An investigation of children's non-narrative writing in a year 6/7 classroom

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AN INVESTIGATION OF CHILDREN'S NON-NARRATIVE WRITING IN A YEAR 6/7 CLASSROOM

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MASTER OF EDUCATION (HONOURS)

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by

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Acknowledgements

This thesis reports on research undertaken in a year 6/7 classroom over a period of nine months. I therefore wish to thank Craig Garrard, the class teacher, who welcomed me so warmly into his classroom and participated actively in the research. Without his collaboration and insight the study would not have been possible. Similarly, the cooperation of the children in Garrard's class, particularly those six — Dorothy, Anna, Joanne, David, Benito and Lee — who provided most of the data described in this thesis, deserve acknowledgement and thanks.

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Nature and purpose of the study

This study investigated the broad question, "What affects children's non-narrative writing in the classroom?" The research perspective and design employed was naturalistic and participatory. It sought an integrated view of children's non-narrative writing performance by examining the following questions, in a natural classroom setting.

1. How, if at all, do students distinguish between different types of writing? By what criteria do they make their distinctions and why?
2. What preferences, if any, do students have for particular types of writing? Why do they have such preferences?
3. What do students believe affects their production of non-narrative writing in the classroom?
4. How do students go about non-narrative writing? What writing strategies do they apply?
5. What instructional strategies influence students' non-narrative writing performance (process and product)?

The study aimed to address the above questions by:

• documenting the context, process and products of naturally occurring non-narrative writing episodes in an upper primary classroom
• describing the teacher's instructional intentions for each non-narrative writing episode and the support provided to students for carrying out their writing
• describing and analysing students' perceptions of non-narrative writing, the context for any non-narrative writing they did in their classroom, and how this context and their teacher's instructional input, influenced how and what they wrote
• exploring and documenting any other influences the students perceived on their non-narrative writing performance (process and product).

Particular emphasis in this study was placed on documenting students' perspectives on non-narrative writing and the tasks which they undertook.

Research site, duration and key informants
The research was undertaken in a year 6/7 primary school classroom in Adelaide, South Australia. It was conducted from March to December 1987, with the major data gathering period being from April to July 1987. Key informants in the study were the classroom teacher and six focal children.

Data sources
Central sources of data were:
• responsive and focused interviews with the teacher and focal children
• the teacher's log book entries
• the children's written products.
Supportive data sources were:
• classroom observations
• informal discussions with informants
• audio tapes of classroom interactions
• the teacher's written reflections on each non-narrative writing episode
Summary

• other artifacts.

Data reduction and analysis were ongoing throughout the study thus contributing to its evolving design.

Findings

Two important trends emerged in the data analyses.

1. Issues about which the children were unanimous
2. Issues about which individual informants offered diverse and different perspectives.

The findings take account of these trends.

Seven major influences on children's performance in non-narrative are identified in this study. These are:

1. Children's literacy histories
2. Children's interpretations of the communicative context for writing
3. Children's knowledge of the topics about which they were writing
4. Children's knowledge about different kinds of writing
5. Children's ability to think and write logically
6. Children's writing strategies
7. Children's interpretations of the "culture" of their classroom.

Implications for teachers

A number of implications for teachers are considered. These relate to three areas:

1. Instructional strategies
2. Teaching challenges
3. Writing assessment.


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Note to reader

Throughout this thesis I refer to the age and year levels of the children who were informants in this study. In South Australia, where the study was conducted, children usually enter school at age five following one year of pre-school or kindergarten experience (from age 4 to 5 years). The following terms are used to describe schooling levels in South Australia.

*Primary school* refers generally to the school levels Reception to year 7 (Children aged 5 to 12 years.) Some schools, such as the one which was the site of this study, consist of all these levels. Others consist only of the year levels 3 to 7.

*Junior primary school* refers specifically to the school levels Reception to year 2. (Children aged 5 to 7 years.) There are many separate Junior Primary schools in South Australia.

*High school* refers to the school levels year 8 to 12. (Children aged 13 to 17 years.) Courses in the twelfth year of secondary education at high school can lead to matriculation into tertiary institutions. Students are required, by law, to attend school until they are 15 years of age.
1.1 WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT

The broad question which the study reported here investigated was, "What affects students' production of non-narrative writing in the classroom?"

The term "non-narrative writing" refers to any written text where information is ordered in a non-chronological way. In contrast, narrative text is that which is ordered in chronological fashion. This simple distinction between text types allows for a wide range of non-narrative forms to be considered in this study. It is a distinction also used by other researchers. [Sowers:1982; Perera:1984; Durst:1984 (who focuses particularly on analytic forms); Harris:1986(b); Harris and Wilkinson:1986; Newkirk:1987].

1.2 ORIGINS OF THE STUDY

My interest in exploring this research question was influenced by insights I had gained and observations I had made in my professional roles. Prior to the study these were those of classroom teacher, language arts adviser in schools, lecturer in tertiary inservice courses in language and literacy education and a student in two graduate programs. This experience allowed me to develop considerable knowledge and practical experience in the field.
of literacy and language education. In particular, I developed a strong interest in issues relating to the role of language in learning "across the curriculum". This led me to consider more closely the nature and development of non-narrative writing.

I often observed students writing in primary classrooms where "process writing" [Graves:1983] was flourishing during Language Arts time but in other subject areas little writing of any kind was occurring. Teachers seemed reluctant to move primary aged students into the territory Britton [1975] described as "transactional writing". One reason for this seemed to be teachers' assumption that so long as the students were writing in great quantity it did not matter what they were writing — that students' fluency in the "expressive mode" would somehow automatically transfer to other forms when they were required. Another possible reason for teachers' reluctance to focus instruction on non-narrative forms of writing was the notion that in "writing time" students should be allowed to choose their own topic and form of writing thereby increasing their "ownership" [Graves, 1983] of it, and, their investment in the task. However, in most of the classes I observed, students seemed to choose to write pieces that were within the realm of story or personal narrative. Since writing instruction focused on helping students develop the pieces they had chosen to write, little opportunity arose for close attention to be given to non-narrative writing experiences. Observations such as these, together with my theoretical and practical knowledge of writing development and instruction, led me to wonder about the broad question, (in 1.1 above), which framed this study.

As well as an established interest in the content of this study, I brought to it a long standing commitment to classroom or action research. As a classroom teacher I had undertaken an action research study in my own class and, as an
adviser and lecturer, used this experience to encourage and support other teachers in enquiring into the processes of their own teaching and learning situations. Although influenced by the work of Stenhouse [1975], I undertook this research work with no firm commitment to a particular method of educational research. Nevertheless, this experience has influenced and shaped my present, more informed, stance. My practical knowledge has been powerful in determining where I placed myself in the research world, what phenomena I perceived as important to research and how I went about designing and carrying out such research.

1.3 INSIGHTS FROM EXISTING RESEARCH


Researchers concerned with explaining children's non-narrative writing difficulties differ in what they see as important. Their research designs, their
findings, and the recommendations they propose tend to reflect their particular focus of enquiry. (These are examined in the following chapter.) As a result, research which has been undertaken offers only patchy, and sometimes conflicting, evidence about the reasons for children's difficulties in non-narrative writing, and what influences their performance in such writing. It is difficult to relate findings from various fields of enquiry, largely because of the very different research orientations and methodologies of the studies which have been undertaken. Further, as will be demonstrated in the following chapter, existing research which focuses particularly on non-narrative writing also tends not to account adequately for the impact of students' knowledge, attitudes, past experience and, their classroom writing situations on what and how they write [Stotsky:1988 and Hillocks:1988].

1.4 THE PURPOSES OF THE PRESENT STUDY
This study sought a more integrated view of children's non-narrative writing performance than that offered by existing research. It took account of a number of the issues raised by researchers from different fields of enquiry, by examining the following questions, in a natural classroom setting.

1. How, if at all, do students distinguish between different types of writing? By what criteria do they make their distinctions and why?
2. What preferences, if any, do students have for particular types of writing? Why do they have such preferences?
3. What do students believe affects their production of non-narrative writing in the classroom?
4. How do students go about non-narrative writing? What writing strategies do they apply?
5. What instructional strategies influence students' non-narrative writing performance (process and product)?
The work of researchers such as Dyson [1984;85] indicates that students interpret their teachers' instructional intentions in unique and different ways and reconstruct literacy activities in the light of their own understandings. Therefore, a particular emphasis in this study was on documenting students' perspectives on non-narrative writing and the tasks that they undertook. This emphasis also aimed to take account of criticisms such as Purves' [1988:p.107] that:

"[current theories] do not place the text in relation to the writer nor the writer within a socio-cultural setting and they do not treat the education system as part of that setting, looking only at the isolated instructor or techniques with total disregard of the students."

The study aimed to address the above questions by:

- documenting the context, process and products of naturally occurring non-narrative writing episodes in an upper primary classroom
- describing the teacher's instructional intentions for each non-narrative writing episode and the support provided to students for carrying out their writing
- describing and analysing students' perceptions of non-narrative writing, the context for any non-narrative writing they did in their classroom and how this context and their teacher's instructional input, influenced how and what they wrote
- exploring and documenting any other influences the students perceived on their non-narrative writing performance (process and product).

These data provided complementary sources of information for addressing the research questions. They allowed what the students said to be checked against what they actually did in a range of non-narrative writing episodes. These data also offered concrete illustrations of how the teacher implemented his instructional intentions for each non-narrative writing
episode and, how the children responded to the instructional support he offered them.

In summary, by accurately describing the non-narrative writing episodes that occurred in one classroom over a period of time the study sought to raise questions and hypotheses about students' perceptions of significant influences on their production of non-narrative writing. By so doing the study also sought to explore the value of going beyond text analyses and experimental tasks to understand and describe performance. It explored the things which students believe affect their writing performance. These are issues that teachers need to take account of if they are to provide the classroom learning environment most conducive to development. The overall goal of the study, however, was not to prove anything, but to explore, document and understand students' perceptions of this type of literacy task and what affects their performance in such tasks. As Walker [1983] points out:

"...we should constantly look for ways of underlining the fact that case studies tell a truth but not the truth. They may offer certain claims to truth, depending on the nature of the evidence they provide, but they are always partial accounts; constructions of reality; representations."

Thus, as Walker [1980] suggests I invite my readers to ask:

"What is there in this study that I can apply to my own situation, and what clearly does not apply?"

Lastly, an important goal of the study was also to provide the teacher with information that would be useful and relevant to his teaching. For this reason every effort was made to feed back information quickly to him as the study progressed.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A number of writers in the field note that there has been comparatively little research undertaken into children's non-narrative writing [Beard: 1984; Freedman and Pringle: 1984; Langer: 1985; Kroll: 1986; Scardamalia and Bereiter: 1986; Raphael et al: 1989]. Recently, however, the role of non-narrative writing in literacy education has caused concern [Newkirk: 1984, 85; Martin: 1984, 85; Bereiter and Scardamalia: 1985; Rothery: 1986; A. Wilkinson: 1986; Christie: 1987(a), (b)].

This chapter first identifies some general research findings relevant to children's performance in, and development of, non-narrative writing. Secondly, it reviews research findings from several fields of enquiry, and the instructional recommendations proposed by researchers in each field.

2.2 KEY FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH

Different kinds of writing make different demands on writers

The assumption in most of the literature is that writing is not a single kind of ability. Numerous studies [Cooper and Matsuhashi: 1983; Hidi and Hildyard: 1983; Prater and Padia: 1983; Watson: 1983; Kent: 1984; Perera: 1984; Langer: 1984, 85, 86; Knudson: 1989; Lamb: 1989] have shown that different text
types put different demands on writers. Despite compelling arguments such as Wells' [1986] that narrative is central in children's literacy development and learning, the research literature suggests strongly that competence in narrative writing does not necessarily lead to similar competence in non-narrative forms.

Traditional rhetoric suggests four modes of writing: narrative, description, argument and explanation. [A. Wilkinson:1986(a)] There exists, however, no universally accepted categorisation of different written forms or genres [Beard:1984; Perera:1984; Harris:1986]. Nevertheless, the ways in which various writers and researchers categorise and define different text types influence thinking about the nature of writing development, about how writing should be researched and, indeed, about how it should be taught. A number of differing frameworks used for thinking about issues such as these are considered briefly below.

Kinneavy [1971, cited in Beard:1984] identifies four basic aims of adult discourse. These aims relate to whether the stress of the language process is on:
1. the producer — expressive aims (eg conversation, journals, diaries, prayer, protests)
2. the audience.—persuasive aims (eg. advertising, debates, arguments).
3. the product — literary aims (eg. stories, songs, poetry, jokes), or
4. the reality of the world to which it refers —referential aims: exploratory (eg. questionnaires and interviews), informative (eg. reports, catalogues), scientific (eg. proving a point by arguing from evidence).
Beard [1984] uses Kinneavy's model as a framework for suggesting ways in which primary school children can be supported to develop their writing abilities within all four discourse aims.

Britton et al's [1975] model aims to describe the writing of school aged children. It proposes a continuum of three language functions — poetic, expressive and transactional. The last function is further divided and subdivided into connative (instruction and persuasion) and informative (recording, reporting, generalised narrative or description, low level generalisation, generalisation, speculation, theorising). Expressive writing is described as highly personal, it assumes a close relationship to the reader and is relatively unstructured. Britton and his colleagues see expressive writing, in developmental terms, as the place where children's growth towards the more formal poetic and transactional functions begins. Inherent within this model is the view that young children are developmentally unsuited to the demands of writing within the transactional function.

Other categorisations of writing reflect, more explicitly, the cognitive demands seen to be inherent within different kinds of writing. Thus, for example, Jacobs [1985] suggests a hierarchy of modes. In ascending order of cognitive difficulty these are:

- attributive (unplanned topic lists)
- narrative (temporal ordering, cause effect logic)
- logical (explicit logic in statements)

In similar vein, A.Wilkinson [1986(a)] proposes a cognitive framework. He suggests that various forms of written language can be seen as falling into one of three broad categories or "primary acts of mind" These are:

- Associative — giving information, describing (explaining)
• Chronological — personal narratives, time sequenced reports, stories
• Logical — persuasion, argument, giving reasons (explaining)

The first two, Wilkinson suggests are cognitively easier to produce than the last because, he writes,

"...logical relations in writing are often harder to find, hard to pursue. If I follow a chronolgy I get to the end of a story: but nothing takes me to the end of an argument except logic."

Researchers working in the field of systemic linguistics [Kress: 1982; Martin:1984,85; Rothery: 1985,86; Christie et al 1989] have developed a quite different typology from those described above. They propose that language in oral and written texts is structured and selected in particular ways according to "genre" —

"...a staged, purposeful, social process — genres in other words are goal oriented and work towards these goals in steps."
[Martin:1984,p.34]

Written genres are grouped into two broad categories:
• story genres (eg. narrative, news story, exemplum, anecdote, recount), and
• factual genres (eg. procedure, explanation, report, exposition, discussion).
(The genres typically found in school writing are described most clearly by Macken et al:1989.) Each genre is described in terms of its function, schematic structure and language features. The intimate relationship between the linguistic features of a text and the prevailing social context is at the crux of this typology of writing types.
Narrative is not necessarily the starting point for writing development

Although, in the past, there has been widespread agreement that narrative is where children start when learning to write [Britton et al: 1975; Britton:1983; A.Wilkinson et al:1979; Bereiter:1980; Kantor and Rubin:1981] this view is being challenged [Newkirk:1984,85,87; Martin:1984,85]. Indeed, the findings of researchers such as Bissex [1980]; Gunlach [1982]; Harste, Woodward and Burke [1983]; and Taylor [1983] who have examined early literacy in home settings support this challenge. These studies of early literacy development describe how young children use writing not just to narrate events, but also to present information and, occasionally, to argue their point of view, and persuade others to do their wishes. Considered together studies of young children's literacy development suggest strongly that:

• young children have an intense interest in, and need to use non-narrative forms of writing

• young children are able to differentiate between different functions of writing and produce appropriate forms (Also indicated by King and Rentel:1981.)

• key aspects of the contexts in which children learn about writing influence how, when and why they undertake particular forms of writing. Text models, and demonstrations of particular types of writing in use, appear to be particularly important influences (Also indicated by Dyson:1984.)

• young children invent their own forms of writing as well as approximating adult models. Patterns of development are more likely to be revealed by looking at what children are able to do in relation to their purpose, rather than in examining shortfalls between their texts and the products of proficient writers.
Sowers [1982] and Raban [1987] noted that children beginning school show a distinct preference for non-narrative writing. (Although, this appears to be the associative or attributive kinds described by Jacobs [1985] and A.Wilkinson [1986].) These findings have important implications when considering the claim that teachers in primary schools focus primarily on narrative writing in their classrooms.

Primary aged students find non-narrative writing difficult and prefer narrative

A number of studies have suggested that when students do undertake non-narrative writing, particularly types involving analysis and argument (A.Wilkinson's [1986(a)] notion of logical "acts of mind"), they find it difficult [Wilkinson et al:1980(a),(b); Hidi and Hildyard:1983; Prater and Padia:1983; Freedman and Pringle:1984; Durst:1984,87; Pringle and Freedman:1985; Carlin:1986; Harris 1986(b); A.Wilkinson:1986; Pike:1988; Lamb:1989; McCann:1989]. Further, these studies, which most often compare students' performance in different types of writing, strongly suggest that students in schools show greater proficiency with narrative than non-narrative kinds of writing. The conclusion usually drawn from such evidence is that development in narrative writing occurs earlier than in non-narrative. It is also relevant to note that several researchers have concluded that students tend to prefer narrative to non-narrative writing tasks [Durst:1984; Carlin:1986; Harris:1986, Langer:1986].

