instruction is to hopefully diminish writing apprehension by removing the most troubling aspect of the overall writing process, thereby allowing students to focus more of their energies on the process of writing.

The other two questions from the Narrative Content Survey ask students to rank typical anxiety for a standard writing assignment and anxiety from the narrative writing. The results of these questions are shown in the chart below (Figure 4.12).
The apprehension reported from the narrative writing assignment measures almost 30% less than the apprehension reported from a typical writing assignment.

By removing the need amongst the students to generate content as well as to work on improving writing, the students reported lower apprehension levels; more on this, however, in Chapter Five.
The Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom (The Overall Approach)

The Canterbury Tales Unit

The results from The Autobiographical Approach Six Month Assessment (See Appendix 7.14) attach to the earlier results for the Balin & Garlonde and Pellinore & Griflet lessons. The chart below (Figure 4.13) offers, then, a comparison between (1) a non-personalized lesson, (2) a narrative lesson, and (3) an Autobiographical Approach lesson.

Recall from earlier, that the narrative approach saw correct responses to 47% of questions asked six months after the lesson, while the non-personalized approach saw only 3%. The Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom found that 70% of the answers were correct or appropriate. Not only does this figure offer a passing score, but it also out-performs both a non-personalized approach (by 67%) and the sole use of narrative instruction (by 23%).
Furthermore, the number of “I don’t know” responses diminished greatly with the Autobiographical Approach. As shown in the chart below (Figure 4.14), the Autobiographical Approach to *The Canterbury Tales* lesson generated “I don’t know” responses for only 15% of the questions asked six months after the unit, lower than the narrative approach alone and far lower than a non-personalized approach.
Below is a chart (Figure 4.15) which shows the percentage of students that passed each of the Six Month Assessments. None of the students passed the Balin & Garlonde (non-personalized) assessment, 30% of the students passed the Pellinore & Griflet (narrative) assessment, and 73% of the students passed the *Canterbury Tales* (autobiographical) assessment.

![Chart showing percentage of "I don't know" responses for different approaches](image_url)
VALIDITY

Definition of “Correct” Responses

Lower level questioning based on Bloom’s Taxonomy can offer simple right or wrong answers; however, as the questioning becomes more complex, moving into deeper levels of thought, simple yes-or-no, right-or-wrong answers are much more difficult to find. In this chapter, when I refer to a response from one of the Six Month Assessments as being correct, I mean to imply that the responses is either correct, appropriate, or both.

Differences Between Wrong (Inappropriate), Blank, and “I don’t know” Responses

For the Six Month Assessments, students were asked to indicate whether or not they had absolutely no clue as to what the answer to a questions would be by writing an “I don’t know” response (e.g. “I don’t know,” “No idea,” “No clue,” etc.). A wrong answer would apply to one of the lower level questions; whereas, an inappropriate
response may apply to higher level questioning. An example of this would be a response of simply “I support this.” when asked to support or challenge an assertion. A blank response indicated that the student may have heard some bells ringing off in the distance regarding the question but could not recall the actual answer. An “I don’t know” response indicated that there were no bells ringing anywhere regarding that particular question.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

The general purpose of this study was to gather data regarding a proposed model of education: The Autobiographical Approach to Instruction in the English Classroom. This study was conducted to determine whether or not this model could lead to or offer success, with success defined as students enjoying the lesson and remembering lesson content.

A secondary purpose of this study was to determine whether an optimized flow experience could be tied into educational pedagogy and assessment to elicit deeper understanding of the subject and more personal development and connections with the literature being presented.

The results of this study were obtained through surveys, interviews, student reflections and assignment grades, as well as researcher field notes. Ratings and grades were plotted and averaged for the purpose of determining whether or not some measure of success could be found with this approach.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Differentiated Instruction

Research Question 1: When teachers employ the Autobiographical Approach to teaching English, to what extent will students feel as though their learning needs have been met?

Students reported that they felt as though the differentiated instruction offered through the Personal Writing Workshop met their needs 25% more so than did a non-personalized approach.

Research Question 2: To what degree do students enjoy the Autobiographical Approach?

Here students reported that they enjoyed this type of approach 17% more than a non-personalized writing approach.

Differentiated Assessment

Research Question 3: How will students react/respond to differentiated assessments? To what extent will students be able to create meaningful connections with the material because of the personalization of assessment methods?

Overall, the students responded in an overwhelmingly positive manner to this aspect of the Autobiographical Approach. I had the students rate three assignments based on an overall rating and on their level of enjoyment; also, I compared the grades from the different assignments.
The students gave the non-personalized, teacher-directed Arthurian assignment a fairly average, middle-of-the-road rating; however, the other two assignments (which allowed some degree of student input) received much higher ratings. The higher the rating, the closer the student was to a “I loved it, and I wish that everything we did was like this” claim.

The response to the differentiated assessment was very positive.

Furthermore, the students ranked the assignments based on what percentage of time they spent fully engaged in and enjoying the assignment.

Again, the non-personalized, teacher-designed Arthurian assignment received a middle-of-the-road enjoyment ranking. The other two assignments both received much higher enjoyment rankings.

When the students felt more positive about an assignment and they enjoyed it more, their performance and success increased. This can be seen by the grade comparison of these three assignments. On average, the students were barely pushing a “C-” on the non-personalized, teacher-designed assignment; whereas, the other two assignments came in at the high “B+” level.

Overall the students, based on qualitative and quantitative data, responded with satisfaction, enjoyment, and positivity to this portion of the Autobiographical Approach.

Most definitely students created meaningful connections because of this aspect of the approach. This is evident from the numerous “because” statements that the students made when evaluating the assignments, some of which I offered earlier in Chapter Four.
Students made comments such as “I know I did a good job because I enjoy art, and I got the opportunity to share it,” “I enjoyed this project because it gave me a different perspective,” and “I know I did well because I got to do what I loved.”

_Narrative Pedagogy_

_Research Question 4: To what extent will the narrative aspect of the Autobiographical Approach spark interest from the students?_

By and large, the answer to this question comes from my own observations and the verbal, sometimes written, feedback I received from the students.

It was obvious to me, standing at the head of the room, that the students were genuinely engaged in the lesson which I was offering. Students responded quite often with words of praise, and even applause a few times, to this aspect of the Autobiographical Approach. These responses are recorded in my field notes.