2.3 WHY CHILDREN FIND NON-NARRATIVE WRITING DIFFICULT

Researchers working in different fields of enquiry have proposed various explanations for children's reported difficulty with non-narrative writing. They may be summed up as follows:
1. Neglect of non-narrative writing in primary classrooms
2. Inappropriate classroom contexts for writing
3. Children's lack of adequate linguistic knowledge
4. Children's immature thinking capacities
5. Children's novice writing strategies.

Researchers concerned with explaining children's writing difficulties differ in what they see as important, and the recommendations they propose tend to reflect their particular focus. In the following section I consider each explanation both in terms of the research findings and the instructional recommendations that have been drawn from them.

Neglect of non-narrative writing in primary classrooms
Children's lack of exposure to, familiarity with, and encouragement to use non-narrative writing is a common explanation for their lack of proficiency in such writing. Researchers from all perspectives seem to agree, to varying degrees, that these issues are significant in influencing children's poor performance in, or later development of, non-narrative writing [Kantor and Perron:1977; Newkirk:1984,85; Martin:1984,5; Erftmier and Dyson:1986; Harris:1986(b); Langer:1986; A. Wilkinson:1986(a); Wilkinson:1986; Christie:1987; McCutcheon:1988].

Claims have been made that, generally, primary teachers have an unjustified instructional preoccupation with narrative forms of writing at the expense of non-narrative forms. Support for the notion that narrative forms of writing dominate school writing instruction, particularly at junior primary and primary levels, can be found in studies reported by Wilkinson et al:1980; Martin:1985, Rothery:1984; Christie:1987(b); Harris and Wilkinson:1986; Hoey:1986; Medway:1986 and A.Wilkinson:1986. These
researchers draw similar conclusions to that made by Harris [1986,p.5] after considering the data collected in a study conducted by the Scottish Council for Research in Education.

"... at primary level narratives (personal and fictional) and topic work (frequently copied from sources) form the staple diet of writing for many children."

Thus, neglect by teachers, of non-narrative writing in the early and middle years of schooling is seen as having detrimental effects upon students' long term development of non-narrative writing and thinking abilities [Kantor and Perron:1977; Newkirk: 1984,85; Martin:1984,85; Harris:1986(b); Langer:1986; McCutcheon:1988].

There is research evidence to suggest that the classroom learning environments set up by teachers influence considerably the kinds of writing that students engage in, and how students perceive the purposes and value of that writing [Clark and Florio et al:1982; Sowers:1982; Dyson:1984; Hudson:1985; Milz:1985; McKenzie:1985, DeFord:1986; Cambourne and Brown:1987; Christie:1987(a)]. Teachers can, inadvertently or otherwise, either open up or close down opportunities for students to engage in non-narrative writing experiences.

Researchers who see neglect of non-narrative writing as a cause of difficulty, naturally enough, tend to recommend that students in classrooms be exposed to non-narrative writing, and have time and opportunity to engage in it.

Related to this recommendation is the instructional strategy of exposing children to models of the different kinds of writing they are being asked to produce. This is an approach often recommended in the literature.
Cambourne and Brown [1987] suggest that the most useful text models are those arising out of relevant situational contexts. They report that children's acquisition of particular text forms is critically influenced by their reading of exemplars of the form of writing being treated at that time.

Chittenden [1982:pp.47-48] reports that the content area writing of 10-12 year old students is improved when they are surrounded with the language of the content they are learning. That language, Chittenden says, needs to be, "accurate and eloquent and not always simplified". She shows also how one book can provide "a model of the language to reach for".

Hillocks [1986] in his comprehensive review of writing research warns that the study of models in isolation may not be an effective strategy. Such an approach, he reports, can lead to "product-based" plans which interfere with a writer's idea generating processes. Similarly, Cazden [1983,p.11], while noting children's need for models which make "the composition an easier task by providing some decisions ready made", warns:

"In adopting the term model for a child's form of assistance, we must remember that the child's task is to acquire an underlying structure; imitation of the model itself does not suffice. The texts we supply are examples to learn from, not samples to copy."

Ryan [1986] also points out that exposure to models alone does not translate into improved writing ability. In order to understand the features of different text types, she argues, students also need opportunities to engage in purposeful writing tasks. (An issue dealt with more fully in the following section of this chapter.)
Inappropriate classroom contexts for writing

Studies focussing on children's literacy development in school and family settings demonstrate the need to pay attention to the influence of the contexts in which children are learning to write [Bissex:1980; Gundlach:1982; Clark and Florio et al:1982; Sowers:1982; Brice-Heath:1983; Taylor:1983; Dyson:1984; Haste, Burke and Woodward:1984; Hudson:1985; McKenzie:1985; Milz:1985; Hastwell:1986]. These researchers show clearly how children's literacy development is influenced by the social contexts of home, community and classroom. Further, the work of researchers such as Cazden [1986,88], Erikson [1986(a)] and Green and Kantor-Martin [1988] has demonstrated the complex nature of life in classrooms. The latter raise an important issue for the present discussion by arguing [1988, p.8,p.30] that understanding the culture of the classroom — the patterned ways of "doing life" in them — is necessary if we are to know whether:

"...the language produced and observed is a result of the student's ability [what they actually know and can do] or an artifact of the social expectations for participating in the daily life of the classroom [their interpretation of the social and academic requirements of the task]".

These researchers argue that issues relating to the cultural and social context of classrooms cannot be ignored. To understand the nature of non-narrative writing development, and issues which affect children's performance in such writing, we need, therefore, to describe the social context in which it is, (or is not), happening.

Neglect of non-narrative writing is obviously the clearest example of a classroom context which does not support children's development in such kinds of writing. However, even in classrooms where such writing receives attention, there is evidence that the contexts for writing set up by teachers influence more than just the kinds of writing that students engage in.
Although none has focused solely on students' non-narrative writing, the work of researchers such as Clark and Florio et al:1982; Sowers:1982; Calkins:1983; Graves:1983; Hansen:1983; Dyson:1984; Kantor:1984; Hudson:1985; Milz:1985; McKenzie:1985; Christie:1987; Edelsky:1984;89 demonstrates that the classroom contexts in which children write also influence the way students perceive the function and purposes of writing and, indeed, how well they perform when undertaking it.

A major criticism of many classroom learning environments is that in order to teach "literacy skills" teachers often lift literacy out of any meaningful context [Taylor:1983; Dyson:1984]. As a consequence, school writing tasks can lack functional relevance to students. For example, the young children in Dyson's [1984] study failed to see how tasks were related to learning to write. In such circumstances children focus much of their attention on the teacher's set task and yet fail to develop insight, understanding and skill in the nature and function of writing. Edelsky and Smith [1984] report on a similar problem with sixth grade students undertaking writing tasks assigned by the teacher.

The need to teach skills, "in context" is further suggested by researchers such as Graves [1983] and Calkins [1983, 86]. Drawing on their observational, case study research in elementary classrooms they argue that when instruction focuses on writing as a process, involving prewriting, writing and revising, children's development as writers is enhanced. The process approach they propose involves such things as daily writing, student-selected topics, focus on what students know about their topics, group-sharing and peer-editing sessions, opportunities to revise and rework writing, publication of writing, and writing conferences to help children's through all phases of the writing
process. A key concept developed by Graves is that of children's control over and "ownership" of their writing.

The audience and purpose for writing tasks which students undertake in classrooms also raises concerns. Assigned writing, on topics of dubious relevance to students, for no clear purpose and readership other than to be corrected by the teacher is seen as particularly damaging to students' writing development. Graves' notion of "ownership" is particularly relevant. He argues that:

"When people own a place, they look after it; but when it belongs to someone else, they couldn't care less. It's that way with writing. From the first day of school we must leave control with the child — the choice of topic and the writing itself." [Cited in Walshe:1981,p.9]

Edelsky [1989,p.169] distinguishes between writing and simulations of writing contending that:

"If the children do not take the assignment and make it their own, if their purpose remains to fulfil the assignment rather than to invite or inform or entertain or some purpose reasonably tied to that genre, if the assignment prevents the audience and the purpose from being compatible — in other words, if the connections between systems are distorted or cut off, then what is happening is a simulation of writing and not writing."

Johnson [1989] also concludes that,

"To empower students in their use of written language it is useful to focus our attention on enriching the task contexts for writing..."

That issues such as these are significant when considering children's writing development is shown by Brodky [1983] who draws attention to the false assumptions that can be made about the errors in any written work if no account is taken of the circumstances of the writing and the writer's
intentions for the writing. Referring to Brodky's work J. Wilkinson [1986,p.10] notes that, "there is a danger of misinterpreting a piece of writing because the specific circumstances of its production have been ignored."

Wells [1986,p.233] expresses a concern about asking children to write on the same topic. Referring to the Kroll, Kroll and Wells [1980] study, he says,

"We were aware that this was not an ideal situation, as there is no guarantee that a topic of someone else's choosing will call forth an equal commitment from every child. ...It might have been better if we had been able to collect samples of the writing that they did in the course of their normal classroom activities. However, this too would have caused problems ..."

These researchers therefore included in their design systematic observation of children as they wrote on two of the four tasks they set. Despite the researchers' acknowledgement of the limitations of observational records, they describe two particularly interesting insights that were offered by their data.

"To begin with, it reminded us that school writing takes place in a special environment, and that the physical surroundings and atmosphere of the classroom can be a major factor in how children compose. ... As we watched these writers we also formed the impression that there were differences in their behaviours as writers."

Kroll, Kroll and Wells believe that further investigation of "the psychological aspects of composing" is warranted. They suggest research methods such as having children think aloud while composing, having children view videotape playbacks of themselves writing, which they then explain in relation to the thinking they were engaging in, and asking children, generally, about the aspects of writing they think are important. The notion worth considering here is that of seeking data about children's own perspectives on writing, for example what they say they were doing and thinking about while writing, and what influences they perceived on their
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writing performance. Such a source of data has been favourably used by a number of researchers [Nolan: 1979; Carlin:1896; Langer:1986; Hudson:1986].

Hudson [1986,p.311] argues that:

"If we are to determine the features of writing contexts which are salient for children, we can and must ask the children themselves."

A related idea is proposed by Scardamalia and Bereiter [1983] who involved children in their experimental studies as "co-investigators" as they thought aloud about their thinking processes while writing. They report that:

"The children themselves became actively interested in what the experimental procedures were allowing them to discover about their mental processes. This [research method] allowed the children to function not only as sources of data but as seekers and interpreters of data as well." [1983,p.62]

Overall, there is considerable theoretical and research recognition of the importance of contextual issues in influencing writers' production processes and completed texts [Brandt:1986; Sternglass:1986; Piazza:1987; Purves:1988]. As Brandt points out:

"Context must be considered as a piece of evidence in explaining a writer's decision-making processes during composing..."

In particular, children's engagement with and commitment to their writing tasks is seen to be shaped and influenced by many features of their writing context. (A finding also described by Edelsky, Draper and Smith:1983; Edelsky and Smith:1984; McKenzie:1985, Milz:1985; Sternglass:1986; and Cambourne and Brown:1987.) Such commitment, they suggest, influences children's performance as writers. It determines whether they will be willing to engage with the writing problems which other researchers, such as Bereiter and Scardamalia [1981,p.45], suggest is "the essential dynamic for giving effect to all other instructional strategies that might be applied to writing." Finally,
researchers who have investigated the affect of context on children's writing performance would refute Hillocks' [1986,p.57] concern that there exists insufficient evidence that children's commitment to their writing tasks influences their performance as writers may be unwarranted.

**Children's lack of adequate linguistic knowledge**

Some researchers of children's writing development adopt a linguistic perspective. Harris and Wilkinson [1986] argue that explicit awareness and control of the linguistic features of different written genres is a pre-requisite for effective writing. A. Wilkinson [1986] argues that knowledge of genre is an important factor contributing not only to higher level writing but also, as a consequence, to higher level thinking. Flower [1987:p.26] concludes that, among other things, "we need to give students experience and practice and a more demystifying insight into the conventions of the discourse before them."

Of particular interest in recent years has been the role played in writing by knowledge of discourse structure. In their discussion of planning processes Hayes and Flower [1986] highlight the role played by the writer's knowledge of basic linguistic structures for different kinds of writing.

"The writing plan has at least three sources: the writer's topic knowledge, the writer's knowledge of effective writing formats and the writer's knowledge of strategies that support planning and problem solving when known writing formats are inadequate."

Although all these researchers indicate that linguistic knowledge, particularly of text structure, is important, there is contention as to whether such knowledge has a direct impact on the quality of children's writing. Indeed, Scardamalia and Paris [1985] found that explicit instruction in discourse structure for students in grades 4-6 did not lead to improved
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writing. Taylor [1985], who looked particularly at middle-grade students' expository writing, arrived at a similar conclusion. Bracewell [1980] noted that, even when they possess discourse knowledge, children appear not to automatically apply it in order to improve their writing. Lastly, Hillocks' [1986,p.228] review of the research on this issue led him to conclude:

"It is one thing to know what the forms and rhetorical devices are (eg. to list the parts of an argument) and quite another to generate the ideas and operate upon them so that they may be used in a new example of the form."

Despite conclusions such as those above, researchers continue to explore the relationship between knowledge of text structure and children's writing development [Englert and Raphael:1988; Ambruster et al:1989; Cudd and Roberts:1989; Raphael et al:1989]. This work has reported successful outcomes in improving middle years students' production of non-narrative varieties of writing. Part of this success seems attributable to the fact that the instructional procedures advocated involve more than isolated instruction in text structure and other features which distinguish different kinds of writing. Indeed, Cambourne and Brown [1987] conclude, from their three year naturalistic study of primary aged students, that raising learners' awareness of text forms, so that they actually use them in their own writing, involves a range of teaching procedures within writing contexts that are relevant and purposeful to children. Turbill [1987] draws a similar conclusion from her classroom study of year 2 (7-8 year old) children. Further, she suggests, children need to develop:

"...a language to talk about language — a meta language. We need to help them by making explicit such terms as text, narrative, reports, characters, plots."

From the available evidence then, it would appear that linguistic knowledge has an important role to play in writers' production of effective non-
narrative writing. But whether such knowledge is of central concern remains doubtful. As Scardamalia and Bereiter [1986,p.784] observe in relation to protocols of expert writers:

"It seems that a simple distinction between explicit and implicit or conscious and unconscious knowledge will not do. Skilled writers make all kinds of use of their discourse knowledge, with varying degrees of consciousness and explicitness."

Further, after reviewing numerous experimental studies investigating the role of discourse knowledge in children's writing Bereiter and Scardamalia [1986,p.785] conclude:

"These studies leave much unexplained, but they do at least make it clear that there is more to competence in framing discourse than having an abstract schema in the mind that regulates what kind of element will go where."

Researchers working within the field of systemic linguistics [Kress:1982; Halliday and Hasan:1985; Martin:1985; Christie:1986,87(a),(b); Rothery:1986] add a new dimension to discussions about the role of linguistic knowledge in children's production of effective writing. Martin, Christie, Rothery and others believe that the poor performance they observe in primary children's non-narrative writing is due to the fact that children in (Australian) schools are given little explicit instruction about the linguistic features of different written "genres". As a result they lack the necessary knowledge to produce competent writing, particularly factual kinds. As described earlier in this chapter the notion of "genre" developed by these researchers is a refined one. Genre theory defines and describes explicit relationships between the structure and language of a written text and the social context in which it occurs. They argue that competence in writing any genre depends on understanding explicitly the relationships between text and context which they identify.
So that it is not confused with the research concerning text structure, considered above, it is important to note systemic linguists' refined notion of 'genres' as "semiotic systems — ways of 'getting things done' in a culture" [Christie, Martin and Rothery:1989].

"There is a common misconception ... that the stages of a genre are empty 'slots' to be filled with language. Nothing could be further from the truth. Genres are constructed through a complex interaction of choices within the language system. The stages of a genre literally 'come into being' through linguistic choices exercised as part of the process of serving important social goals." [Christie and Rothery:1989]

As an outcome of their "genre theory", researchers in this field recommend "a genre-based approach" to teaching writing [Rothery:1986; Macken et al:1989]. Briefly, it involves three phases:
1. Modelling of text 'in context'
2. Joint negotiation of a new text
3. Independent construction of text

Christie, Rothery and Martin [1989] summarise briefly each of these phases:

"The notion of modelling involves identifying the characteristics of a genre by processes of deconstruction and discussion, while the notion of joint negotiation involves much scaffolding by the teacher and all the benefits of group work in a collectively undertaken enterprise. The notion of independent text construction involves a step undertaken when students are deemed competent to operate independently in writing in an instance of whatever the genre of concern happens to be. Depending upon the nature of their tasks, and in particular upon their prior learning experiences, students will not necessarily work through all three steps in the cycle, but it is intended to provide a framework for guiding curriculum planning practice."

In fuller descriptions of these instructional phases, [eg. Macken et al:1989] the approach appears to also take account of students' need for purposeful
writing contexts. However, the focus is clearly on ensuring that children understand and control the key features of the genre as it is being presented. Only after such control emerges is "creative exploitation of the genre and its possibilities" proposed [Macken et al:1989.p.12].

Research that has looked at the effects of "genre-based instruction" in classrooms offers some promising insights particularly into the role of children's knowledge of each genre's "schematic (discourse) structure" in their writing development [Rothery:1986; Callaghan and Rothery:1988]. Children's written products, it appears, are much improved as a result of having access to knowledge about genre.

**Children's immature thinking capacities**

A common, but not universally accepted, explanation of children's difficulty with non-narrative kinds of writing, particularly in argumentative and analytic types, is children's cognitive immaturity [Moffett:1968,81; Britton et al:1975; Bereiter:1980; Bereiter and Scardamalia: 1980; Wilkinson et al:1980; Scardamalia:1981; Freedman and Pringle:1984; Pringle and Freedman:1985; Jacobs:1985; Harris:1986; Lamb:1989]. This view is reflected clearly in the models of writing development proposed by these researchers and their related categorisations of different kinds of writing. (Refer to 2.2 above.) The view taken is that students' immature level of cognitive development is a major impediment to early development of non-narrative writing abilities. For example, a study of writing produced by 10-14 year olds by Scardamalia [1981] focused on "the cognitive demands associated with the co-ordination of increasing numbers of ideas in writing" which she believes is "the over-riding challenge of expository writing" [1981.pp.81-82]. Finding that children in this age range had difficulty integrating two or more ideas into a logically consistent whole, Scardamalia concluded that children are cognitively
incapable of producing expository texts in which ideas are explicitly related and co-ordinated. Similar conclusions were drawn by Wilkinson et al [1980] who believe that students' "growing cognitive powers" largely explained thirteen year olds' better performance than younger students in explanatory and argumentative writing tasks. Likewise, Freedman and Pringle [1984,p.79] contend that "in order to produce a unified and logically structured piece of persuasive discourse, one must first be able to abstract and conceptualise".

Martin [1984,5] and Newkirk [1984,85] contend that it is teachers' assumption that young children are cognitively incapable of non-narrative writing, other than simple information giving, which leads them to exclude it from their classroom writing programs. However, among the researchers cited above, only Jacobs [1985] recommends that teachers should avoid setting what she calls "logical writing" for younger students because it is too difficult for them. Furthermore, Jacobs also considers her category of "attributive" writing, (the unplanned topic lists she sees as typical of young children's non-narrative writing efforts), a "poor task" because, in cognitive terms, it demands too little.

Other researchers take a less rigid view. For example, Freedman and Pringle [1984] believe that we should not expect students to succeed in written argumentation before cognitive maturation has occurred, but they do not discourage teachers from providing students with opportunities to engage in such writing. Beard [1984] also suggests that, while types of writing involving Kinneavy's referential and persuasive aims may be difficult for primary aged children to master, there is a case for fostering the beginnings of such writing at an early age and learning to recognise "embryonic features" of it in children's texts. A.Wilkinson [1986(a),(b)] clearly argues for far greater effort on the part of teachers to help primary school children
develop earlier, through writing, the skills of difficult cognitive activities such as argument. He suggests, as do Martin and Newkirk above, that contentment with children's "expressive writing" as defined by Britton et al [1975] may slow down development in children's thinking and writing. Instruction, Wilkinson argues, can make a difference to the rate of children's cognitive development. (Medway [1986] makes a similar observation.)

Wilkinson's view is an interesting one, particularly in view of Lamb's more recent [1989,p.3] observation that early findings from the IEA Written Composition study in New Zealand and other countries:

"...suggest that acquiring the skills necessary for argumentative or reflective writing comes only with the maturity of the writer and [students' poor performance] is not because of deficiencies in any teaching programme."

Wilkinson however, makes recommendations for changing instructional practice. These include discussion of content, exposing children to models and providing them with organisational frameworks for types of writing involving more complex thinking abilities (such as argument, and explanation).

**Children's novice composing strategies and lack of metacognitive control**

Text analyses offer little insight into the knowledge, experience and understandings about writing and writing processes which students use while writing. Kroll, Kroll and Wells [1980] acknowledge the significance of such information in their study. They state:

"...analyses of written products fail to account for the behavioural and psychological process through which texts are created."
Researchers investigating children's cognitive processes while writing propose another explanation for the difficulty children have with what are seen as the more cognitively complex varieties of non-narrative writing. The belief is that children may not only lack mature thinking capacities but also lack the cognitive resources to cope with all the demands of writing. [Bereiter and Scardamalia:1985] The findings of Bereiter, Scardamalia and their colleagues are of particular interest because they have, in recent years, undertaken considerable research that looks particularly at elementary school students' production of non-narrative writing.

Scardamalia, Bereiter and Steinbach [1984,p.174] draw on an impressive bank of data from experimental studies to propose that young writers cope with the cognitive load during writing by engaging in:

"...a procedure that permits them them to generate texts through primarily linear, non-reflective processes. This procedure is one we call the "knowledge-telling strategy" [Bereiter and Scardamalia:1983]. In brief, it consists of reducing writing assignments to topics, then telling what one knows about the topic. The knowledge-telling strategy takes account of semantic and structural constraints, but it does not involve operating on representations of goals for the text. It thus permits novices to reduce writing to a routine. Primary concerns in this routine are what to say and how to put it into appropriate language — fairly local considerations that allow writers to deal with problems singly or in small units rather than needing to work out implications of multiple constraints simultaneously."

Such a strategy results in what Flower [1986] would describe as "Writer-Based prose" which she defines in the following way [1986.p.77]:

"In function, Writer-Based prose is a verbal expression by the writer to himself and for himself. It is the record and the working of his own verbal thought. In its structure, Writer-Based prose reflects the associate, narrative path of the writer's own confrontation with her subject. In its language, it reveals her use of privately loaded terms and shifting but unexpressed contexts for her statements."
Flower, believes that students can be taught to transform their "Writer-Based prose" into more effective"Reader-based prose" and suggests a number of ways that teachers might do this [1986,p.101]. She argues:

"By defining writing as a multi-stage process (instead of a holistic act of "expression") we provide a rationale for editing and alert many writers to a problem they could handle once it is set apart from other problems and they deliberately set out to tackle it. By recognising transformation as a special skill and task, we give writers a greater degree of self-conscious control over the abilities they already have and a more precise introduction to some skills they may yet develop."

Flower [1985] and Hayes and Flower [1986] propose a range of "problem solving strategies for writing" in order to help writers, both students and adults alike, deal with the complex cognitive problems that writing presents.

Scardamalia and Bereiter [1985(c)] are less optimistic than Flower. They see expert writing involving an internal dialectical process which is not parallel to that which occurs in dialogue between conversational partners. Thought in writing, they argue, does not depend on internalised dialogue but on interaction between two problem spaces — the substantive space (the writer's beliefs and knowledge), and the rhetorical space (the means for expressing them). This distinction appears to be critical to these researchers' view of how mature exposition and argument evolves. It is worth quoting them further at some length.

"The dialectical process implies a real tension between rhetorical and substantive concerns. If one concern predominates wholly, there will not be sufficient tension to lead to a new synthesis. The writer wholly concerned with rhetorical demands and willing to alter substance in any way to meet them becomes the stereotypic Madison Avenue lost soul, producing carefully calculated vacuities. With student and novice writers, however, the imbalance seems to be in the other direction. Belief tends to predominate, and problems of rhetoric are either not recognised or are solved through ploys that leave the substance unchanged." [Scardamalia and Bereiter:1985(c),p.312]
Bereiter and Scardamalia [1985,86,87] argue, that thought in writing and learning through writing — "high literacy" — will not develop fully if "knowledge telling", (the strategy they report that children, and indeed, novice adult writers in their studies, adopt in order to cope with the cognitive demands of writing), is allowed to persist. Although they accept that "knowledge-telling" can lead to some effective writing, these researchers argue that quite a different set of mental activities is involved in its application than in the "knowledge-transforming" strategy which expert writers use.

"The essential difference represented in the knowledge-telling and knowledge-transforming models is the distinction between composing as a routine process of content generation and composing as a problem-solving process concerned with joint solution of rhetorical and content related problems." [Bereiter, Burtis and Scardamalia: 1988]

Expertise in writing, they contend, involves a strategy of "knowledge-transforming" which is not an outcome of natural developmental learning. Rather, children need to be taught the cognitive requirements and strategies needed to attain it. They believe "life long novice" writers "who miss out on the gains in knowledge and understanding that expert writers obtain from the composing process itself" are the common consequence of not learning these strategies [1986,p.14].

An important implication of the work of Bereiter, Scardamalia and their colleagues' work is their view that certain instructional strategies used in classrooms, although used with the best of intentions, actually work against children's learning of content and their writing development. This is because, they believe, such practices promote "knowledge-telling" [Bereiter and Scardamalia:1985]. Of the eleven practices they identify three present a particular challenge to current instructional practices in writing. These are:
• teaching topic outlining and procedures for putting content items on separate note cards and arranging them, which is valuable for some writers but permits purely formal arrangements of items without need to have a goal.
• assigning topics that "turn students on" and therefore provoke a ready flow of spontaneously recalled content.
• using "prewriting" activities — films, discussions, interviews and the like — to activate knowledge stores or provide fresh new knowledge for students to draw on in writing.

These researchers have developed the notion of "procedural facilitation" [Bereiter and Scardamalia:1987; Scardamalia and Bereiter:1985] to describe the kind of instruction they believe will move children out of their "knowledge telling" strategy towards independent application of "knowledge transforming". Although they acknowledge that this instructional approach is not yet fully developed [Bereiter and Scardamalia:1987] its overall goal is to support students in developing the cognitive processes necessary to produce effective writing of a complex kind, and" help children become consciously aware of, and exercise control over, the mental operations which expert writers engage in".

2.4 MAKING SENSE OF FINDINGS FROM DIFFERENT FIELDS OF ENQUIRY

The findings and recommendations of the studies described above suggest that a wide range of issues are likely to influence children's production of non-narrative writing. These are:
• the contexts in which children write
• children's actual interpretations of their context for writing
• the composing processes children engage in while writing
• the thinking strategies children employ while writing
• children's knowledge of and experience with the kind of writing being produced
• children's level of cognitive maturity.

Whether students' reported poor performance in non-narrative forms of writing is attributable to any one or some combination of the explanations described above is uncertain. It is also uncertain which of the instructional recommendations proposed are most likely to lead to enhanced development of children's non-narrative, and indeed general writing abilities. Considered together, the studies reviewed in the previous section offer patchy and sometimes conflicting evidence on the issue. This situation seems largely to have been caused by the very different research orientations and methodologies of the studies which have been undertaken. This poses difficulties for any effort to relate findings from one area of research to another. Therefore, they warrant brief consideration here.

Students' written products are an obvious place for researchers of children's writing to focus at least some of their attention. As Matsuhashi [1981] notes, prior to the date of her writing, "nearly all the study of written language — linguistics, stylistics, literary criticism, discourse theory — has looked solely at written products...". Studies such as those undertaken by Britton et al [1975], Wilkinson et al [1980], Kroll, Kroll and Wells [1980] which have collected examples of children's writing produced under "normal" classroom conditions are illustrative of those which have used text analyses to describe children's development as writers. They have been valuable in describing the features typical of students' writing at various age levels but,
in the light of the previous sections they do not address questions concerning *why* children produce the kind of texts they do.

The impact of the classroom context on children's writing is well made by Newkirk [1987]. He examined the structure of 100 pieces of non-narrative writing composed by students in Grades 1, 2, and 3. In discussing the limitations of his study he notes:

"Because the analysis focuses on text structure it cannot fully describe the context in which various forms emerged. Why for example, did the reason list become so popular in one third grade classroom? And in the other third grade classroom why did so many students write extended exposition about pets and hobbies? How did writing conferences work to elicit such extended elaboration in this class?" [1987:140]

Statements about writing development which are inferred from such analyses of children's texts therefore need to be treated cautiously. They do not necessarily describe the course of natural development, but rather, what children are currently able to do as a result of experience and instruction.

Research on cognitive processes while writing can also be criticised for its failure to take account of contextual issues. In the main, researchers have worked within experimental research designs involving students of varying ages undertaking tasks in contrived situations. As Newkirk [1982, p.87] points out, it is difficult to:

"...allay the suspicion that the specialised tasks used by many researchers of cognitive writing processes may fail to elicit the quality of performance that students are capable of in non-test situations."

In a later paper, Newkirk [1987] illustrates the need to consider this methodological concern. Discussing his analyses of grades 1, 2 and 3 children's non-narrative writing Newkirk [1987] noticed that the students
whose texts he examined showed evidence of some competencies which the work of Bereiter and Scardamalia suggests students of their age cannot demonstrate. He highlights the importance of information about the context in which students write to explain this apparent discrepancy.

"This is not to say that under the task conditions used by Bereiter and Scardamalia students would be able to demonstrate this competence. In fact the abilities shown by the students are probably closely tied to the knowledge they possess on their topics and to the collaborative community in which they worked."

The important research question Newkirk points to is, "What kinds of classroom conditions facilitate successful non-narrative writing and allow students to display the competence they may have potential for?"

Overall, studies which focus on analyses of children's written products, or those which examine children's writing behaviours in experimental situations, tell us little about the influence on children's writing performance of such things as:

- children's knowledge of the topic,
- children's knowledge of text features
- children's experience with the kind of writing being undertaken
- children's attitudes to the writing task
- children's actual sense of purpose and audience for their writing
- the extent of children's engagement with and commitment to the writing task
- children's writing strategies and processes, or how these are influenced by issues such as the above.

As indicated earlier, researchers who have investigated the influence of context on learning to write have shown that writing is a multidimensional phenomenon. Studies focusing on text analyses or those involving
experimental situations can be criticised for failing to adequately take account of this complexity. This situation leads to ongoing difficulties for any effort to relate findings from these different fields of enquiry.

Another concern about the research methods used by researchers is the appropriateness of comparisons, which are sometimes made in studies of children's writing, between experts and novices. Newkirk [1987] and others [Kantor and Perron:1977; Langer:1986; J.Wilkinson:1986] argue that applying an "adult template" of writing proficiency to young students' non-narrative (or other) writing efforts can lead us to overlook potentially significant features of development. Indeed, while discussing the results of her study Langer [1986] notes what she sees as a "theoretical chasm" between research that has shown students develop their own rules in the acquisition of oral language, and current reading and writing "process" research which attempts to identify adult strategies and teach them to young children. Langer challenges researchers to look more closely at what children are doing, and why they are doing it, before making recommendations about the kind of instruction which will enhance development. In similar vein, J. Wilkinson [1986,p.13] notes that,

"...not enough [attention has been placed] on what children are doing as they write. Attention has too often been drawn to what should be there, rather than to what is actually happening when pupils put pen to paper."

From the issues and concerns discussed above it appears that studies which attempt to document what students do do, and can do, in particular classroom contexts, while also exploring why students exhibit the writing behaviours they do, offer greatest potential for furthering our understanding of what non-narrative writing development might look like and how teachers can enhance and foster it in their students. Indeed, further research
may well take account of the recommendations made by Stotsky [1988, p.101] and Hillocks [1988, p.110]:

"We need to pull together diverse studies so that they give a more integrated picture of human performance in writing." [Stotsky:1988,p.101]

"What we need are studies of writers' knowledge, attitudes and situations and how those affect their writing. Such studies will be very important both for understanding the composing process and for improving instruction." [Hillocks:1988, p.110]

The present study, although necessarily modest in its design, aimed to address concerns such as these.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 THE NATURE OF THE STUDY
As described in chapter 1 this study was concerned with exploring the question, "What affects students' production of non-narrative writing in the classroom?" Because of the nature of the phenomena the study sought to explore a naturalistic [Lincoln and Guba:1985] and participatory [Lather:1985; Hall:u/d; Carr and Kemmis:1986; Clandinin:1986] research perspective and design was adopted. This design is described comprehensively below.

3.2 THE RESEARCH SITE
I worked with one teacher and 30 children, in one classroom in a suburban primary school, in Adelaide, South Australia, from March to December 1987. The class, a year 6/7 composite, comprised fourteen girls and sixteen boys. Seventeen children were in year 6 and thirteen in year 7. The children were of mixed ability and were between 10 and 12 years of age. All children were born in Australia and spoke English at home. One student was bilingual. Most were of Anglo background with five children being of Greek, two of Italian and one of Aboriginal descent.
3.3 INFORMANTS IN THE STUDY

The class teacher

The teacher, Craig Garrard, was in his seventh year of teaching and his third year at this school. He had taught all year levels from years 3 to 7. Garrard had a reputation as an energetic, enthusiastic and committed teacher. He had been introduced to me by a colleague who, as a tertiary lecturer, had worked with Garrard while he studied the Language Arts major component of his Bachelor of Education (Inservice) degree the previous year. His completion of that award meant that he had a sound understanding of recent developments in literacy and language education. While studying Garrard had shown a particular interest in, and undertook, classroom research activities focusing on developing student's non-narrative writing abilities. Garrard's other areas of professional interest were in sport and physical education and science and "science fairs".