As part of the Personal Writing Workshop mentioned earlier, I asked students to compose a letter of feedback to me (writing number four) about the course. Many of the students remarked in these letters that the narrative aspect of a lesson was their favorite part, the part that grabbed them from the start.

_Research Question 5: To what extent will students readily make personal connections to the literature?_

One thing that most teachers learn very quickly is that students love to tell stories, to be in the classroom spotlight for just a moment. I found that this holds true under the
narrative instruction umbrella, as well. Students were very willing during the lesson, after class, in writing, while giving feedback, and other times to offer contributions to the narrative foundation that I was building for a particular lesson or unit. In doing this, they were creating strong connections to the literature, to the teacher, and to each other.

*Research question 6: When answering questions from the literature, both immediately after the lesson and several weeks after the lesson, to what extent will students be able to recall and apply the material from the instruction?*

This is possibly one of the most striking pieces of data gathered during this whole study; I am thrilled with the astounding results found in Chapter Four.

Implementing the Autobiographical Approach, the students were able to recall an impressive amount of information from the lessons, as well as make connections and assertions long after the lesson had been taught.

Moreover, the students, it would seem, were far more willing to attempt the questions from the narrative lesson than the non-personalized lesson. This is demonstrated by the large discrepancy of “I don’t know” responses. Also, very few students responded with a total “I don’t know” response (all questions receiving an “I don’t know” response) to the six month assessment for the narrative lesson. This shows that though they may not have been able to recall specifics from the lesson, they may have been able to apply the overall concepts and assertions from the literature; whereas, they were far less willing to do this with the non-personalized lesson.
Overall Questions

Research question 7: Does The Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom (autobiographical pedagogy) work?

I feel confident in asserting that this model: The Autobiographical Approach to Instruction in the English Classroom does in fact lead to success as an overall, holistic approach to English classroom instruction.

First, each of the individual aspects of the Autobiographical Approach has shown success. When combined the success of the total approach is increased greatly. One example of this is found in the Six-Month Assessment used for the Autobiographical Approach: the percentage of correct responses was higher than both the non-personalized approach and the narrative approach; while, the percentage of “I don’t know” responses was lower than both.

In education we most often use assessment to determine or measure success. The percentage of students who were able to successfully complete assessments for the Autobiographical Approach lesson six months after the material was taught was astounding (73%); whereas, the percentage of students able to do the same for a non-personalized approach (0%) was dismal, and the percentage for the narrative approach alone was better (30%) but not as impressive as the Autobiographical Approach.

Educators and scholars, such as Howard Gardner as I mentioned in Chapter Two, are concerned with the students’ ability to actually hold onto and use the knowledge that they receive in school. In the opening section of Gardner’s *The Unschooled Mind* (2004), he discusses a growing body of research that supports the claim that students “typically
do not display an adequate understanding of the materials and concepts with which they have been working,” (p. 3).

By and large, students will learn something just long enough to pass a test on it or write a paper about it (Ask most any student if this is true, and one will find that it is.), and then they will forget whatever concepts they had been taught. Referencing the students and allowing them to bring their life experiences to the table i.e., engaging in The Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom, creates connections that are not so easily forgotten, therefore allowing students to recall and apply the material and concepts months (and possibly years, depending on further research) later.

If this is not a recipe for success in the English Classroom, then I don’t know what is.

DISCUSSION

This study came about because of a desire and a need to address variant learning styles (Dunn, Dunn, and Price, 1989; Briggs, 2001; Schmeck, 2001; et al.), multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1991, 1993, 1997; Sternberg 1985, 1988, 1997), and the goal of connecting students with the literature (Pritchard, 1993; Rosenblatt, 1978). Research is needed in this area because, as evidence from a number of educators and researchers (Hamel, 2003; Tomlinson, 1991, 2001, 2004; Moon, Tomlinson, and Callahan, 1995; Marshall, 1989; Gardner, 1993, 1997; et al.) indicates, little is actually done in educational settings to address the very diverse needs of our students; in fact, many teachers adopt a one-size-fits-all teaching style.
As a way to address and explore these issues, I designed and researched The Autobiographical Approach to Instruction in the English Classroom. This dynamic, holistic approach to education is supported by research on narrative pedagogy (Rossiter, 2003; Neuhauser, 1993; Ironside, 2003; Mello, 2001; et al.) and differentiated instruction and assessment (Tomlinson, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2004). One of the goals of The Autobiographical Approach is to help students enter into an optimal flow experience, where growth and learning occur (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1991).

The lessons and assessments which I designed for this study were designed with differentiation and narrative pedagogy in mind. The characteristics and criteria set forth in the literature regarding these aspects of the approach are evident in the research procedures.

In line with the claims made by researchers such as Tomlinson (1999, 2001) and Gardner (1991, 1993, 1997), the lessons implemented during this study, based on evidence gathered from student surveys, student interviews, researcher field notes, researcher observations, grades, etc., demonstrated a degree of success, which is defined here as students enjoying the lesson and remembering the content, in helping student connect to, understand, and enjoy the literature presented. Moreover, students reported that they felt as though their individual needs were met and that their apprehension regarding writing was fairly low.

CONCLUSIONS

I do not necessarily make the claim that differentiated assessment, differentiated instruction, narrative pedagogy, or the overall Autobiographical Approach is the solution
to the issues facing education today. I do, however, put to education professionals the
results and explanations presented herein.

This study demonstrates a marked positive response in a variety of areas for
students, among these: enjoyment, meaning, task appreciation, and grades. When
students feel like they can connect a part of themselves, of their interests, into the
literature or the assignment, they do that: they put more of themselves into it, which in
turn, creates a quality product meaningful to them: (1) the resulting grades are
impressive, (2) the students care far more about the product, (3) they care about and feel
connected to the process, and (4), these in turn, lead to a deeper understanding of the
material presented.

I believe that this approach facilitates overall success and student achievement.
More important, for me, than the numbers and the grades and the ratings are the
comments the students make about enjoying an assignment or lesson and the meaningful
connections that they make.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Much more research is needed regarding The Autobiographical Approach to the
English Classroom as a holistic model for instruction. I note four specific areas by which
this study may be expanded: (1) more diverse assessment products and methods, (2)
incorporation of other disciplines beyond the English Classroom, (3) long-term analysis,
and (4) comparisons of classrooms using the Autobiographical Approach compared
against those not using this model.
More Diverse Assessment Products

One aspect of the study which needs further research is the types of products assigned under non-personalized assessments. For the Arthurian Legend assignment, I opted for the students’ products to be formal essays. The reason that I chose this type of assessment is that the essay is one of the most common types of assessments used along with tests.