Six focal children

As the design of the study evolved, six children in the class were selected as focal informants. I considered this kind of data collection focus to be important for several reasons:

- to develop an adequate research relationship with the children
- to gain some insights into issues that were either peculiar to one student or typical of several
- to establish the consistency of the data collected from one student over a series of episodes
- to consider data across the range of age and ability levels represented in the class.

Initially I asked Garrard, the teacher, to identify three children from each year level who represented the range of high, average and low ability in
writing within the class. Garrard, however, was reluctant to make this selection arguing that children performed differently according to the nature of the learning tasks before them. He challenged me to select focal informants on the basis of my own observations. This turned out to be valuable advice since it forced me to begin the major data gathering phase with the whole of the class in mind as potential informants. As a result I made contact with as many children as possible during the first two writing episodes and kept my options open for making this selection. While I still wanted to cover the general ability range within the focal group of children, I also applied other criteria in deciding which children they would be. These were:

- that the student felt at ease with me in interview situations and, was willing to take my questions seriously and offer honest responses. (For example, I excluded Damien as a suitable informant because the information he offered me was, I discovered, consistently unreliable. In the early part of the study he took great delight in trying to trick me into thinking he was somebody else.)

- that the student was willing to try to think about and articulate influences on their non-narrative writing decisions. (For example, I excluded Travis as a suitable informant because although an able writer he could not be persuaded to offer anything other than very brief explanations of what he did or responses to my questions. In contrast, Benito and Lee were willing to have a go even though they found it difficult at times to express their thinking clearly.)

- that the non-narrative writing products the children created in the first few episodes were "interesting" in some way. (For example, I would probably have overlooked Lee as a likely focal informant had he not come up with a fascinating non-narrative written product about lizards in the Shotgun Writing episode.)
Many of the children in the class would have fulfilled the criteria above. Most were keen to work with me and often approached me saying such things as, "When are you going to talk to me?" or "Do you want to look at my project?" In fact, Joanne was so insistent in this regard that I first interviewed her simply to make her happy. Her responses turned out to be so interesting that I identified her as a focal informant. I have no doubt, that many other children in the class would have provided equally illuminating data. However, resource constraints required that I make a selection. The children who were focal informants in the study are described in chapter 4.

Other informants
1. Children in the class other than those eventually identified as focal informants were observed and interviewed at various times during the study. For comparative purposes I often collected the written products of all children in the class.
2. The school principal was interviewed regarding the features of the overall school context.
3. Other teachers whose dealings with the class had bearing upon particular non-narrative writing episodes were interviewed. These teachers were the school librarian and, the health education teacher.

3.4 PHASES OF THE STUDY: DURATION AND DECISIONS
Decisions about the length of the study and how it came to be chunked into distinct phases were made for two kinds of reasons. At a pragmatic level the study was influenced by factors such as the amount of time I had available to work at the site and the amount of 'extra work' the teacher could be reasonably invited to undertake. The natural setting in which the data were collected also wrought a distinctive set of constraints that had to be grappled
Methodology

with. Like Clark and Florio et al. [1982: p.34] I noted that "classrooms are characterised by interruption and unpredictability". The design of this study had to cater for and respond to this "unpredictability". For example, I had to adjust when focal children were absent during my visits or, a special event occurred that disrupted the normal routine of the class or, a student unwittingly destroyed or misplaced written products that I had hoped to collect.

At another level methodological decisions were associated with the nature and improvement of the research itself. For example, I extended the data collection period and conducted a final focused interview with the focal student informants. As Lincoln and Guba [1985: p.208-9] so clearly explain:

"...within the naturalistic paradigm, designs must be emergent rather than preordainate: because meaning is determined by context to such a great extent; because the existence of multiple realities constrains the development of a design based only on one (the investigator's) construction; because what will be learned at the site is always dependent on the interaction between investigator and context, and the interaction is not fully predictable; and because the nature of mutual shapings cannot be known and witnessed. All of these factors underscore the indeterminacy under which the naturalistic inquirer functions; the design must therefore be "played by ear"; it must unfold, cascade, roll, emerge."

Set out below are the distinctive features of each phase of the study. These help to clarify the process by which I made methodological decisions.

The preliminary phase

The preliminary phase of the study involved decisions of many kinds.

1. I drafted a research proposal that reflected my exploration of, and developing understandings in, the fields of both educational research and research into non-narrative writing development and instruction. This was done in consultation with my peers, my supervisor and
seminar work with Dr Robert Walker of Deakin University. At this time I clearly identified the overall goal of the study and five key principles that consistently guided my methodological decision making process and the evolution of the study's design. These were:

- that the study would document real classroom events as they occurred in a natural classroom setting
- that non-narrative writing tasks would constitute the focus of data gathering attention
- that every effort would be made to document the classroom context for writing, the children's writing strategies and the products of each non-narrative writing episode
- the teacher's intentions for, and the children's actual interpretations of, each non-narrative writing task would be of critical concern and so these would be documented
- the teacher would be invited to collaborate with me in the research:
  - in initial design
  - in collecting some of the data
  - in ongoing data sharing and analysis
  - in making instructional decisions based upon insights offered by the data.

The last goal listed above was influenced strongly by the work of several researchers. Firstly as Clandinin [1986:p.20] so aptly puts it:

"...I cannot as researcher, enter into a teacher's classroom as a neutral observer and try to give an account of her reality. ...the research process is a dialectical one ... The meaning created in the process of working together in the classroom, of offering interpretations and of talking together is a shared meaning. Neither teacher nor researcher emerges unchanged."
Secondly, related to Clandinin's last point, Walker [1980], Cullingford [1982], Lather [1985], Hall [undated] and Carr and Kemmis [1986] have raised powerful questions about the purpose of educational research, who it is for and what it should be expected to do. They argue that research can as Lather [1985, p.19] puts it, "help participants understand and change their situations". In designing my own research, therefore, I was intent to offer the teacher I worked with "rights of participation in the research process" [Lather:1985, p.15]. My goal was to generate data which the teacher, and possibly also the children, would find immediately relevant and useful. My research design therefore acknowledged the need for "a reciprocal and responsive process" [Clandinin:1986, p.27] between researcher and teacher.

3. I identified an appropriate research site and participating teacher. My major considerations in making this decision were that:

- the teacher had an existing interest in non-narrative writing and an open, reflective approach to teaching
- the teacher was willing to work in a collaborative way [Bussis and Chittenden: 1978; Black and De Luca: 1979] with me during the research
- non-narrative writing was a normal part of the existing writing curriculum (rather than needing to be specially set up for the purposes of research)
- the children were at middle or upper primary level (age 10 to 12 years). My own professional interest lay at this age level. Although the research literature [Carlin: 1986] suggested that this was likely to be a critical age in writing development, comparatively few classroom studies had been conducted at this level.
Several teachers with whom I had worked and who I thought might fulfil each of the above 'criteria' came to mind. However, after informal discussions with several teachers, and visits to the classrooms of some, I found no-one with either an established interest in non-narrative writing or a classroom writing curriculum that gave any specific attention to it. I began to wonder whether the dominance of narrative suggested in the research literature was so entrenched that I would have to rethink my set of guiding principles. However, I was fortunate at this time to be introduced to Craig Garrard, the teacher described in section 3.3 above.

Phase one of the study
I met Craig Garrard for the first time on Thursday 5th March 1987, the fifth week of the first school term. At this time we informally discussed our particular interests in students' non-narrative writing development and I explained the kind of study I was hoping to undertake.

Garrard immediately invited me into his classroom with no sign of uneasiness about being observed or, of revealing to a stranger what went on in his classroom. He was enthusiastic about my draft research proposal and immediately volunteered to collaborate with me in it. We both deferred a final decision until we had had the opportunity to know one another better and clarify the precise nature of the study.

I spent the remaining six weeks of this term "becoming part of the scene" [Brice-Heath:1983] at the research site. This involved visiting the school and class on two mornings each week during which time:
1. I informally discussed with Garrard his and my interests in, and concerns about, students' non-narrative writing development and
instruction. By this means we established some mutual understandings and made our final decision to collaborate in the research.

2. I informally observed Garrard operating in his classroom in order to:
   • develop my sense of his teaching style and methodology; and
   • allow him to become accustomed to my presence in the classroom.

3. I negotiated the final research proposal with Garrard in terms of the questions the study would address, its design, our roles, the responsibilities and commitments involved, and the mutual advantages to each other in conducting the study.

4. I introduced myself to the children in Garrard's class. I told them exactly who I was, why I was there, and what I was interested in exploring with them. I observed and talked with them as they worked on writing and other tasks, recording my observations as field notes. One student summed me up in an article for the class' end of term newspaper that was sent to the children's parents.

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Ms Campagna
Ms Campagna comes into our classroom and goes around the class asking kids questions. Once she told us a story. When she gets a new tape recorder she's going to tape the things we say. She's doing a study on students' writing. She's also doing a Master of Education course. At the moment she's on study leave. She is a teacher. She will be coming into our class, Tuesdays and Wednesdays in the second term.
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5. I sought the approval and support of the school principal for the study by informing him of Garrard's and my research intentions. Evidence of the support he offered came in the form of Garrard being given an extra half hour release from classroom duties each week in order to participate in "debrief" discussions with me during the course of the major data gathering period. (Phase two below)
6. I familiarised myself with the school staff. I informally introduced myself to them and explained what Garrard and I would be doing.

7. I conducted a formal focused interview with Garrard during which he outlined his teaching background, experience, philosophy and rationale and methodological approach. (I had given him the questions I would ask a week prior to the interview.) In this interview, particular emphasis was on Garrard's writing curriculum. This interview was audio-taped and relevant artifacts were collected from him (e.g. his teaching program).

8. I conducted a formal focused interview with the school principal regarding the overall nature of the school context. (I had given him the questions I would ask a week prior to the interview.) This interview was audio-taped and relevant artifacts were collected. (e.g. school information booklet).

At the end of this period, I formally submitted to the University of Wollongong a research proposal, to which Garrard had offered considerable input and response.

**Phase two of the study**

This phase was the major data collection period. In the original proposal I had planned to spend two mornings per week, from approximately 9.30 am to 12.30 pm over the eleven week duration of the second school term, at the site. This period of time (mid April to mid July) turned out to be insufficient to fulfil the research purposes because:

- at the end of the term the children were in the middle of a non-narrative writing episode, and
• fewer non-narrative writing episodes than had initially been anticipated had occurred. Therefore, I continued to visit the site and collect data well into the third school term.

Throughout this phase, which lasted almost two school terms, (a period of 18 weeks, excluding the holiday break), I met regularly with Garrard for half an hour each week while the class was supervised by the deputy principal. During this time I clarified what the children had done since my last visit to the classroom and we informally discussed the progress of the research, shared data and speculated on interpretations, and hypothesised about what we had observed and recorded. On three occasions I audio-taped our discussions as they were set up as deliberate review sessions. These took place during week ten of term two (mid July), week five of term three (August) and at the conclusion of the study at the end of term four (December).

Phase three of the study
This phase involved the process of reading, summarising and analysing data. I continued to visit the research site on a weekly basis in order to check the data with key informants and to discuss emerging insights and ideas with Garrard. As a result of this process I designed and carried out a structured "concluding interview" with five of the six focal children (one was absent). This took place during the last week of the school year and signified the true end of the data collection period.

During this period I wrote an article based on the data relating to the first non-narrative writing episode in the study. [Campagna:1987] This was published in the *Australian Journal of Reading*, Vol 10, No 4, November 1987. Garrard and I also presented preliminary findings from our study to
the school staff during a staff meeting. Both of these experiences were important data analysis/interpretation activities. In particular the article, when published towards the end of the fourth term, had an inspirational effect. Seeing ourselves "in print" facilitated the ongoing seriousness with which we, and the children in particular, took the final phase of the study.

3.5 DATA SOURCES AND METHODS OF COLLECTION

The responsive/semi-structured interview

The purpose of this type of interview was to open up a discussion where the informant could talk freely around the general topic, i.e. how s/he went about writing a particular text. (In the manner described by Kantor:1984.)

The focused interview

The purpose of this type of interview was to obtain specific information from the informant. Questions emerged from the interpretations made of the information provided in earlier interviews or of that provided by other informants.

The teacher and the focal children participated in both types of interviews. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed soon afterwards by me. In all, approximately 40 hours of recorded interviews with the focal children, and 5 hours of recorded interviews with the teacher were transcribed.

Informal discussions

On some occasions I was able to be present while the children were actually engaged in writing. I used this as an opportunity to talk informally with the focal children about what they were doing and how they were coping with
the task. The children's responses at these times were recorded in the form of field notes and verbatim records of children's utterances.

Also, throughout the study I met each week with the teacher. We spent half an hour together discussing informally data we had collected, problems that had arisen in the design of the study and generally, reviewing our interpretations of what we found. These discussions were not taped since my relationship with the teacher was new and I did not want him to feel constrained in what he had to say because it was being recorded. Nevertheless these discussions were critical to our understanding and interpretation of the data. They influenced the evolving design of the study. For example, Garrard's intimate knowledge of the children and the classroom context would often prompt me to rethink my interpretations of what was 'going on' and seek new data to illuminate particular issues.

Following these discussions I made notes of relevant points in my record book for the study. I discovered, as did Clandinin [1986:p.28], that:

"Sharing the interpretations allowed me to seek confirmation, correction and amplification of the picture being painted ...."

Classroom observations
Whenever I was able to be present while the teacher was providing input about a non-narrative writing task, and/or the children were actually writing, I recorded my observations in the form of field notes. These were written descriptive accounts of on-going classroom behaviours during these times. They included records of such things as notes which were made on the blackboard or an overhead projector transparency.

Audio tapes
At times, when small groups of children were working together on a task, or when I was not able to be present during input sessions given by the teacher,
I arranged for audio tapes to be made. These were transcribed soon afterwards by me.

**Teacher's log book entries**

During phase one of the study, when Garrard and I were negotiating the initial design of the research, he agreed to keep a log book. I offered him the following suggestions about what to record in it:

- Outline the writing task and how you want the children to go about it. (Individually, pairs groups; drafts - final copy; etc.) How much time will probably be allocated.
- How/why the activity/writing task has arisen.
- Your reasons/rationale/goals for the input you give the children on what to do. eg.
  - Understandings about the task you particularly want to clarify. (eg. purpose, audience, form, content, structure etc.)
  - What you want the kids to focus on doing and why.
  - Predicted difficulties that you want to try and short circuit. Strategies you might use to do this. eg. idea sharing, blackboarding, sharing models, writing together etc. etc.)
- Any observations you make while the children are doing the task that you think are interesting. eg. Their questions and problems, their use of your input etc.
- Reflections overall — the "success" of the writing activity in relation to your goals.
  - problems which arose
  - new issues or concerns
  - where to from here — refinements? new task?
As the teacher's own written records during the study, Garrard's log book became an artifact for data collection purposes.

The teacher's written reflections on each episode

Primarily as a "member checking procedure" [Lincoln and Guba:1985] (refer to section 3.7 below) I provided Garrard with detailed descriptive summaries of each non-narrative writing episode. At these times I also invited him to record his reflections on the episode in terms of the following questions:

1. Overall, how do you think the children handled the task in relation to your initial goals for it?
2. What did they do particularly well?
3. What problems did you see them having? What do you think caused them? (Generally and/or for specific children.)
4. What do you think the children actually learned as a result of doing this task? (ie. developments in skills/attitudes etc.)
5. If you could repeat the task what changes would you make to the way you set it up? Why?

Children's written products

All notes, jottings, drafts and final written pieces produced in the course of a non-narrative writing episode, by the six focal children, were collected or photocopied. On other occasions, when deemed appropriate, the written products of other children in the class were also copied.

Other artifacts

Whenever appropriate, other artifacts were collected during the course of the study. These included:

- Garrard's program
- The teacher librarian's program of work for the class
• School information booklet (this complemented the interview with the principal)
• Photographs of the children's products where more than a written text was involved:
  - technology assignments — made on large display boards
  - their board games
• writing done in previous school years (such as projects)
• children's written "confessions" of themselves as readers.

3.6 DATA REDUCTION AND ANALYSIS

As can be seen from the previous summary of data sources the study, being naturalistic in nature, generated a large and complex volume of data. I began, therefore, to work on the data as soon as I collected it. As a result data reduction and analysis were ongoing throughout the study. Indeed, these processes would have been overwhelming if left to the end of the data collection period. But more important than this practical purpose was the fact that the ongoing reduction and analysis of data as it was collected facilitated the study's evolving design.

The first non-narrative writing episode that occurred was, in fact, a 'test case' for the study. I collected data from many of the sources listed above, including interviews with twelve children. Before returning to the site the following week I transcribed every interview and considered this data in relation to that collected from other sources. This process involved:
• checking my interview strategies
• considering the potential value of each data source
• exploring ways of appropriately coding transcripts
• chunking together in meaningful ways related data from different sources
• identifying issues that might be significant and therefore worth following-up in future episodes
• summarising my interpretations of the data
• sharing the data and my analysis with the teacher and inviting his response
• inviting my supervisor and peers to critically review all aspects of my data collection, analysis and interpretation during a "debrief" session
• reviewing methodological plans in the light of their practical implementation.

From the above it became clear that to collect, reduce and analyse data on a weekly basis would be a mammoth task. Garrard also told me that he felt obliged to ensure a non-narrative writing episode happened every week even though this would not normally happen in his classroom program. We agreed, therefore, to slow the pace of the study so that his program was more 'natural' and so that I would have more time to handle the data.

As well as this practical decision, the experience gained in the first episode clarified several other methodological decisions. It was clear that the interview data was, as predicted, a central source of data. But so too, was Garrard's description of his intentions for, and perceptions of, the episode — the writing context he tried to establish and the instructional support he gave the children. I could not be present to observe and collect data on all that happened during a non-narrative writing episode. I therefore needed to rely on Garrard's log book entry and discussion with him to obtain this information. This data source was also central to understanding the children's interpretations of the writing they were doing.
Ongoing data reduction and analysis also influenced the design of the study in more general ways. For example, responsive/semi-structured interviews with children early in the study led to more focused formats based on issues children had raised. In turn, these led to the concluding interview where I devised a specific schedule of questions and activities in order to cross check the data and emerging hypotheses (refer to Appendix 1).

Finally, the process of analysing and sharing data with Garrard throughout the study also allowed us to consider alternative teaching strategies and approaches. These considerations affected the way Garrard set up non-narrative writing tasks later in the study. In this way, my goal to make the research of immediate relevance to the participants was in some way realised.

Central data and supportive data
As indicated above, all sources of data were not accorded equal status. There were both practical and methodological reasons for this. Firstly, time and resource constraints meant that it was simply not possible to collect and handle all possible sources of data for each non-narrative writing episode, no matter how illuminative they might have been. Secondly, some data sources contributed more to the focus questions of the study than others. It was on this basis that a selection of 'central' data sources was made. These were:

- interviews with the teacher and focal children
- the teacher's log book entries
- the children's written products.
Other data sources were 'supportive' of the central data in that they were used to support, confirm and/or modify interpretations made of the central data. Supportive data sources were:

- classroom observations
- informal discussions
- audio tapes
- teacher's written reflections on each episode
- other artifacts.

3.7 ENSURING CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE DATA

Lincoln & Guba [1985] describe a number of ways in which naturalistic researchers can ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of their data. Those used for this purpose in this study are described below.

Prolonged engagement at the site / persistent and focussed observation over time

I visited the research site over an extended period of time (March to December) undertaking major data collection for two mornings per week over 18 weeks. This allowed me to become well known and accepted into the site's 'culture'.

Triangulation of information from a variety of sources

A basic assumption underlying this study was that there is no one 'truth' or single reality that a researcher can discover. Rather there exist multiple realities all of which are interrelated and therefore influence one another. In this study I deliberately planned to avoid bias in the data by balancing the sources from and methods by which I collected it, thereby contributing to its "internal validity" [LeCompte and Goetz:1982]. For example, data about the
contextual features of a particular writing episode were collected in different ways and from different sources:

- the teacher's log book entry
- my observations/field notes of classroom events
- interviews with focal children
- interviews and informal discussions with the teacher

This triangulation procedure also allowed me to identify and consider the match or mismatch between mine and the various informants' perceptions of what was 'going on' during the study.

Another example of a triangulation procedure used in this study involved varying the methods by which I obtained data from the children. At the conclusion of the study I designed a broad based interview schedule for the focal children. (Refer to Appendix 1.) The questions were based on the information they had provided during earlier interviews. Their responses enabled me to check for consistency with data collected on other interview occasions where the focus was on a particular writing episode.

Peer debriefing

On regular occasions throughout this study I met with my peers to discuss the ongoing development of their studies and mine. At these times I shared data with them in order to test my data ordering, constructions and interpretations. This was also a time when my supervisor audited the methodological decisions I was making throughout the study.
Member checking

In order to verify the accuracy and reliability of the data I collected, and my ongoing interpretations of them, I constantly checked these with the participants.

- All transcripts of interviews were returned to Garrard for him to verify their truth and accuracy.
- Descriptive summaries of the complete process for each non-narrative writing episode were checked by Garrard for accuracy. (These included his intentions for the task, how he set it up in the classroom and the sequence of sub-tasks that the children undertook.) This also presented an opportunity for Garrard to record his reflections on the value of each task overall and therefore became another source of data for the study.
- As Garrard collaborated in the ongoing interpretation of data he was able to say whether his intentions and purposes were being accurately represented in my data summaries for each episode.
- During the writing of this report Garrard has read and responded to drafts.

3.8 DEFINITIONS

Non-narrative writing

As already noted at the beginning of this report, the term non-narrative writing here refers to any written text where information is ordered in a non-chronological way. In contrast, narrative text is that which is ordered in chronological fashion. This simple distinction between text types allows for a wide range of non-narrative forms to be considered in this study. It is a distinction also used by other researchers. [Sowers:1982; Perera:1984; Durst:1984 (who focuses particularly on analytic forms); Harris:1986; Harris and Wilkinson:1986; Newkirk:1987].
Non-narrative writing episodes

The term "non-narrative writing episode" encompasses all teacher and student activities that relate to a particular non-narrative writing task. This includes things such as the teacher's planning, pre-writing activities and any instructional support or advice offered to children. The notion of a writing "episode" is not unlike Clark and Florio et al's [1982] definition of an "occasion for writing" as the unit of description and analysis in their study.

In this study each episode always involved the children in more than the actual task of writing. Often, an entire series of sub-tasks and activities were carried out by the teacher and children prior to, during and after writing. The most notable example of this were the project episodes. Before the children wrote anything they first had to engage in a complex research process. In brief, this involved them in selecting and focusing their topic, locating relevant resources, selecting and recording of information and organising it for final presentation in written form. The children's final written products could not be fully appreciated without reference to the ways in which they understood and went about each of these sub-tasks. The teacher also provided input of various kinds at different stages of a non-narrative writing episode. This too was important data for interpreting the children's writing efforts.

Thus, a non-narrative writing episode refers to all classroom activities that related to a particular non-narrative writing task that the children undertook during the study. In all, data were collected in relation to 8 non-narrative writing episodes during the study. (These are described at the end of chapter 4.)
Context

As Green and Kantor-Martin [1988] note the term "context", while freely used in the theoretical and research literature, is difficult to define. Piazza [1987] identifies and describes different perspectives and definitions of context from across three disciplines. In this study I use the term in a general sense to include the rhetorical context (audience, purpose, genre) for each non-narrative writing episode, the social context of the classroom and the context of knowledge and experience about writing and writing strategies that each individual student brought to a writing task.

Where it is relevant to do so, I identify particular dimensions of the children's "context" for writing more clearly.

1. The communicative context of particular writing episodes (the purpose and audience for whom the children believed they were writing)
2. The social contexts of the classroom and school where the study was undertaken (the "cultures" to which the informants belonged).

Overall the study attempted, as did Hudson [1986], to understand the children's interpretations of their contexts for writing and, the relationship between the child writers, their writing context and the evolution of their written texts [Brandt:1986].

Writing process

The term "writing process" is used in this thesis to refer to generally identifiable, but not discrete, phases in the production of a final piece of writing. Current writing theory commonly refers to these phases as pre-writing, writing and revising. However, as Hayes and Flower [1980] have made abundantly clear, these phases are not linear stages. Writers move back and forth between them as they write. "Writing process", therefore,
refers to the way, during each non-narrative writing episode, each child approached the task of writing from initial ideas and plans to completion of and feedback on their work.

**Writing strategies**

"Writing strategies" refers to the specific ways in which children made decisions and solved problems as they wrote, for example, how they planned, generated and selected content, accommodated the needs of their readers, organised ideas, drafted, revised. The focus here is on the children's thinking while writing.

**Written products**

Although this label seems obvious enough, I want to stress here that I was interested in *all* written products the children created in the course of a non-narrative writing episode. These included not only the final drafts but also, any notes or jottings made by the children and all 'rough draft' versions of the finished pieces.

**Writing performance**

The term "writing performance" refers to both the features of the children's written products and the writing strategies they applied in order to create those products.
4.1 THE RESEARCH SITE

The school

In 1987 Netley Primary School, situated in the western suburbs of Adelaide approximately 9 kms from the city centre, had an enrolment of 201 children organised into eight classes.

Of the 170 families represented in the school about one third were supported by a single parent living at home. The principal considered that it was...

"...fair to say that most parents would come from a blue collar background.... Most probably own their own homes.... It's not a high nor low socio-economic area."

20% of the children in the school came from families with incomes low enough to warrant government assistance with school fees.

The school population was predominantly of Anglo background. There were 50-60 children of Greek or Italian background and two of Spanish background. None of these children were new arrivals to Australia, or unable to speak English. However, for many of these children English was a second language.
As well as the principal and eight classroom teachers, the school was staffed by a full time deputy principal, a full time librarian, and a 0.6 time English as a second language (ESL)/multicultural education teacher. Non-contact time for class teachers was provided by part-time teachers who ran programs in art, health and science.

As it once catered for an enrolment of 740 children the school was generously endowed with buildings and grounds. The principal noted that:

"...so much space has become available over the last ten years... we've been able to modify and create lots of specialist areas."

These included a double activity room; an ESL teacher's room; an art room; a carpeted triple class space for community and other uses; a five room library/resource area and; two other free rooms. Larger teaching areas were also available to individual teachers. Double rooms were available for the two upper primary classes and a four teacher open space unit was shared by only two Junior Primary classes. Outside, there were ample asphalt areas and a huge grassed area. In fact, the grounds were so big that they could not be adequately supervised during play times and had to be closed off from access to children.

The classroom

Size was a key feature, the class area being a carpeted, double unit that once housed two classes. This enabled the children considerable freedom of movement and allowed special areas to be permanently set up. In addition to the children's individual desk space, these included a computer station (with 2 computers and a printer), a comfortable reading area, tables for group activities and special displays, a quiet study area, and an open area for whole
group discussions and activities. In itself, this space afforded Garrard considerable flexibility in planning his teaching/learning program.

4.2 KEY INFORMANTS IN THE STUDY

The teacher

Craig Garrard, as explained in chapter 3, had been teaching for 7 years, the last three of which were at Netley. He had taught all year levels in the 3-7 range and at the time of the study had a composite year 6/7 class. As well as trying to maintain his expertise in all areas of the primary school curriculum, Garrard had special interests in sport and physical education, science and "science fairs", and language arts. He had recently completed his Bachelor of Education with a language arts major.

The children

At the beginning of the study there were a total of 30 children in the class. In year 6 there were seven girls and ten boys. In year 7, seven girls and six boys. As mentioned in chapter 3, all children were born in Australia.

Garrard noted that the children's social skills needed attention. He cited problems in peer co-operation, sharing and sexist behaviour as significant concerns. Garrard also considered that the children needed support in their ability to work independently. He adopted this as a focus in his classroom program. Garrard described the ability range within the class as "wide".

As described in chapter 3 six children were selected as focal informants in the study. Background information about each of these children is provided below.
Dorothy: Aged 11, in year 6, of Greek descent (both parents were born in Greece), bilingual — speaking both English and Greek at home. A confident, articulate girl and a generally capable student in all areas of the curriculum.

Joanne: Aged 12, in year 7, of Anglo background. A bright personality, eager to please her teachers. Tended to leave tasks until to the last minute to complete.

Anna: Aged 12, in year 7, of Anglo background. A confident, articulate girl and, generally, a capable student in all areas of the curriculum.

David: Aged 11, in year 6, of Anglo background. Shy, but capable, and confident of his abilities in all areas of the curriculum. Closely attended to and followed the teacher's instructions in tasks.

Benito: Aged 12, in year 6, of Italian and Anglo background (father born in Italy, mother born in Australia). Had difficulties with academic work in all areas but tried hard to succeed.

Lee: Aged 12, in year 6, of Aboriginal descent. A carefree personality. Undertook tasks in his own way and in his own time. Had some difficulties with academic work.

4.3 THE CLASSROOM PROGRAM

Garrard's teaching/learning goals

Overall, in his classroom program, Garrard expressed his aim to:

• identify and cater for the individual learning needs of the children in his class
• provide a comfortable learning environment characterised by fair teacher expectations, student determined class organisation and rules, and attractive physical arrangements
• foster and encourage children's curiosity by enabling 'hands on' problem solving activities
• allow for continuity in children's learning by working from what they already know
• foster communication skills for effective interaction and learning
• encourage tolerance and co-operation in group learning/working situations
• encourage children's independent learning strategies.

These goals underlay Garrard's educational program and, (of particular concern to this study), his approach to the teaching and learning of writing.

Teacher and student roles
Garrard saw his and the children's role in the classroom as mutually supportive. He summarised his teaching roles as:

A planner — for example organising resources and planning skill development activities.

An instructor — teaching specific skills based on the children's readiness to take them on.

A model — demonstrating the value he finds in his language abilities; showing children how he does things.

A negotiator — involving the children in planning aspects of the learning program.

An evaluator — assessing children's progress mainly through observation and interview.
Garrard believed the children's role as learners also involved these elements. As well, he wanted them to be risk takers, problem-solvers, and generally active participants in their learning.

Garrard saw two important factors in enabling children to do this. Firstly, at least as far as language learning was concerned, they should often read, write, speak and listen, independently. Secondly, that language activity should be "relevant, meaningful and purposeful" to the children.

"I think that with all activities if the children see a purpose for it... they'll be more keen to have a go at it because they can see a reason for it. It's not just a case of doing it for Mr G, there is a reason for doing it — it becomes more of a learning experience."

Garrard believed that this sense of purpose was most likely to ensure the children participated actively in their learning tasks.

Classroom routines
The first half hour of every morning was devoted to "resource time" during which the children were encouraged to show initiative in preparing themselves for the day, and to work independently on ongoing tasks. The next 80 minutes were devoted to chiefly language arts activities. Following recess half an hour was spent on "daily morning fitness" with the other upper primary class. The last hour before lunch was usually spent engaging with mathematics activities.

Other teachers who worked with the class
The children spent one hour per week with the art teacher and another hour with the health education teacher. (This was Garrard's time for duties other than teaching.) The librarian worked with the children and Garrard for one hour each week in the library. As well as fostering their reading for
pleasure interests, in consultation with Garrard, she also provided considerable input regarding their research, study and project skills. The ESL/MCE teacher joined the class for one and a half hours each week offering support in Garrard's language program. She did this mainly by conducting individual writing "conferences" with children. Each week the deputy principal spent fifty minutes with the class in a supervisory capacity, while Garrard participated in such things as school policy writing.

The writing program
The writing program which Garrard set up for his class included both child negotiated and teacher directed activities. The former consisted of what Garrard described as a "process/conference approach" [Graves:1983] where children had regular free writing time during which they selected their own topic, purpose, audience and form for writing. This writing usually proceeded through drafting, rewriting and publishing phases and, whenever possible in this process, teacher/student conferences. The program goal was for children to publish one piece of writing produced in this way per month.

Teacher directed writing activities usually involved the children in writing experiences they did not normally choose to engage in during free writing. Often, they were of a non-narrative type, for example: arguments, descriptions, instructions, note-taking, letter writing, class newspaper articles. Garrard saw real purpose and audience for writing as equally important in this kind of writing as the other. Drafting, rewriting and reviewing writing in conferences were also undertaken.

Garrard's concerns about his writing program at the beginning of the study
With 30 children in the class, Garrard's biggest concern at this stage was that of making sufficient time available in class for talking or "conferencing"
[Graves:1983] with children on an individual basis about the process aspects of their written products. As a result he was finding that he had little insight into the lines of thinking, and the writing strategies, children were applying in producing their writing. This caused him to also be concerned with finding ways of adequately monitoring and recording children's writing development. This issue was a recurring theme in our discussions throughout the study.

**Garrard's thoughts about narrative and non-narrative writing at the beginning of the study**

Although Garrard noted that he had not formally used the terms "narrative" and "non-narrative" writing prior to meeting me, he distinguished between two broad kinds of writing on the following basis:

- narrative — imaginative story writing
- non-narrative — most other forms (excluding poetry); usually dealing with factual topics. For example: penpal letters, swimming journals, class newspaper articles, "Me Book", descriptive writing eg."Who Am I?", other letters, note-taking.

Garrard believed that both types of writing had an important place in his program. His emphasis was on "maintaining a balance" between them and on "getting a variety of writing into the program".

In their free choice writing, however, most children chose narrative. Garrard noted that:

"...for some reason the kids have the impression that writing is just story writing."
This observation was influential in his decision to set up the teacher directed component of his writing program. In this way, he hoped to raise children's awareness of the different types of writing that existed so that when they made choices in their free writing times they would do so from full knowledge of what the possibilities were.

"...if they are only focusing on a few things then their choice is limited. So I'm trying to set up the situation where kids can make choices from a broad knowledge [of writing types]."

"I'm not trying to take them totally away from narrative writing, but the whole story is balance ... and making the kids aware of that."

An interesting aspect of Garrard's decision to direct the children into non-narrative writing tasks was the way he planned for them. He said:

"I have an idea of the forms of writing I'd like to cover. The next step is not so much how I am going to teach them but how I'm going to set things up so that those forms relate to purposeful writing tasks."