Some may argue that the reason student scores rose was not because of their input on the process and product but rather that they were simply not writing essays. While this argument suggests a disturbing fact, it does introduce the need for other types of products for assessments over which students have little or no control.

As I continue to research, I will introduce some different products for assignments in this manner. I do, however, have faith that the findings of this continued research will yield similar results to the ones presented above.

Incorporation of Other Disciplines

As I am an English teacher, my study was focused on the English / Language Arts discipline. I would very much like to see if ratings and grades play out the same way in other disciplines.

As I continue this research, I will reach out to other teachers to develop and implement Autobiographical assessments and lessons, so that I may track those results as well.
Long-Term Analysis

One concern an educator has for any type of lesson or assessment is whether or not the students will be able to retain the information into the future. In order to measure the effectiveness of this approach, long-term results need to be obtained as well.

I had students take six month assessment quizzes, and the results were wonderful. In the future, I would like to perhaps have one-year, two-year, etc. assessments and compare those results, as well.

Approach Comparisons

This study only proposed and sought to explore the Autobiographical Approach model. Future research could addend this study by comparing this model with other educational models, such as a traditional, or non-personalized, approach.
References


APPENDICES
APPENDIX 7.1
Definitions

_FCA:_

Focus Correction Areas – Focus correction is a selective approach to correcting student writing. In focus correcting, the teacher selects one, two, or three critical problem areas and corrects only those areas. Students are informed of the focus correction areas before beginning their first drafts. Any area for focus correction can be selected, from capitalization to the use of details, and focus correction areas can be chosen for an individual, a group, or a whole class (Collins, 1987).

_Student Performance:_

Student performance herein is used as a term to encompass several things: (1) acquired grades, (2) successful completion of the task at hand, (3) desire to complete/perform assigned task, and (4) enjoyment (a characteristic of “flow” see Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1991) of the assigned task.
APPENDIX 7.2
Table 31-1. Number of entering freshmen at degree-granting institutions, and percentage of entering freshmen enrolled in remedial courses, by subject area and type of institution: Fall 1995 and 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of institution</th>
<th>Enter. Freshmen (in thousands)</th>
<th>Reading, writing, or mathematics</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1995</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All institutions</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public 2-year</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private 2-year</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public 4-year</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private 4-year</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All institutions</td>
<td>2,396</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public 2-year</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private 2-year</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public 4-year</td>
<td>849</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private 4-year</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^1Data from private not-for-profit and for-profit institutions are reported together because there are too few private for-profit institutions in the sample to report them separately.

NOTE: Data reported for fall 2000 are based on Title IV degree-granting institutions that enrolled freshmen in 2000. Data reported for fall 1995 are based on degree-granting institutions that enrolled freshmen in 1995. Remedial education includes "courses on reading, writing, or mathematics for college students lacking those skills necessary to perform college-level work at the level required by the [sampled] institution." Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

APPENDIX 7.3
Table 31-2. Among degree-granting institutions that offered remedial courses, percentage distribution by the approximate length of time a student was enrolled in remedial courses at the institution, by type of institution: Fall 1995 and 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of institution</th>
<th>Less than 1 year</th>
<th>1 year</th>
<th>More than 1 year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All institutions</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public 2-year</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private 2-year</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public 4-year</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private 4-year</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Rounds to zero.
! Interpret data with caution (estimates are unstable).
‡ Reporting standards not met (too few cases).

1 Institutions were asked the average length of time their students spent enrolled in remedial courses and were given the following choices: less than 1 year (e.g., 1 semester or 2 quarters), 1 year, or more than 1 year.

2 Data from private not-for-profit and for-profit institutions are reported together because there are too few private for-profit institutions in the sample to report them separately.

NOTE: Data reported for fall 2000 are based on Title IV degree-granting institutions that enrolled freshmen in 2000. Data reported for fall 1995 are based on degree-granting institutions that enrolled freshmen in 1995. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding and not reporting where there are too few cases for a reliable estimate.

Student Interest and Focus Survey

Name: _______________________________

1. When working in a group, do you consider yourself more of a leader or a follower?
   Follower ……|……|……|……|……|……|……|……|……|……|…… Leader

2. Which of the following best describes your view on group work?
   a. I like to take charge and do most of the work; I don’t trust other people with my grade.
   b. I am a true team player; I want everyone to do the same amount of work.
   c. I like to sit back a little and see where I am needed; if it doesn’t look like I’m needed, that’s ok with me.
   d. I hate groups; I think it’s unfair to share a grade.

3. In a student educational setting, would you prefer the role of the teacher or of the student?
   Student ……|……|……|……|……|……|……|……|……|……|…… Teacher

4. Through which medium do you think you best express your thoughts and feelings? (You may choose up to three.)
   a. Drawing
d. Music
e. Creative Writing
f. Poetry

5. If you had a choice of assessment methods, which would you choose?
   a. Test (Not Multiple Choice)  d. Portfolio
d. Essay
b. Essay
e. Other (specify): ___________  

6. How do you prefer to receive instruction from a teacher?
   a. One-on-one
c. Large Group (whole class)
b. Small Group

7. What are your two favorite subjects/classes in school? _______ & _______

8. How much do you like school in general?
   I hate it. ……|……|……|……|……|……|……|……|……|……|…… I love it.

9. How much time, on average, at night do you have for school work? ____ hours

10. If you could do one thing to improve the whole concept of school, what would it be?
    _______________________________________________________________________
    _______________________________________________________________________
    _______________________________________________________________________

   Alex Kaulfuss, 2005
APPENDIX 7.5
EVALUATION FOR ARTHURIAN LEGEND ASSIGNMENT

YOUR NAME: _____________________________________

EXPLAIN YOUR APPROACH TO THIS ASSIGNMENT: _______________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________

SCALE EVALUATION OF PROJECT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I HATED THIS, AND I HOPE THAT WE NEVER DO ANYTHING LIKE IT AGAIN.</th>
<th>I LOVED IT, AND I WISH EVERYTHING WE DID WAS LIKE THIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>……………</td>
<td>……………</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HOW MUCH TIME DID YOU SPEND ON THIS PROJECT? _____ (HOURS)

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF THIS TIME WERE YOU ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN WHAT YOU WERE DOING I.E., HOW MUCH OF THIS TIME DID YOU ENJOY WHAT YOU WERE DOING (“IN THE ZONE”)? _____ (HOURS OR PERCENT)
APPENDIX 7.6
**Evaluation for *Beowulf* Project**

Your Name: _______________

Group Genre: ____________  Group Leader: _______________

**Evaluation of your group leader:** ________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

**Scale Evaluation of Group Leader**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I wouldn’t follow him/her out of a burning building.</th>
<th>I’d follow him/her to the ends of the Earth.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>…</td>
<td>……</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Member:</th>
<th>Evaluation:</th>
<th>Grade:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_____________</td>
<td>_______________</td>
<td>- = +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____________</td>
<td>_______________</td>
<td>- = +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____________</td>
<td>_______________</td>
<td>- = +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____________</td>
<td>_______________</td>
<td>- = +</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluation of this assignment:** ___________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________

**Scale Evaluation of Project**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I hated this, and I hope that we never do anything like it again.</th>
<th>I loved it, and I wish everything we did was like this.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>…</td>
<td>……</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How much time did you spend on this project? ____ (hours)

What percentage of this time were you actively engaged in what you were doing i.e., how much of this time did you enjoy what you were doing? ____ (hours or percent)
EVALUATION FOR BALIN & BALAN PROJECT

YOUR NAME: ________________________

BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION: _____________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

GROUP MEMBER EVALUATION

GROUP MEMBER:    EVALUATION:    GRADE:
[ (- lower)= same)(+ higher) ]

____________________  ____________________________  ______________________

____________________  ____________________________  ______________________

____________________  ____________________________  ______________________

____________________  ____________________________  ______________________

____________________  ____________________________  ______________________

EXPLAIN YOUR SPECIFIC ROLE ON THIS PROJECT: ______________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

SCALE EVALUATION OF PROJECT

I HATED THIS, AND I HOPE THAT WE NEVER DO ANYTHING LIKE IT AGAIN.

...|......|......|......|......|......|......|......|......|......|......|

I LOVED IT, AND I WISH EVERYTHING WE DID WAS LIKE THIS.

HOW MUCH TIME DID YOU SPEND ON THIS PROJECT? _____ (HOURS)

WHAT PORTION OF THIS TIME WERE YOU ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN WHAT YOU WERE DOING I.E., HOW MUCH OF THIS TIME DID YOU ENJOY WHAT YOU WERE DOING (“IN THE ZONE”)? _____ (HOURS OR PERCENT)
APPENDIX 7.8
Instructions:

Over the next few weeks you will undertake a series of short writing assignments which will allow you to focus on your specific strengths and weaknesses. These will allow me to tailor my feedback to your personal concerns.

You may move through the writings as quickly or as slowly as you like. However, all writings and revisions are due by April 28th, this is the Friday before the AP Literature Test. Your AP Lit test is scheduled for Thursday May 4th.

For each writing, you will identify one to three FCA*s upon which you’d like for me to focus. If you’ve done well with the identified FCA’s, I will sign the “approved” box, and you can move to the next writing. If not, I will make comments and suggestions, so you can revise the piece and turn in a new draft. Both you and I can suggest FCA’s for the next piece of writing.

You may turn in new writing at any time; you can email a piece to me. If you do this, make sure that I sign this sheet afterward.

*FCA: Focus Correction Area – A specific area which the student/teacher assigns for special attention when reading or writing which encourages students to improve targeted writing skills. Examples: Vary sentence structure, Develop a clear, focused thesis, etc.

| Choose any American or British author to whom you will compose a letter. In this letter, you will chastise/berate him/her for some aspect of his/her work(s). You may focus on any aspect of the author’s writing; however, you must remember to remain professional, though you may become discourteous at times. |
|---|---|---|
| **Format:** | Letter |
| **Length:** | 1 page |
| **FCA (1):** | |
| **FCA (2):** | |
| **FCA (3):** | |

| Choose one of the following genres into which you will throw a creative short story: science-fiction, historical fiction, satirical romance, or roman à clé. |
|---|---|---|
| **Format:** | Creative Story |
| **Length:** | 2 pages |
| **FCA (1):** | |
| **FCA (2):** | |
| **FCA (3):** | |

| Compose a persuasive essay in which you argue who the greatest character in all of literature is. |
|---|---|---|
| **Format:** | Essay |
| **Length:** | 2-3 pages |
| **FCA (1):** | *Essay has a clear, focused thesis which promises what the essay delivers.* |
| **FCA (2):** | |
| **FCA (3):** | |

<p>| Compose a letter to me about your feelings about this class. You may discuss your performance or my performance; you can write about your concerns, fears, hopes, your likes and dislikes. You need to be honest with this piece; nothing will ever be accomplished by (or for) an apple-polishing sycophant. |
|---|---|---|
| <strong>Format:</strong> | Letter |
| <strong>Length:</strong> | 1 page |
| <strong>FCA (1):</strong> | |
| <strong>FCA (2):</strong> | |
| <strong>FCA (3):</strong> | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format: Speech</th>
<th>FCA (1)</th>
<th>Approved?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length: 1-2 pages</td>
<td>FCA (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FCA (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your Choice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format: Your Choice</th>
<th>FCA (1)</th>
<th>Approved?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length: 1-2 pages</td>
<td>FCA (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FCA (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Propose a plan of action which a teacher ought to implement into his/her curriculum to better aid the students in their quest for knowledge. Be sure to offer practical examples of what you’re proposing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format: Essay</th>
<th>FCA (1) Essay has a clear, focused thesis which promises what the essay delivers.</th>
<th>Approved?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length: 2-3 pages</td>
<td>FCA (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FCA (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Choose one of the following genres into which you will throw a creative short story: fantasy, mystery, dark utopia, or satire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format: Creative Story</th>
<th>FCA (1)</th>
<th>Approved?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length: 2-5 pages</td>
<td>FCA (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FCA (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compose a letter to the editor of the News & Observer in which you discuss one of the following issues: (1) the state of education, (2) the state of the state, or (3) the state of our youth population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format: Letter</th>
<th>FCA (1)</th>
<th>Approved?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length: 1 page</td>
<td>FCA (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FCA (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Choose one of the following genres into which you will throw a creative short story: fable, folk tale, fairy tale, or fictional diary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format: Creative Story</th>
<th>FCA (1)</th>
<th>Approved?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length: 2-4 pages</td>
<td>FCA (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FCA (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WRITING WORKSHOP EVALUATION SURVEY
ALEX KAULFUSS

NAME: ____________________________

1. HOW MUCH DO YOU TYPICALLY ENJOY COMPLETING AN ASSIGNED WRITING PIECE?

I actually hate it immensely. 1……2……3……4……5……6……7……8……9……10 I absolutely love and adore it!