Garrard's concern for purposeful learning activities therefore featured in these teacher directed tasks.

**Garrard's concerns about the children as writers at the beginning of the study**

Although the children seemed reasonably comfortable with different types of writing, Garrard noted that they had difficulty with note-taking and argumentative writing. He wanted to follow these up more closely during the period of the study. He also noted that suitable text models for sharing with children, when introducing them to a particular type of writing, most notably argumentative, were not readily available. In situations such as this they usually discussed what was involved and/or made a model text together on the blackboard.
4.4 THE NON-NARRATIVE WRITING EPISODES

In all, data were collected for 8 non-narrative writing episodes that occurred in the classroom during the study. For the reasons described in chapter 3 data were collected from different sources using a variety of methods.

A brief description of each episode is provided below. These descriptions are drawn from the data summary made for each episode. These summaries were checked for accuracy of interpretation by Garrard.

**Persuasive Letter**

The children's task was to write a letter to the deputy principal arguing the reasons for changing a particular school rule. Most children worked in pairs to prepare their arguments following which each wrote a letter. The completed letters were sent to the deputy principal. In response some of the rules were changed on a trial basis.

**Shotgun Writing**

Garrard asked the children to "choose a topic that they felt easy with. [and could] write lots about." They were to write sustainedly on that topic for 15 minutes. Later they would have an opportunity to proofread and write more if they desired. The goal was to produce, from a conventional viewpoint, "a perfect piece". This piece would be put into their assessment folders as a record of their proofreading skills. Four of the children chose to write non-narrative pieces for this task.

**Board Game Instructions/Rules**

The children's task was, in small groups, to make a board game for other children to play in the classroom, when wet weather forced them to stay inside during play time. Part of this task involved them in writing a set of
instructions/rules for playing the game. These were to be pasted on the back of the completed game.

Technology Project
The children were completing this task when the study began. As a part of their investigations into the topic "Technology", in their social studies program, they were required to research and report on a technological item of their own choice. Their projects were to include a range of items including a written report of the item's historical development. The completed project was to be presented on a large cardboard display board for viewing by other children. The children were also required to present their work to the class by giving a three minute talk on what they had learned. This project was formally assessed by the teacher.

G5 Sports Information Book
The children worked on this writing task as a class with considerable guidance from the teacher. The final product was to be a book for peers containing information about five sports (a chapter for each sport). The teacher guided the writing of the first chapter by working with the class as a whole. The children then divided into groups in order to write other chapters using the first as a model. The completed book was placed in the school library.

Health Project
This task was not set by Garrard, but by the health education teacher who taught the class for one hour per week. This teacher asked the children each to research, and present in written and illustrated form, a topic related to their health studies which was of "special interest" to them. The children were expected to use their health lesson time, and time at home, to complete
this task by the end of the term (a period of three weeks). A wider readership for this work, other than classmates, was not especially focused on. The children's work would be formally assessed by the teacher.

When the children told Garrard of this task he changed his program plans for the remainder of the term. He had intended to complete the G5 Sports Information Book and then work on a task that would allow the children to build on the skills and understandings which they had developed through it. This task was for the children to produce an individual information book on a topic that was both familiar and of interest to each of them. The idea was that this task would allow two things to happen:

1. It would reduce the constraints on children's informational writing caused by their researching unfamiliar topics. (This was a conclusion that Garrard and I reached in discussing the Technology project data.)
2. It would allow children who were particularly knowledgeable about a topic to use that knowledge and interest in their writing. (For example, the Shotgun episode had revealed Lee's expertise in and enthusiasm for lizards.)

Rather than overloading the children with similar concurrent tasks, Garrard decide to forego his plans and support the children in successfully completing their Health Projects. The school librarian also decided to devote the time she spent with the class to supporting them in this task.

Class Newspaper Report
As a matter of a recently developed school policy, each term, the class was required to produce a small class newspaper. Its purpose was to inform parents about the activities in which the children had been engaged during that term. Garrard also saw it as valuable way for the children to record and
reflect on their achievements. Topics were generated during a class brainstorm and then one was allocated to each student whose task it was "to write a positive, interesting report" for inclusion in the newspaper. Because of length constraints for the completed publication, the children were told that "it had to be a condensed report ...short ...a paragraph of minimum four to five sentences." After revising their handwritten drafts the children used the wordprocessor in the classroom to produce their final copies.

G5 Expert Book

The G5 Expert book involved the children in producing a class book to which each student contributed a piece of informational writing, on a topic about which they considered themselves "expert". This task arose out of discussions Garrard and I had about the data that had so far been collected — particularly that relating to both project tasks (described above). Together we devised this task in the hope of lessening two key constraints, on the children's non-narrative writing, which we had identified during the project tasks. These were: (i) their lack of familiarity with the topic for writing and, (ii) their time consuming struggle to research information from reference books prior to writing. Thus the topic for each student's writing was a factual subject about which she/he already knew a considerable amount.

In designing this task Garrard and I also tried to incorporate supports that the previously collected data suggested would enhance the children's success with the task. These supports were:

- a purpose and audience for the writing that the children were likely to perceive as relevant and worthwhile. ie. to inform peers about a topic in which they were "expert"
- explicit guidance from Garrard in all phases of the writing:
- clarifying the task and its purpose
- demonstrating useful writing strategies (such as brainstorming, categorising, expanding notes)
- examining models of this type of writing (such as that found in encyclopedias)
- identifying the distinctive features of the type of writing they are trying to produce (such as headings, sub-headings and a general introduction)
- considering the needs of intended readers when writing
- conferring with others about their writing

This task was not completed as initially planned. Primarily, this was because, as the end of the school term neared, other class activities took up much of the available time in their weekly program. (Such as a one week camp and a school sports day both of which required preparation and followup in class.)

By the end of the term almost all of the children had completed a first draft of their writing. However, Garrard decided that it was inappropriate to carry the original task over into the following term. Instead he decided that when school recommenced in term 4 he would offer the children a choice about whether they worked further on their drafts. Although the class Expert book was never produced, many children opted to use their drafts as the basis for other written productions.

4.5 OTHER WRITING
During interviews throughout the study the children frequently mentioned and referred to other writing tasks that were not episodes documented by it. These were story writing, penpal letter writing and journal writing. The
children's stories involved them in writing imaginative narratives. Journal writing largely involved them in chronologically recounting their personal experiences. Penpal letters usually involved description of familiar "items" (themselves, their interests, pets etc.) and recounting of events which had happened in their lives. They also usually responded to or asked for similar information from their penpals.
INTRODUCTION TO RESULTS CHAPTERS

The following chapters present the results of my analyses of the data collected in this study.

Chapter 5 looks closely at the children's work on two "project" tasks. These involved them in researching and reporting on information about a factual topic. In the main, however, the children actually copied from reference material more than they created their own texts about the topic of their research. Despite this, the data offered some important insights into children's non-narrative writing in the classroom. "Project writing" accounted for a significant amount of the children's non-narrative writing experience, both in the current and previous school years. The chapter examines why writing project reports "in their own words" presented such a difficult challenge for them.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 examine the data collected as the children worked on five other non-narrative writing episodes — the Persuasive Letter, the Board Game Instructions/Rules, Shotgun Writing, the class Newspaper Report, and an informational piece, the G5 Expert Book. Data collected during the final interviews with five of the focal children are also considered in these chapters. Chapter 6 examines influences the children perceived on their writing preferences and performance. Chapter 7 considers the children's
explicit knowledge about different kinds of writing — how they
distinguished between one kind and another. Chapter 8 looks at how the
children actually went about writing — their process and strategies, the
kinds of writing problems they confronted and, how they tried to deal with
them.

Chapter 9 draws on the findings of chapters 5-8, and other data, to consider
the instructional strategies, used by the teacher in this study, which
influenced positively, the children's non-narrative writing performance.

Lastly, chapter 10:
• summarises the findings of the study,
• considers the implications of these findings for teachers
• discusses the benefits and limitations of the study
• suggests useful directions for future research.
CHAPTER 5:  
THE CHILDREN'S PROJECT WORK 
"In your own words"

5.1 INTRODUCTION
During the data collection period the children undertook writing during two project episodes. These episodes accounted for a substantial amount of classroom time and each involved the children in researching and reporting information about a topic. Their individual topics were related to a larger investigation being undertaken by the class as a whole (i.e. Technology and Health). Garrard's goal was for the children to write their projects "in their own words" rather than to copy information directly from books. However, despite his efforts to help them to do this, during a debrief session late in the study, he noted that:

"...even though we've done all this work ...some always revert back to the safety of just copying out."

As the literature clearly indicates, Garrard's students were not unusual for doing this. Students' tendency to resort to copying material from reference books, at both primary and secondary level, is frequently noted in the literature [Chittenden:1982; Calkins:1983,86; Jacobs:1984; Durst:1984; Winograd:1984; Taylor:1985; Fillion:1986; Giacobbe:1986; Harris:1986; Wilkinson:1986; Taylor:1986; Pike:1988; Lamb:1989; Kitagawa:1989 ]. This is also an issue which receives much anecdotal corroboration from teachers. However, the work of Hastwell [1986,87] with year 2 students, (age seven)
and Calkins [1986] work with young children, shows that such behaviour is not necessarily due to children's lack of ability to cast new learning from reference materials "in their own words".

Observing and talking with the focal children as they tackled these projects, helped me to understand some of the hurdles that they must confront, and overcome, before they can ever succeed in writing research reports "in their own words".

This chapter explores how these children went about "doing projects" and how they responded to Garrard's efforts to help. Firstly, it examines the existing knowledge, experience and understandings that the children brought to the task of "doing a project". Secondly, the reasons children had for doing their projects are explored, then thirdly, how these influenced their choice of topic and use of reference material is considered. Next, how these issues affected Garrard's interventions to help children develop and refine their research strategies and report their work "in their own words" is examined. Lastly, conclusions are drawn about how children might be supported to undertake active strategies for researching and reporting.

5.2 EXISTING KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDINGS

All the children told me that "doing a project" was a familiar school task that had increased in frequency since they progressed from year 3 to 7. These experiences turned out to be important in influencing how the children went about new ones. The focal children drew on two kinds of background knowledge which I will describe in this section. One was their understandings about the product they were trying to create, the other was their knowledge of how to go about doing a project.
What makes a good project?
To find out what they were aiming to produce, prior to their working on the second project, I asked the children to tell me what they thought made a good project. Their responses fell into four categories: information, organisation, illustration and presentation.

The children applied two criteria to the informational writing they thought a "good project" should have. Firstly, all but one student, Joanne, said that the written information had to be "good" or "understandable" — "the sort that makes sense", "information that they can understand, that's not too complicated and suits the age group for whoever's reading it."

The second criterion the children applied to the information in their project was that of quantity. As Joanne put it, "you have to have lots of information". Although she worried most about this issue, the other children revealed it was part of their thinking about their project goals too. Most stopped collecting information from books when they thought they had "enough". But this decision tended not to be based on a belief that they had adequately covered their topic. Rather, it coincided with their reaching the end of their guiding reference book or, their having filled all the pages of their project book or, their having exceeded the guiding minimum quantity the teacher had set.

"I thought it was enough. I'd done more than anyone else I knew ...the other kids only did about five pages and I did eight and I thought that was enough." [Anna]

"[I stopped] when I thought I had enough information. Well, it filled up a book... and ...there's quite a bit of information there." [Dorothy]

"When I got over the minimum ...I wrote a page over that." [David]
Sometimes too, the children stopped collecting information simply because, as the due date for passing in their work to the teacher neared, they ran out of time to locate more.

Most of the children said that the way in which the information in their project was organised was important — it had to be "setted out in a certain way". They remarked on the use of a table of contents, index, titles and subheadings as strategies for guiding the reader through the text. For example the children said breaking their information up under headings was important.

"...otherwise I could rave on about a certain subject and they [readers] wouldn't know what it is." [Benito]

"...so if you look at the top you know exactly what you're going to find out about." [Dorothy]

"...if you didn't have those you wouldn't really know what they are talking about until you got half way through the paragraph." [David]

The children's completed Health Projects showed much more attention to this issue than had their earlier efforts in the Technology Project. Their awareness of these features had no doubt been influenced by recent work they had done relating to the features of "considerate and inconsiderate text" [Ambruster et al:1983].

Illustrations and diagrams were a third feature of "good projects" mentioned by all children. Four specified that they should match and support the written information provided.

"Pictures to go along with it, otherwise they wouldn't know what the thing looks like or something." [Benito]

"...if the picture has something to do with the writing then you can probably understand it easier." [Anna]
"...a good project would be good illustrations and that and diagrams saying what you're talking about." [Dorothy]

"...[the pictures] have to go with the thing you've been talking about on the page, so you get more of an idea of what's happening." [David]

Lastly, every student said that neat, clear and colourful presentation was important. They were extremely concerned that their projects should "look good". David offered an explicit reason for this. He said that a good cover was important because...

"...the first thing they look at is the cover and if it doesn't look very good, they won't sort of look at it, they might look at it after."

Indeed Anna told me that she thought bad projects were ones that:

"...look horrible [with] yucky presentation and dull colours. The ones in the class that are awful — they've rushed the pictures and their writing's not neat."

When I asked the children what they would change about their completed projects if they could "wave a magic wand over it" all but one wanted to change the way their work looked — nothing else. Benito and Joanne were unhappy with the generally "messy look" of their work while the others merely wanted to to add to, or alter, particular decorations they had used.

Overall, what is fascinating about the children's criteria for a good project is that they reflect a sound awareness of the features of considerate non-fiction text. This was an issue which Garrard and the school librarian had spent considerable time exploring with the class over the year. Although many of the children told me that they already knew "how to set out a project" before the current year, these activities obviously contributed to the clarity they showed in their responses. Whatever its precise origin, these children brought to the second project episode a clear idea of the kind of product they
The children's project work

wanted to create. Their product goals turned out to have a powerful influence on the children's decision-making processes throughout the projects.

**How to do a good project**

The children not only had a clear idea of what they wanted their finished products to be like but had also, over time, developed established routines and strategies for achieving them. They eagerly told me about their past "successes" in project work. For example, Benito proudly showed me a project he had done in the previous year, for which he had been awarded an "A" grading. It was presented beautifully but he told me that he had copied the entire text, verbatim, from a pamphlet. On another occasion he told me:

"Most of the projects in my life I've probably copied it out. Sometimes there's hard words but I just copy them out anyway. I don't change them around that much."

Lee and Joanne had similar experiences:

"I got some pamphlets that just gave it straight out — it made sense as I read it though and that. ...He [the teacher] gave me an "A" for it." [Lee]

"Well, we did one on Japan and we looked in encyclopedias and it had it all straight off. It had the country, the flag and everything and it was really easy to do. So we copied most of it from the book. ...It was very good actually, I liked that project." [Joanne]

Copying such as this was the favoured approach for two children but others combined this strategy with another — that of "rearranging" text.

"We've done heaps of projects. ...I just copy the ones [parts of the book] that are reasonable and rearrange the others." [Dorothy]

Several children told me that copying directly from reference books was not something they thought they were supposed to do, but rather, that their teachers wanted them to write "in their own words". Many believed that
"rearranging" text met this requirement. For example, Dorothy explained what she did.

"...'cos if there was parts that, um, I didn't really need — that didn't suit the heading much and things like that I just didn't put them in. Then I rearranged the words to make it fit with leaving that out. ...well basically the words were in there, in the same sentence, but like I put them in a different order to make them make sense again."

In effect, although she often did copy text directly from the book "when it was written really well for kids to understand", Dorothy translated more complex text in order to make it "understandable" for her reader. She and the other children who used this strategy were seriously trying to apply their good project criterion that the information "make sense". Even when they did copy directly, it wasn't "mindless" but rather the outcome of reviewing their reference book(s) for the sense it made to them. Even Lee, who told me that he rearranged text, in order to hide from the teacher the fact that he was copying, did this.

In most cases the children's "by the book" strategies, as Anna called them, were successful in enabling them to meet several of their "good project" criteria. Those of "enough", "understandable" and well organised written information. They usually achieved the latter by simply adopting the headings and sub-headings offered in their reference book. Often too, appropriate illustrations and diagrams were drawn from the book. That the six focal children applied different degrees of copying, rearranging and rewording suggests that each had different conceptions of what the task of doing a project actually involved. Their definition of "copying" seemed to be restricted to verbatim copying from a single reference. They considered that they weren't "copying" so long as they changed the text in some way. They
The children’s project work

were trying to simultaneously meet their product goals and their teachers’ 
expectation that they not copy directly from their reference material.

Interestingly, the children were not deliberately trying to plagiarise — to pass 
off someone else’s work as their own. They were well aware of the strategies 
they were using and didn’t see anything wrong with them because they 
satisfied their goals. They also made the whole project episode easier and 
more manageable for them. This was highlighted when I asked the children 
to compare the difficulty of project writing with another informational 
writing task they did — that of writing a report, without extensive research, 
on a factual topic they already knew a lot about (The G5 Expert Book 
episode.).