2. HOW MUCH DID YOU ENJOY COMPLETING THIS SERIES OF WRITINGS?

I actually hated it immensely. 1……2……3……4……5……6……7……8……9……10 I absolutely loved and adored it!

3. TO WHAT DEGREE DO YOU TYPICALLY FEEL THAT YOUR NEEDS ARE MET IN A GIVEN WRITING ASSIGNMENT?

Not at all. 1……2……3……4……5……6……7……8……9……10 Completely

4. TO WHAT DEGREE DID YOU FEEL THAT THIS SERIES OF WRITINGS ADDRESSED YOUR NEEDS?

Not at all. 1……2……3……4……5……6……7……8……9……10 Completely

5. HOW MUCH DO YOU FEEL THAT A TYPICAL WRITING ASSIGNMENT HELPS YOU GROW AS A WRITER?

Not at all. 1……2……3……4……5……6……7……8……9……10 Completely

6. HOW MUCH DID YOU FEEL THAT THIS SERIES OF WRITINGS HELPED YOU GROW AS A WRITER?

Not at all. 1……2……3……4……5……6……7……8……9……10 Completely


________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
1. Please complete this list of the basic rules of the joust.
   a. _____________________________ - one point
   b. _____________________________ - two points
   c. _____________________________ - three points and ____________________

2. Summarize the fight between King Pellinore and Griflet.

3. Examine the decision that Arthur made in making Griflet a knight of the court against Merlin’s advice.

4. Explain the eventual effects of Arthur’s decision and the fight between Pellinore and Griflet.

5. Formulate a theory concerning what would have happened had Arthur followed Merlin’s advice and not made Griflet a knight.

6. Support or challenge the argument that Merlin knew exactly what Arthur would decide to do and did what he did so that Arthur could end up with Excalibur.
APPENDIX 7.11
1. Please list the three things that Balin found in the castle of King Pellam.
   a. _____________________________ - person
   b. _____________________________ - weapon
   c. _____________________________ - several of the same item

2. Summarize the fight between Balin and Garlonde.

3. Examine the decision that Pellam made in avenging Garlonde against his guests’ advice.

4. Explain the eventual effects of Pellam’s decision and the fight between Balin and Garlonde.

5. Formulate a theory concerning what would have happened had Pellam followed his guests’ advice and not avenged Garlonde.

6. Support or challenge the argument that it was necessary for both Garlonde and Pellam to do what they did so that Balin would meet up with his brother.
APPENDIX 7.12
My father stops and sets the scrapped 12-ton jack down by his side. My brothers and I shuffle to a stop; stones and dust dance around our shuffling feet signaling the long day this has already been, though the day has barely passed breakfast. I drop the cordless drill I’m carrying, which is not supposed to be cordless, and my brothers let the casters they’re lugging tumble to the ground. The morning’s scrap yard trip has been good, plenty of trash turned treasure today.

At first glance this place is just a dusty, desolate smattering of garbage. At one end, skyscrapers form out of junked cars – beat-up Benzes, flattened Fords, crushed Chevrolets, and the occasional rusty Renault; toppled medical equipment lines the edge of the trees; huge metal drums, once titans in a warehouse, now sit rusting to form barriers at the far end of the field; and rubbish of all sorts litters the landscape all in between. Some of it’s covered in oil, some in rust; some is overgrown with weeds and vines. But if you look inside things and under piles, you may find something worth saving – a new radio tucked into the dash of an old truck, a stack of old books, forgotten in the trunk of a wrecked Honda, or barrels of unused, surgical razor blades which will sell for a buck a handful at the flea market.

The day tenders a respectable haul for my father. The booty making that fact inarguable lies gathered around our feet.

My father asks us each to find a decent sized throwing rock, which we all do, and he answers our unasked question by producing a discarded Snapple bottle from
underneath an old conveyor belt. Stripped of its label, the bottle sits proudly naked on the tips of my father’s fingers. He says, “Let’s see if you can hit this.”

The bottle drops from his fingertips into his palm; his arm swings back into a perfectly positioned arc; and finally, gingerly it swings forward. The bottle glides out of his hand, a slow, perfect softball pitch. Out of the corner of my eye, I see my brothers both hastily launch their rocks. The stones fly through the air, as close to the bottle as the sun is to the moon.

To me, the bottle seems to be moving so slowly, as if it is hanging in the air waiting to be struck. I, too, wait; I wait for the perfect moment. Fingering the rock, I find that at a certain position, it fits perfectly in the crook of my forefinger; this will be crucial in acquiring the proper spin. The bottle passes through the air, the light glinting off its smooth crystal surface. Finally, somehow, I know that the right moment has arrived.

I suck in a quick, short breath, drawing in not only air, but also some of the invisible energy I can feel surrounding me. Like a shot my arm is back, and with a blast of force, I send the rock rolling off of my forefinger into the air.

Suffice it to say that I can’t play basketball worth a damn; I can almost never help the ball find its way to the basket. Pretty much all that I do on the court is obstruct the paths of other players, usually my teammates. Often, when I’m passed the ball, I somehow, automatically revert to a dodgeball mentality, much to the dismay of the poor souls who’ve been damned with me as a team mate. At a certain time in my younger
days, I could hit a baseball as it attempted to speed past home plate, but that time no longer exists. At a baseball game, I’m pretty much good at one thing: getting hotdogs.

But as that small, oddly shaped rock spins off the edge of my finger, I know; I know that I’ve done it. I only have to wait a moment before my father and brothers know it, too. The small, spiraling stone smacks into the side of the sailing Snapple bottle and bursts right through it. The crash which one might expect does not issue forth. It doesn’t sound like the candy glass windows in the movies, which are made from spun sugar. Rather, we hear a dull pop as the top and bottom of the bottle are separated from the shattered middle.

As the glass tinkles to the ground, my father and brothers utter expressions of awe and amazement. A quick “hot damn” was one, and a slow “whoa” was another. I just smile, pick up my cordless drill, which isn’t supposed to be cordless, and walk towards the car.
APPENDIX 7.13
NARRATIVE CONTENT SURVEY
ALEX KAULFUSS

PLEASE RATE THE FOLLOWING TWO QUESTIONS ON A SCALE FROM ONE TO TEN.

1. In general, how anxious do you feel about writing?

   – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10 –

2. How anxious did you feel writing the childhood experience piece?

   – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10 –

CHOOSE ONE ANSWER FOR THE FOLLOWING QUESTION.

3. Generally, which aspect of a piece of writing is most frustrating?

   [ ] Planning
   [ ] Writing
   [ ] Creating Content
   [ ] Revising & Proofing
   [ ] Publishing (Sharing)
APPENDIX 7.14
1. What did the three men in the *Pardoner’s Tale* find?

2. Summarize either the *Pardoner’s Tale*, the *Wife of Bath’s Tale*, or the *Knight’s Tale*.

3. Examine the assertion that the Wife of Bath made about what women want.

4. Explain why the Pardoner would have told the tale that he told.

5. Formulate a theory concerning Chaucer’s motives in writing *The Canterbury Tales*.

6. Support or challenge the claim that the Wife of Bath made about what women want.
APPENDIX 7.15
As the very nature of The Autobiographical Approach to the English Classroom is to meet the needs of the individual student, I felt it imperative that I include a couple of specific stories about the implementation of this approach. I’ve included here two stories about Kate, a girl from my fourth period AP English class, and Ahna, a girl from my mixed Debate I and II class. I have asked them both to respond to their reactions to this approach; those responses are printed here, as well.

Kate

Earlier this year a beloved teacher, ‘Mrs. M’, passed away at the high school where I teach. Her death was sudden and unexpected; she was only 36 years old. Kate was very close to this teacher. She had been a student under Mrs. M for three or four different History courses; they had served together for student government; they had worked together on a leadership enrichment camp; they had had many conversations about Kate’s desires, hopes, and fears. Mrs. M’s death hit Kate like a sledge hammer, and Kate needed an outlet for her emotions.

Since the beginning of the school year, I had been discussing with my seniors the senior paper that they would be responsible for researching and writing. I had given the topic of assessing the impact of an action or decision made by a monarch of the United Kingdom. When Kate came to me with a request to alter the content of the research paper just a bit and research and assess the impact made by Mrs. M, I would have been a fool on so many levels to have said no.

In many ways the work that Kate did was much harder than the work that some of her classmates were doing. She could not simply go to the Internet or to the library and
do a quick search for Mrs. M; she had to create much of her own research, by conducting interviews and compiling her own information.

This process allowed Kate an outlet for narrative about Mrs. M, about herself, and about her feelings.

Here is Kate’s response to this experience:

Dear Mr. Kaulfuss,

I wanted to thank you for all you’ve done in English this year. I’ve really appreciated the freedom that you’ve given all of us to take responsibility for our own education, and make individual choices to better ourselves. All year, you’ve made me and other students feel very comfortable about changing assignments to best fit our needs. This is a unique teaching style, one that I wish more teachers would consider.

Our senior research paper seemed like a daunting task from the beginning, yet one I was not dreading completely. But after we decided I could alter the paper and research a person dear to my heart and incredibly influential in my life, I was ecstatic. I could not wait to begin the paper. I had not been excited about any school assignment in years, probably since my fifth grade lighthouse project.

Not only was I energized to begin my paper, but I found that through working on it, I did not want it to end. I’ve never felt that way about any assignment. If I had done my paper on any random British monarch, then I would have worked hard, yet half-heartedly, just to spit out some sort of finished project. With my paper about someone who mattered to me, my grade was the last thing
on my mind. I cared about the content and what it meant to me and others who I interviewed; not about whether I could pull off an “A”.

I became deeply involved with my research paper, wanting it to be perfect and meaningful, not long and full of rarely used vocabulary. I also learned about how I write best; what conditions are ideal for me. This will be important over the next four years, as I will be writing plenty in college.

Thank you, Mr. Kaulfuss, for caring enough about me and other students, and giving me the gift of choice in my own education. This paper is a prime example of how students, when given the right choices and enough freedom, can decide to take control of their learning, and get the most out of schoolwork. It is a lesson that reaches far beyond the classroom, and that, we all know, is the only one that matters.

Sincerely,
Kate

Ahna

Each semester, I have my Debate classes raise money which will ultimately go to charity. As a real world example of how the things that we learn and do in school can affect our lives, the real world, and the lives of others, the culminating project of the Debate class is a Charity Debate. The two teams in this debate will have arrived there though a series of in-class elimination debates. The two teams on stage in the final debate will be representing two charities, and whichever team wins determines where the charity money raised goes.
The debate is meant to be a spectacle. We invite other classes; we announce the topic and results to the school; we have refreshments provided by a local catering company; and so on. Each semester, this puts a little bit of a burden on me… except for this past semester.

Ahna is a Debate II student; she has taken three semesters of Debate and is respected by those who face her in a debate. However, debate, per se, is not necessarily in her future; event planning may be. Ahna’s aunt owns the catering company which provides the refreshments for our Charity Debates, and Ahna is considering following in the footsteps of her aunt.

This semester, Ahna came to me with the request that she be allowed to organize and manage the Charity Debate. I was glad to hand it over to her for a variety of reasons: (1) it took some work and planning off of my hands; (2) she would be contributing greatly to a class project; and (3) I believed that this would be truly meaningful for her. Again, she is a well-respected debater, but event planning and management is even more meaningful for her.