"That was harder than the Health Project 'cos we had to use our 
own heads. See, in the project, a book guided me a lot on what I 
was going to write and [the other] we had to think up in our own 
heads." [Anna]

"[In the Health Project] we got all the information from books and 
that, so [the other] would be a bit harder 'cos you have to think of 
everything out of your own brain. With this [the project] all I had 
to do was get it out of the book and rearrange everything." 
[Dorothy]

Simply put, the children did not view the finished project as a vehicle for 
their own thinking and learning about the topic. Instead of actively and 
critically using books for their own research purposes these children were 
content to go "by the book" in order to arrive at the product they wanted. 
Indeed, they seemed to have no notion of a successful, alternative approach.

Despite the comments above, all of the children reported that doing projects 
was, overall, hard for them. However, by adopting their selective copying, 
rewording or rearranging strategies, they at least felt in control of what they 
were doing.
"Maybe I find project writing a bit easier than some of the others [types of writing] because I've done heaps of projects before and that makes it easier because then I know what I'm doing." [Anna]

In contrast, Joanne lost any sense of control she had over the task when the teacher librarian challenged her to do something other than copy directly from a reference book.

"I thought this was all good information, I thought it was sufficient and she said it's not. I don't want to do this anymore. I want to do a new topic. I won't copy. I'll have to keep asking Mrs O's help all the way through, with every little bit. I don't know what to do now. I thought I did until she corrected it."

Confronted directly by different expectations for how she should operate, Joanne was confused and distressed. The problem seemed to be that Joanne was applying her "good information" criteria to the work she had done, while the teacher-librarian was viewing it from the perspective of the text's originality. Despite earlier instruction focusing on note-making (see section 5.6 below), Joanne and the librarian were operating from conflicting views of what producing "good information" for a project involved.

Overall, the children revealed that they had considerable experience in "doing projects". They knew what it was they wanted to produce, they had an established view of what the task involved and, they had developed particular strategies to help them succeed in it. Furthermore, in their view, feedback from previous teachers, (via the gradings they had been awarded), confirmed their understandings and approaches. Changing their strategies needed to first involve making explicit, and dealing with, this experience and, indeed, the purpose of the task itself. Calkins [1986,p.282] makes similar observations:

"When students merely paraphrase or copy the resource books, we raise our eyebrows — not realising that during the school
years, students are *taught* that learning means making copies of someone else's information. Our challenge is to reverse the damage, and it is a big one."

5.3 A CLASSROOM INEVITABILITY

When I asked the children why they were doing the projects many of their responses indicated that they saw them as a classroom "inevitability" about which they had not thought a great deal.

"I didn't know actually. I thought it was the project for the year 'cos we normally have lots of projects for the year." [Joanne]

"Oh he [the teacher] just picked the topic Technology and he just told us ...he just gave us the project to do on it."[Dorothy]

"Maybe it was just time that we did another project!" [Lee]

I asked the children why they thought their teachers had set the projects for them to do. This drew specific answers offering some comparisons between the teacher's instructional intentions for setting the projects, and the children's understandings. The children's responses fell into several categories. "Learning something" as Benito put it; practising for high school; and being assessed.

Garrard and the health education teacher told me that they set the projects so that the children would both learn about their topic and, develop and refine their research and reporting skills. Yet, only some of the children raised explicitly one or other of these issues as reasons they perceived for doing the projects. Even then, their comments were very uncertain. A couple mentioned that their teachers wanted them to learn about the content:

"Oh, he wanted us to learn, yeah, like how it works, um, the history, the inventors and the first people to try them out and use it. ...We might learn things that we didn't know before." [Dorothy]
"To learn more things, you know, on the subject you've chosen?"
(Doubtful tone of voice) [Anna]

A few others mentioned learning and practising project skills:

"It would help us set out projects better. ...Um, to use our research skills I suppose." [David]

Three of the children also suggested that their project work was preparing them for secondary schooling. As Anna put it:

"'Cos we do it a lot at high school, just to get us ready for high school."

This was an issue also raised by Joanne and Benito:

"'We've been working out how to set out projects and things ...since we're going to high school we're probably getting, [he's] picking a hard project for us to do." [Joanne]

"... for us to learn something ...... maybe how to set it out, set a project out. ... So when we get older we can, in high school we can set out better projects, leading up to .... like if we do ones now, we can do better ones after." [Benito]

These children then, also saw the tasks in terms of practising skills they might need in the future. Unfortunately, I did not explore further the origin of this notion.

Lastly, the children also mentioned concern for their teachers' assessment of their work as part of their purposes for doing the projects. They were aware that in addition to their teachers' ongoing input, questioning, advice and help as they were doing the projects, their teacher(s) would also assess their final products when they were complete.

"Oh [for the teachers] to see how you could look up information and ... to see what we're interested in maybe." [Lee]

"...For the teachers to see how we handle these things, like testing us." [Joanne]
As well as offering explicit statements like those above, the children talked about the "marks" they were likely to get for their finished products. They derived more personal satisfaction from coming up with a good product that won them teacher (and perhaps parent) approval and marks, than from learning about their topic.

"...I like getting good marks for it so I put all my energy into it." [Joanne]

"[Last time] Mr G took marks off because I didn't use sub-headings so I thought I better use them." [Anna]

"I like looking back on my work and seeing how I done it and what I got for it." [Dorothy]

"I really do it for myself. I present it well for myself and the mark we get." [Anna]

In short the children were striving to create projects that would meet the expectations which they believed their teachers had of them. This encouraged them to channel their energies into coming up with a project product that would win them marks, rather than to struggle with processes they understood little about, and that, ultimately, were not assessed anyway. In this way they seemed to be learning to "do school", as Dyson [1984] puts it, rather than learning to be active users of information resources.

5.4 FOR MR G.

As well as asking the children to tell me about their reasons for doing the projects, I asked them who they thought would be reading their finished work. Although Garrard said that he did not make a special issue of it, he intended the children to share the knowledge they gained, with others in the class, via their written projects and short oral presentations when they were complete. The assumption he worked from was that, as always, the
children's completed work would be available and, perhaps, specially displayed for others in the class to look at and read.

It was significant that none of the children mentioned teaching peers about their topic as a reason for doing their projects. Indeed, when I asked the children to identify the most likely readers for their finished work some were hard pressed to come up with anyone other than teachers.

"Mainly, I was trying to get it done for Mr G." [Dorothy: TP]

Despite the children's teacher-as-reader focus, several did mention two groups of other likely readers. Firstly, a few children suggested that their parents might read their work but this seemed more an afterthought than as central to their thinking while they were doing the project.

"For Mr G. and Mrs O. ....oh and probably my parents." [David: HP]

Secondly, in both projects, several children mentioned classmates as potential readers of their finished work. However, only one student, Dorothy, showed any explicit awareness of this readership and deliberately catered for it. Despite her teacher orientated audience for the first project, in the second one, she made significant modifications to her work on the basis of the reading needs of her peers. For example, she made a glossary for her Health Project because:

"...they're the words that I didn't know what they mean so I thought the other kids wouldn't know." [Dorothy]

Dorothy's comment on how her sense of readership affected her is fascinating:

"You do it better if other kids are going to read it. If no-one's going to read it, if it's just going to sit there, you just do it." [Dorothy]
Overall, however, the notion that the children were doing their projects in order to genuinely communicate what they knew, and had learned, with interested readers was not a feature of their reasons for completing the tasks. Even Dorothy supported this conclusion when she told me how her classmates responded to finished projects:

"...people sometimes flick through them. But nobody reads them. Nobody wants to read a project ...it's boring and takes too long to finish it." [Dorothy]

The dilemma is clear. The children did not perceive their peers as an interested, responsive audience for their project work. Nor did they perceive their teachers in this kind of role, since it was the teachers' job to assess their work. (It was notable that, in the study, projects were the only written work awarded with marks by Garrard.) As a result it is, perhaps, not surprising that the children lacked a functionally communicative sense of purpose for the tasks.

5.5 MAKING IT EASY
How the children approached the task of doing a project
Coming up with a project that met their "good project" criteria and would gain them good marks was not something the children found easy to do. In particular they said that the most difficult sub-task was deciding what information they should include in their written reports.

To make the task more manageable they adopted strategies which, in fact, went against their teachers' goals that they both learn about their topic and develop and refine their research strategies. Their "by the book" strategies of selectively copying, rewording and/or rearranging written text in books are one example of how they made the task easier for themselves. Two other examples are described in this section. Firstly, the ways in which the
children chose their project topics and secondly, how they selected and used their reference materials.

Easy topics
The reasons the children had for doing their projects were most clearly reflected in their choice of topics. Garrard or the health education teacher set the overarching topics for each project episode — technology and health. However, both teachers deliberately offered the children topic choice within these so that they,

"...are investigating an area of interest to themselves with a positive attitude to it rather than starting off in a negative manner with a topic they don't want to do." [Garrard]

The instructional assumption both teachers were operating from was that such choice was more likely to ensure the children's interest and personal engagement in the task. If they chose a topic in which they were interested they would therefore be much keener to learn the research skills that would help them find out more about it. The children in this study shook this assumption. While their interest in the topic did influence their choice of topics, their prime concern was to make the project task easy for themselves. To do this they considered a number of other factors when choosing a topic.

The children often experienced a real dilemma when it came to choosing a topic even though Garrard devoted a class session at the beginning of each project to brainstorming and exploring possibilities. Benito told me that, simply, he "couldn't think of anything else." Others sought the advice of friends.

"Well because I, for one I couldn't think of a topic to pick on Health and I saw Penny had "Teeth" and I thought that would be a fairly easy one." [Joanne]
"I didn't really pick it because, um, I didn't have much to do, I didn't know what to do, and I was asking everybody what to do and some people suggested "Eye"..." [Dorothy]

Anna asked her mother.

"I asked mum and she brought up the idea of "Pregnancy" so I picked that cos mum would be able to help me quite a bit." [Anna]

The children seemed to evaluate the suggestions they were offered on the basis of likely success in the task. Joanne looked for something "easy" while Anna valued her mother's help.

Several children told me that knowing a lot about the topic already was an important issue for them in deciding whether a topic would be "easy to do".

"[I chose it] because I knew a fair bit about it. ...it would be easier to do my project." [David]

"I chose Teeth because I thought it would be fairly easy [because] I already know a lot about teeth ...it just gives you more information to put down." [Joanne]

Again, these children were concerned to make the task easier for themselves rather than to explore a topic of interest about which they knew little. Some expertise in their topic gave them a head start in coming up with a "good project" product. Joanne for example, noted that prior knowledge helped her read books about the topic.

Lastly, all of the children wanted to make sure that there were plenty of books related to their topic available in the school library, or at home, before they made their final decision.

"I found there were stacks of books on it and I've got a big book at home on health and the eye." [Dorothy]
Some children actually changed topics when they could not locate what they thought were sufficient book resources.

"I was doing "Drugs" but I didn't have enough information on that so I did "Teeth" ...'cos I knew there was lots of information on it, like plaque, decay that rots your teeth." [David]

Applying this criterion affected children like Lee adversely. He changed topics from guns, to tanks, to bikes, before finally settling on spaceships for the Technology Project. The unfortunate result for him was that:

"I'm not really interested in this, this is the only one I could find information on. ...I don't like the thing I'm doing it on that's why it makes it boring..."

For Lee the trouble was that he could not find a book that "gave it straight out" as a pamphlet had done for him in the previous year. His search for information began and ended on the shelves of non-fiction books in the library, where he looked for books that were directly on his topic. He either did not have the skills, or the motivation, to seek out alternatives such as encyclopedias, and chapters or sections within books on related topics.

Overall, in considering why the children chose their project topics it seems clear that their over-riding concern was not that of a burning desire, on their part, to find out more about the topics they chose. Even more surprising was that, to some children, it did not seem to matter whether they were learning anything new or not — several told me that they were not at all interested in the topic they had chosen to do in one or other of the projects. None were able to say much about what they had learned after doing the projects. What did matter was "doing a good project" and, through their choice of topic, the children tried, very early in the episode, to set themselves up for success in the task. As was seen in the previous sections, the children's view of "success" centred on coming up with a good product but not necessarily for
clearly understood learning or communicative purposes. Rather, like the kindergarten children studied by Dyson [1984] they had, over time, constructed their own routines for managing to accomplish the task as they conceived it. They were in the business of creating an artifact that would be assessed and marked by the teacher.

**Easy references**

The children's preoccupation with doing a good project, rather than exploring and coming to grips with a topic of interest to them, also revealed itself in the way they selected and used reference material, particularly for their work on the Health Project. Despite their concern to have many books available on a topic before they chose it, few of the children actually ended up using more than one or two.

A conflict between the teacher's and the children's intentions clearly emerged here. At the beginning of both projects, Garrard had encouraged the children to check out information resources before making their final decision about topic choice. His reasons were twofold. Firstly he wanted them to check that sufficient information resources on their topic were available. Secondly, Garrard wanted to encourage the children to use and integrate information from a variety of sources. However, the children had different goals. Despite Garrard's advice about using several references to locate appropriate information, what they actually did was to shift into their established strategies for doing projects. For example, Dorothy and Anna had both come to the first interview with me about the Health Project armed with a stack of books relating to their topics. Neither of them ended up using more than one or two of these books. This behaviour seemed like a meaningless pre-project ritual until I asked them why they decided not to use the books they had gathered.
"I collected a lot of books but then they didn't, they didn't ...come of use to me so I just used that one there. I found all I needed in this book." [Dorothy]

Anna explained further than this. She said it was not that she had problems working out how to use all the books she had, but rather:

"I just had a browse through them and this was the easy, was easy to understand. It was a really good book too. ...I used all of this book. Really good book it is. ...One book, yep. And I just read it, yeah well whatever. And I just put it into my own words and that was it. ...cos this was a really easy to understand book."

All the other children offered similar responses, telling me that they sifted through the books available until they found one that would be "really easy to use".

"There were lots of books on it and I got all of my information out of one book." [Benito]

Again, the children were concerned to make the project task easier for themselves. They identified two key issues at stake in their text selection process — coverage of the topic and readability.

"Well, since I got my pamphlets it had all the kind of information I needed and that's made it really easy [it contains] all of the things I can think of." [Joanne]

"First I found a book that would be suitable for information, and that wouldn't be too hard to understand." [David]

Benito told me that if he had not found a single book with sufficient, readable information in it, he "probably" would have changed topics. The trouble with his choice, however, was that despite its seemingly 'simple' text it was poorly organised and presented. It lacked a table of contents or index, it made no use of major headings and subheadings within the text, and it omitted appropriate captions on illustrations. It was, in fact, an extremely poor model of the kind of writing he was trying himself to create. It no
doubt contributed further to the difficulties he had in locating and selecting appropriate information on his topic. Interestingly, Benito's finished project was more considerate [Ambruster et al:1983] than his reference book in relation to text organisation — a good indication that his "by the book" strategy was not mindless, but took account of the teacher's advice on these issues.

Overall, the children went through all the books on the topic which they had collected in order to find the one which offered, what they saw as, a comprehensive coverage of the topic, and which they could most easily understand. They then used this book as a guide for their favoured, and previously successful, copying and rearranging strategies.

The children's dependence on the guidance offered by a single reference was further highlighted by the difficulty they had incorporating any information from supplementary sources into their projects. Many of the children had obtained pamphlet material on their topic but they did not incorporate the information from it into the written part of their projects. Indeed, only David used any of it in this way. Instead, most of the children used their pamphlets by cutting them up for use as illustrative material. In her enthusiasm to do a good project, Anna went out of her way to visit a maternity hospital where she interviewed a supervisory midwife. However, she neither saw any need, nor had any strategies, for incorporating the information she gained in this way into the main part of her project. Instead, she included the interview in question/answer format in a separate section at the end. Dorothy used a book she had at home to add another section to her project. However, she only added this section because she had depleted the information available in her major reference yet, she said:
"I had one more page left in my project book so I decided to fill it up."

To sum up, in selecting their reference materials the children were again making decisions that would reduce the complexity of the project task as they interpreted it, and make it easier for them to come up with the product they had in mind. Indeed, by focussing on a single, readable reference they avoided dealing with more complex references in order to come up with the "understandable information" they aimed for. This approach also meant that they did not have to deal with problems associated with the integration of information from different sources.

5.6 TRYING TO DO IT DIFFERENTLY
With the support of the teacher librarian, Garrard made considerable efforts to develop and refine the children's research and reporting skills in the context of both projects. After initial class sessions they spent a great deal of time with children, on a one to one basis, helping them with specific problems they were experiencing. However, the children had difficulty in accommodating the new strategies for research and report writing which both teachers tried to develop in them. It was not that they were telling the children irrelevant things, but rather, that the suggestions they made and the guidance they offered did not fit easily with the children's existing view of what "doing a project" involved. As a result they often misinterpreted their teachers' advice or tried to do what they suggested without really understanding the purposes new strategies were meant to serve. Furthermore, when these new strategies failed to work for them they returned to their old ones with even more conviction than before.
To illustrate how this occurred I will describe briefly two examples of strategies the teachers introduced to the children. These were
1. taking mainpoints (making notes) from reference materials and,
2. posing questions to guide their research.

Taking mainpoints
In the first project the children's task was to research and report on the historical development of a technological item of their own choosing. Garrard challenged the children's preferred copying, rewording and rearranging strategies for writing projects by instructing them to take "main points" from several references. The idea was that they would then use these "notes" as the basis for writing their reports "in their own words".