Here is Ahna’s response to this experience:

My participation in the charity debate was an extremely useful learning experience. I liked the fact that I got to have such a personal role; it made me work harder to know that so much depended on how seriously I took my job. As the coordinator of the Semi-Annual Charity Debate, I was in charge of refreshments, setting up the stage, creating/posting fliers, seating, and giving out other jobs and tasks to my fellow classmates. That was the third charity debate I’d been involved in, and it was by far the one I enjoyed the most. I learned that I deal really well with chaos, but I might not
necessarily want to have a career as an event coordinator. I enjoyed it, but after the
debate I really felt like it might not be as fun as I thought it would be to do this every day.

I’m glad that before I chose it as a career, I learned that being an event
coordinator is too stressful for me. For now, I would love to be the one coordinating the
next couple of Charity Debates, but as far as taking it beyond that, I really learned that
this wouldn’t be the best career for me.
APPENDIX 7.16
Last time we met together I told you all about the battles that Arthur had to fight in order to hold his claim to the throne. Even after he had pulled the sword from the stone numerous times, and no one else was able to do the same, many of the nobles of the land were not happy with how things had turned out and wanted to fight with Arthur and take the crown from him. I shared with you that he had decisively won all of these battles, until no one questioned that he was rightfully king, though there were some who were unhappy about it. At the end of my last tale, I told you that Arthur’d thrown a huge party to celebrate his many victories, and that at this party, he was reunited with his mother Igraine.

Well, because of how absolutely thrilled Arthur is to be with his mother again, he decides to extend the feast for eight more days and declares, “Any man who comes to me with a reasonable request shall not be denied that request.”

Now, it just so happened that later that day a young page comes riding into town with a mortally wounded knight draped over the horse in front of him. Upon reaching Arthur, the young page asks to be made a knight. The page says to Arthur, “I have served my master faithfully for many years. Recently he jousted with a great knight in a clearing in the woods by a well. After the knight had defeated my master, I asked to joust with him and avenge my master’s injuries. The knight simply laughed at me and said that he did not joust with children. My honor has been twice wounded by this knight, and I would seek vengeance.” Arthur, remembering his proclamation about honoring requests, asks Merlin his opinion on the matter.
Merlin tells Arthur not to make this young man, whose name is Griflet, a knight just yet. He also tells Arthur that Griflet will become a great knight of his court, but that if he goes off to fight this knight, whose name is Pellinore, that he will be lead to the brink of death. So, Arthur, draws his sword and makes Griflet a knight of the court.

I’m going to go on with the story, but I want you to ponder why Arthur blatantly disregards Merlin’s advice, and also consider whether or not Merlin knew that Arthur would do that.

So Griflet, satisfied with his new honor, heads off to fight Pellinore. Pellinore is called a couple of different names: King of the Well, Knight of the Well, King Pellinore.

Now Pellinore, really liked to fight, and he had this huge gong outside in his front yard. Anyone who wanted a fight could gong the gong, and Pellinore, hearing the gonging of the gong, would come out and joust with him. You know the fighting Brad Pitt and Edward Norton did in *Fight Club* and the mindset behind it? That’s the same kind of thing with jousting. There wasn’t much to do, so they’d get together and knock hell out of each other, just for giggles.

Anyway, Griflet gongs this gong, and Pellinore comes outside, takes one look and Griflet, and says, “I told you I don’t fight with kids.” The new knight yells out, “You have to fight me; I am a knight of Arthur’s court.”

Pellinore comes out and says to Griflet, “Fine you want to fight, know this: I will win; I will hurt you; I may kill you; I may spill your guts on the ground; I may knock your head clean off of your shoulders; I will win.”

“Fine,” was Griflet’s only response as he rode to one end of the lists and Pellinore rode to the other. Now, remember, the joust consists of three lances; we learned this
from the film we saw a few days ago. Breaking the lance on the body, earns one point; breaking the lance on the helmet, earns two points. If you knock a rider off of his horse, a rider gets three points and wins the horse of the other jouster.

So, Griflet and Pellinore spur their horses and rip towards one another, and for a while it looks like Griflet may actually be able to hold his own. Sadly, though, he lets his lance drop to the side, and he misses Pellinore. Pellinore, though, does not miss him. His lance slams into Griflet, knocking the wind out of him.

A second time they charge towards each other. This time Griflet does connect with Pellinore, but his lance does not break. Pellinore also connects with Griflet, and (Keep in mind this is really rare for this kind of thing to happen.) his lance pierces through Griflet’s armor and tears through the side, ripping Griflet’s side open, spilling his guts all over the ground.

Griflet, not knowing what else to do, gathers his guts up off of the ground and, cradling them in his arm, heads back toward Arthur’s court.

Now, let me tell you two things about Griflet before I continue: first, before you get too upset about it, by the use of many good leech, Griflet is healed and eventually becomes a great knight of Arthur’s court; second, yes, you can have your guts cascade out of your body and keep on going. I was reading the paper a few years back, and there was this story about a farmer… He was out in the barn, and he had this one fairly old machine that was used to separate seeds from chaff. Well, it was old, so things got stuck in it fairly often. So, this farmer was leaning over it, trying to get whatever was stuck unstuck. And this machine had these blades – they weren’t sharp necessarily; they were like fan blades. When this guy did a little hop-thing to grab whatever was stuck, one of
the blades caught him right across the bottom of his gut, and just like Griflet, plop-
bladop-blop: his guts spilled all over the ground.

This guy gathers his guts back up, looks around (like there’s some spilled gut
manual lying in the barn), and stuffs his gut back into his belly. Not really knowing what
to do, he grabs some duct tape and wraps it around his belly to hold his guts in.

Now, here’s where this guy’s story starts getting really funny, as if it wasn’t
hilarious enough already. See, he and his wife had been arguing all morning, so when he
opens the door to the kitchen to get his wife to call 911, she flings a frying pan at him and
smacks him right in the head. Sends him flying out the door. She runs out the door,
yelling at him, and then sees his bloody duct tape belt.

She calls 911; they come and get him. It’s a pretty simple procedure really. The
doctors laid his guts out on the table, washed them off (remember they fell all in the
dirt.), and stuck them back inside. Stapled his belly shut and sent him on home.

Any of you all hear anything like this before? (Allow for student stories, if there
are any.)

So, when Griflet gets back to court…
APPENDIX 7.17
NARRATIVE INTRODUCTION TO *King Lear*

When I had just entered high school, perhaps the first few weeks of ninth grade, I walked into the bedroom that I was forced to share with my brother to find this same brother playing with fire in the sink. To really grasp the story, let me tell you a little bit about how the room was situated. We lived in this little trailer with only two bathrooms, and the second bathroom, the one that the kids used was half in my bedroom and half attached to it. The toilet and shower parts were closed off, but the sink and cabinet area were actually in the room. Well, it was this sink in the room into which my little brother was throwing burning paper and whatnot. Now, you can imagine how fast the place would have gone up if he’d dropped something of the floor or in the closet, which was right next to the sink area.

Well, the end of the trailer, which made up one wall of my bedroom was composed of one large window, which, incidentally, faced towards my stepfather’s shop, or his stand-around-and-do-nothing-place, as it should have been called.

Without much interruption, my stepfather would stand in the doorway of his shop for hours and just look around. And, well, what do you think he saw on this particular occasion? Me, my brother, and a fire.

So, my stepfather comes busting into the room, demanding answers. My brother was a little less than honest, and I didn’t want to hang him out to dry. I won’t go too much into detail about what happened, but I took pretty much all of the punishment because my brother just told my stepfather what he wanted to hear.
APPENDIX 7.18
NARRATIVE INTRODUCTION TO MACBETH

Have you ever been in a situation where you worked really hard for something and then someone else, someone who is maybe really lazy or uncreative or even downright dumb, got the same thing? And then it almost diminishes the thing that you worked so hard for? For example, - now, I’m not going to name anyone specific, so don’t ask - you guys know that I’ve been working on my thesis… Well, this morning, we all get this note in our boxes: Be sure to congratulate so-and-so on earning a Master’s degree. Honestly, I think it’d be much easier to work on my Master’s thesis, if I just waked in and said, “Alright, I won’t be teaching today; I’m going to work on my thesis, so just be quiet.” But, uh… I don’t think we should sacrifice one for the other. You know?

Or, another example: my wife just got National Board Certification, right. Well, I’m really proud of her, and I know how much she worked, and all that. But then, same kind of thing: we get this letter telling us to congratulate all the teachers who got National Boards, and there are people on the list who can’t even manage their classrooms. So then I wonder what my wife really accomplished.

I’m sure that you guys experience the same kind of thing. Like, maybe, you study and study for this test; you spend hours going over the material. Then you come in and make an 80% on the test, but what really does it is that Jack Smack over there, who didn’t study a lick, came in, finished the test in half the time, and got a 98%.
I mean, what’s up with that. Alright, I had my chance to rant; any of you have any experience with this sort of thing?
Appendix 7.19
NARRATIVE INTRODUCTION TO *THE PARDONER’S TALE*

Sometimes, as a teacher, it becomes my responsibility to teach more than the literature. I often hear stories about things that my students do, who they did them with, and how they covered it up. Most of the time, I struggle with how to address the things that I hear. Should I talk to the student? Should I tell the parent? Should I try to confirm what I’ve heard? Should I alert a guidance counselor? Or, should I just do nothing at all?

Well, sometimes the things that I hear are too grievous to ignore. They are too big to address privately, and I feel compelled to delay the lesson that I had planned for the day, in order to address these foolish thing that teenagers sometimes do.

You will have to forgive me if I become a little emotional or a little frustrated in what I have to say because, for the life of me, I can not begin to understand some of the idiotic things that you all do sometimes.

I absolutely refuse to offer any names or hints, so don’t even bother to ask. And, yes, the incident that has caused me to talk about this only involved a couple of you, but I feel like it’s something that all of you need to hear. Also, if you happen to have heard this story already, or you know the people involved, I would really, really appreciate it if you would keep that information to yourselves. If you must gossip, do it outside of my presence.

(This year my Chaucer unit happened to fall just after Halloween, so it made this part of the lesson much more credible.)
I understand that teenagers do stupid things on Halloween. Believe me; I understand that. My own stepson got busted for rolling several of his friends’ houses in the next neighborhood. But sometimes, sometimes, you go too far… way, way too far.

It would appear – and I may have been misinformed; I truly hope that I have – that a couple of students in this class obtained some fake id’s and went to a bar up here on --- Street.

Now, yeah, that’s pretty bad, but that doesn’t even begin to cover why I’m upset.

It would also appear – I have been told – that after a few solid hours of illegal drinking that these three students of mine, of mine! students that I thought were mature, respectable students, picked a fight with some other people in the bar. They all got kicked out, and instead of doing the sensible thing and going home, your classmates decided to wander down --- Street in the middle of the night.

Oh, don’t look shocked yet; the bad part of the story hasn’t even come yet.

Well, after about a half hour of wandering around, our three friends decide to hang out in the back parking lot of ---’s, the pool hall down there on --- Street. One of them has to relieve himself, so he goes off behind the dumpster. Now, here, finally, is where things start to get bad.

Behind the dumpster, your classmate finds a box of money. The only conclusion that I can come to is that that box of money was phase two in someone’s drug deal. Why else would a box of money be sitting behind a dumpster?

Well, the first thought of the guy who finds it is just to not say anything and come back for it later alone, but the other two ran around the back of the dumpster to mess with him. So, of course, they saw the money there, too.
They decide to hang out in the parking lot until the streets have cleared out from all of the late night partiers and then take the money. As you can imagine nerves and boredom were high, so they sent guy number one, the one who first found the money in the first place, to the store for some more alcohol.

So on his walk to the store, he gets more and more angry that the other two found out about it, so when he gets to the store, not only does he buy a bunch of alcohol with his fake id, but he also buys sleeping pills, diet pills, and whatever-else-over-the-counter-pills he could find. On his way back, he grinds all this stuff up into the alcohol.

I mean, really, really! how stupid- how bad is this going to get. When I first heard this story, I was sure that I was being screwed with, but I called some parents. I am amazed at the things that people will do sometimes.

Well, turns out that while guy number one was on his little walk, the other two started thinking about how it’d be better to split the money two ways instead of three. When alcohol guy gets back, he gets the crap knocked out of him with a broken bottle, and the other two run off with the box of money and the alcohol to celebrate.

How! How can you people think that this is okay?!? Whoo- let me catch my breath here before I give something away…

Anyway, these other two, walking down the street back towards the car, leaving their “friend” lying in an alley, pop the tops of their celebratory booze, and before you know it, they’re both lying in the middle of the freaking street, eyes rolled back in their heads, foaming at the mouth…