Garrard assisted the children in this process by suggesting that they devise a set of sub-headings for their topic as a structure for locating and recording information. His intention was that the children would then to use their notes thus collected to write their information in extended prose under each sub-heading. The organisational structure he offered them was:

- Inventors
- Why invented
- It's development
- Present day
- Future

The student's were not constrained, however, to use these sub-headings and were allowed to select other headings which they devised or found in reference books. In devising the task in this way, Garrard assumed that the children would draw on past experience of this process, and various activities he had done with the class in the current school year. (For example the children often watched and recorded notes/mainpoints about a
television current affairs program. Following this, they wrote, from their notes, a brief report about the program.)

Unfortunately, as Garrard later reflected, this requirement turned out to be extremely difficult for the children to fulfil. He realised that he had assumed too much about the children's past experiences in "doing research" and that, in fact, few children had adequate note-making experience, within project tasks, to draw on.

"I didn't lead them by the hand sufficiently. I led them up to the starting mark and expected them to get to the finish. In the meantime there were a few hurdles to get over and I did that more on an individual basis, according to the needs of the kids. I found that I was having to do that with too many individuals. It got a bit hard to cater for everybody."

He did, however, provide the children with individual support by offering models, advice, and explanations to help them identify and use main points more effectively.

As Garrard noted, the strategy of making notes from several references, under specific sub-headings, was newer to the children than he had thought. It was not something that they were either familiar or confident with. As Anna put it:

"That was the only time I'd ever heard of those sorts of things."

Nevertheless, many of the children in the class genuinely tried to fulfil Garrard's instructions about taking mainpoints under sub-headings from several references. Their struggle and persistence was quite astounding. The interesting thing was how differently the children interpreted and carried out the task, despite having had the same basic input from Garrard on how to proceed.
David and Travis saw the task as simply that of omitting function words from sentences in their reference books, and then putting them back in when the time came to "write up" their notes.

Anna and Dorothy, however, attended more carefully to Garrard's instructions and attempted to do as he suggested. Unfortunately, their persistent efforts resulted in what they later admitted were incomprehensible notes. Indeed, Dorothy's final text for this project was a hodgepodge of loosely related information. Anna, on the other hand, informed me that she found it necessary to "quickly go back" to a single reference book in order to produce (by "rearranging" and selective copying) suitable text for her project.

Benito and Lee tried to record mainpoints as notes, but they gave up the effort because of the difficulty they found in deciding, in the texts they were reading, what a main point was. They, too, found they could not understand the notes they did make and, in fact, half way through the first project reverted to their familiar strategies.

Joanne never really came to terms with what a main point was. She therefore did not veer from her strategy of selectively copying information from her reference material. Hence her confrontation with the teacher-librarian described earlier.

In the second project, (another big one which he was not responsible for setting), Garrard did not insist that the children record information from references in main point form. He was interested to see how they would approach the task after intervening class work dealing with this and other
The children's project work

research and report writing strategies. (The most notable of which was the joint production by the class of the G5 Sports Information Book — refer to p.72 for details about this.) As a result, the children abandoned the strategy 'en masse' returning to their preferred strategies of selective copying, rewording and rearranging text from a book. This time they expressed even more conviction that this was the best way to proceed.

I asked the children why they opted not to use the strategy of taking main points on this occasion.

"Waste of time — 'cos I didn't have much time and that so I just wrote them straight out into sentences." [Lee]

"I think it's a waste of time. Cos you've got to write all your main points out and then you gotta write them into sentences, then you gotta write, put it in your book. And it takes... it's like doing your project 3 times. ...You just waste half your time." [David]

"I didn't have enough time .... that's why. ...Didn't have enough time. ... I couldn't be bothered 'cos I was falling behind and I wanted to get it done. ...I don't reckon it is [important], not as much... You don't really need them. I don't know why. ....Cos I don't really like using them. You know how you're meant to write them and then write up the notes, I just didn't use it. ...That took so long to do [when] we did it in the Technology Project — it took so much time. Plus I had so much to do in this one." [Anna]

In contrast to the other children Dorothy suggested that taking main points was a time saving strategy.

"It gives you, it takes less time to collect all your information up — if you just take it all in notes and then you can quickly do it in sentences and so it doesn't take as long to find your information than it does to write it all up."

However, she still decided not to use this "quicker method" because...

"...but, um, for the one that I did, I did most of this project at home so I had plenty of time to do it."
Of course, the main reason that the children found taking main points so time consuming was the difficulty it had caused them during the Technology Project episode. This issue was raised by Lee when I asked him whether he would have chosen to do main points if he had had more time.

"No, 'cos I don't really know how to do main points that good, cos after I write them down I forget what they mean — that's what happened in my Technology Project, that's why I haven't got much information there either, I lost half of it cos I didn't know what it was that I'd writ."

Benito continued to be confused about selecting the main idea and writing notes. His difficulty really was that of recording his selection in note form. This led him to decide:

"Well, I'm fed up with main points so I've started writing them in sentences."

"I find it hard taking notes and stuff. So I just write it out in sentences."

Reflecting on his attempts in the previous Technology Project, he said:

"Well, I didn't really write notes like I did in my last project, the car one, but all I did here was..I just writ um, err, sentences out..."

"Not really .. oh a little bit I did, I got a bit bored of doing it so I just like put some of it in my own words and some of it I copied out."

Joanne also continued to have a confused notion of what a main point actually was. Reflecting on her difficulties in the Technology Project, I asked her if she thought that she was going to work out what a "main point" was this time.

"Yep. This is easier the main points 'cos it's on teeth and things I like and that I know already. And that book was really easy to use."
When she had finished her Health Project, I asked Joanne to explain what a main point was:

"Well, say I've got the topic of Teeth, it's like, the main point is the most important question about that topic. [For example], well, I'd pick the first one which is obvious — "What is a tooth?". And then I'd pick the second one which is obvious, "How to clean them... and what diseases are and the main questions.

In fact, here, Joanne seemed to think that a main point was the same as a main heading in her project. This confusion must have contributed to the method she decided to use when taking "notes" as she was selecting information.

"Well, I went through the pamphlets and I wrote it all down... into a memo book... it's got about six pages... then I crossed out things I didn't need, like the questions and things like that."

In a later interview, Joanne seemed to know that main points were a special way of recording information, different from what she had actually done. Her conclusion about its value was clear:

"I reckon that was a waste of time because we tried that in our Technology Project, in our draft copy and it was no good."

Identifying and noting main points was not only time consuming and difficult for the children. (A situation reported in numerous studies dealing with this issue [eg. Taylor:1986].) The children also realised that the finished products that they ended up with as a result of trying to "take mainpoints" were not as good, in terms of quantity, organisation, and readability, as those they produced using their other strategies. In terms of their goals for doing projects it remained a "waste of time."

Reflecting on this set of data, Garrard perceptively summed up the problem.

"It's been really difficult trying to change children's ways of approaching note-taking because based on their previous
He speculated on how a complex skill like note-making might be better approached.

"Trying that idea in such a huge task was a bit of a mistake. On reflection I'd choose a smaller task and experiment with how the children handle it in a task that lasts say, two weeks, instead of ten."

He experimented with this approach later in the year, after the major data collection phase of this study.

"[Now] they are all just short type assignments where they're getting to reinforce the process of collecting information — gathering it and working out what's appropriate et cetera. So it's more a repetition of working through the process."

**Posing questions to guide their research**

In the second project Garrard worked collaboratively with the school librarian to help the children pose questions to help focus and guide their research. The idea was that doing this would challenge the children's "by the book" strategies. They would then be able to operate more actively on their reference books taking from them what they needed rather than resorting to passively absorbing/copying what books had to offer.

From the children's point of view this approach to project work was also new to them. As Dorothy told me:

"We never really had to do a project to answer questions, we just had to, um, research." [Dorothy]
As it turned out, the children also found this a difficult task. Although they had chosen their project topic, they did not necessarily have any specific questions about it that they wanted to find answers to. Indeed, considering the reasons the children had for actually choosing their topics this is not surprising. What is interesting, however, is that despite all the time and work they, and the teachers, put into this stage of the project, none of the children I spoke to actually used the set of questions they came up with to guide their research. Indeed, the notion that their questions would guide their selection and use of reference materials, and the final writing of their project, escaped many of the children. Although they all co-operated in compiling a list of questions, when the time came to do the project they largely ignored them. Instead, they continued to operate on their existing framework for "doing projects" built up over previous school years. (As Jacobs [1984:p.359] points out, "even with questions, it is possible for children to get caught up in the flow of words provided by the source book.") I asked the focal children about the way in which they used their questions during their "doing the project process".

In the first interview, before she commenced her research, Anna had some rough ideas about how she might use her set of questions.

"Well, try and look them up and try and find out some answers to them [then] ...make a list of sentences. ...I'm going to do it in a project book and maybe just put, group them and then put them on a page. ... Well, like this one "Spontaneous abortion" and that ["what is an abortion"] put these together. I don't know how I'm going to group them but I'll think about it as I go along."

However, half way through the episode, when I asked Anna whether her set of questions had been guiding the information she had been looking for, she replied:
"No, not really, I'm going to do that at the end. A different section [in her Table of Contents]. ...Um, I might put that in other information, see there's here "Other Information"

Evidence that Benito's research process was little influenced by the questions he posed at the beginning emerged in the following comment he made after he had collected his information.

"I've got to make up other questions 'cos all of that information I've written out, I haven't got questions for. I just copied it out of the book and put it in my own words, so I'll have to make new questions." [Benito]

The purpose of the questions set at the beginning of the project process also evaded Lee's awareness since, after changing his topic following the class question setting activities, he did not do it again in relation to his new topic.

"Oh no, I did um, ... you know how I was going to do it on drugs? Then I changed it around and I forgot all about doing the um, um, questions. So I didn't need the questions. I didn't bother when I changed. ...Ah, I just didn't get around to doing it. I was going to do it, um, one night but I didn't, I just left the book at home and I forgot all about doing it.

Because David only commenced researching with two questions, intending to generate more as he read, it was clear that they were not actually guiding his search for information. I asked him if he had enough questions:

"Probably not enough... 'cos there's more sub-headings besides those. Like could be how braces help us. I might use "Braces" as a sub-heading and then put how they help us."

Dorothy's final reflections, on the use she made of the questions she set at the beginning of the project process, sum up the other children's responses above.

"No, I didn't use the questions at all (they're in my other book) [I answered them] but I haven't got them in. I haven't written the question and then written the answer underneath. I've just got them in, like there might be an answer to one of the questions in here or there [one of the sections of her finished project]."
I asked whether they were of use to her in any way:

"No, not really. I didn't need them much. Oh they helped me to just figure out if I exact...if I really needed the information that I found cos if you're doing anything big the questions like if it could help me answer em, but I didn't really use them much at all besides that."

To clarify, I asked whether she would set herself questions before she did another project:

"No, not really. ...I'd just, when I had the heading what I was supposed to do it on I'd just go find as many books on it and put sub-headings down and find as much information as I can on it."

In effect, the children ignored what might have been a powerful strategy for guiding their research in books, and making them active, critical users of information resources. They were unable to accommodate answering their questions with their views of how to do a project and what a finished one should be like.

Overall, the children's efforts to apply, and their responses to the value of, these strategies highlight the critical role of past experience in the children's interpretation and use of instructional advice offered to them. They indicate how important it is to get the purposes of what they are doing, and of the alternative being proposed, very clear. They suggest that even the best instruction can prove ineffective when children cannot fit it into their existing frameworks for going about a task.
5.7 CONCLUSIONS

By exploring the children's perspectives on "doing projects" this chapter has revealed a number of points where there were mismatches between the teacher's instructional intentions and the children's interpretations of aspects of the project tasks they were undertaking.

The data reported here suggest that helping children to undertake and report their research "in their own words" requires that teachers do a number of things.

1. Finding out from children:
   - what they already believe that doing and reporting on research involves. What existing understandings and strategies are they operating on? What new or alternative insights do they need to develop?
   - what they believe are the purposes of doing research in the classroom. Is it, for example, to find answers to intriguing questions or to produce an artifact that gets good marks?
   - what communicative reasons they perceive for reporting on their research. Will their reports be read, and responded to, by interested readers? (Chittenden [1982] reports on the remarkably positive impact of setting up a research episode so that children have a genuine sense of purpose and audience.)

2. Setting up research situations where children can take on a learning challenge believing that they will be successful. Short, manageable tasks may be most likely to provide the context for this to happen. (A suggestion also made by Calkins:1986 and Graves:1989.)
3. Clarifying and communicating the classroom definition of "success" in research tasks. Is it the production of a lavish, ten page project complete with perfect illustrations and lettering? Or, does it have more to do with tracking and reflecting on the research process the student tried? Could successful products be, for example, very short reports of very long research processes, or finding the answer to one small question and coming up with twenty more? In the end what, if anything, gets assessed?

4. Explaining and demonstrating for children the function that new or unfamiliar research strategies serve.

5. Providing children with many opportunities to reflect and gain feedback on the research strategies they have tried.

6. Providing children with many opportunities to refine their strategies across several small tasks instead of trying to do everything in one big one.

Many of the issues and questions above are also raised by Calkins [1986] who considers primary aged children's need to learn effective research and reporting strategies.

In our data sharing sessions together Garrard and I reflected on and discussed issues such as these. Indeed, Garrard was swift to act upon the insights we gained. Soon after the major data gathering phase was complete he had begun exploring exciting ways of addressing some of these issues so that his children would gradually learn not to "revert back to the safety of just copying out".
CHAPTER 6:
WRITING THAT'S EASY, WRITING THAT'S FUN

Influences the children perceived on their writing preferences and performance.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Prior to the data collection period, Garrard told me of his concern that, when offered free choice in their writing tasks, the children almost always seemed to opt for imaginative story writing. They did this despite his encouraging them to select a range of different tasks and kinds of writing. In fact, Garrard deliberately designed his classroom writing program to ensure the children had experience with a range of different types of writing. He did this by setting writing tasks, as well as programming free writing time. This, he believed, would help to ensure that the children were aware of a range of possible options for writing when they had the opportunity to choose their own tasks.

Throughout the interviews with the children I explored their writing preferences. I wanted to find out what, if any, kinds of writing they preferred, and why. As they compared and contrasted the features of different writing tasks the children raised a number of issues which they perceived as influencing their attitudes to, and performance in, not only non-narrative, but all, classroom writing tasks.
Of all the explanations the children offered for their writing preferences, that which recurred again and again in the episodic and final interviews, was that certain kinds were either easier and/or more enjoyable to produce than others. This chapter examines the reasons the children had for their views. Firstly, it considers what kinds of writing the children found easy and difficult to produce. Secondly, it looks at the kinds of writing the children said they particularly enjoyed or found fun to write. Finally, issues which the children believed made some kinds of writing easier, and/or more enjoyable, for them to do are examined.

6.2 WRITING THAT'S EASY

To clarify and check the data from the episodic interviews on this issue, in the final interview, I asked the children to name as many kinds of writing that they could think of, to rank them from easiest to most difficult, and to explain their rankings to me. I checked the five children's rankings and explanations with the comments they had made during the episodic interviews. There was little discrepancy between the data from both sources.

It is important to note however, that in responding to my request Anna and Benito revealed their very differing views of themselves as writers. Anna told me she found all kinds of writing "fairly easy to do" while Benito said that he did not find any kind of writing easy. Although both agreed to rank them in order of ease or difficulty they signalled a warning of which I have tried to take close account in this study. That is, the need not only to analyse group "statistics" for patterns or trends, but also to attend to, and try to understand, the significance of individual variations within the data.
Figure 6.1, on the next page, shows each child’s individual rankings, according to difficulty, of the nine main kinds of writing they identified. Figure 6.2, also on the next page, summarises the children's rankings according to whether, comparatively, they found them very easy (VE), easy (E), difficult (D), or very difficult (VD).

The data represented in figures 6.1 and 6.2 suggest that, generally, the children found descriptions of familiar items and, as indicated by the research literature, narrative types of writing easiest to produce [Durst:1984; Freedman and Pringle:1984; Pringle and Freedman:1985; Carlin:1986; Harris:1986].

This finding was supported by the data from the Shotgun Writing episode. In this episode Garrard asked the children to "choose a topic which they felt easy with, [and could] write lots about". They were then to write sustainedly on that topic for 15 minutes. A further 20-30 minutes was then to be devoted to finishing off and proofreading the piece. Garrard set this task primarily as an assessment procedure to allow him "to get an idea of what their writing style was like in a short period of time and to check on their proofreading skills". The children were informed that their writing would go into their individual assessment folders as a sample of work.
Figure 6.1: Focal children's rankings of kinds of writing identified from easiest to most difficult

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOCAL CHILD</th>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Story</th>
<th>Personal letter</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Non-fiction</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
<th>Persuasive</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>VE</td>
<td>VE</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>VE</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>VE</td>
<td>VE</td>
<td>VD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>VE</td>
<td>VE</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>VD</td>
<td>VD</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 6.3, on the next page, summarises the focal children's choice of text type for this task, while figure 6.4, also on the next page, shows, for comparative purposes, what all children in the class elected to write under the situational constraints described previously.

All the focal children informed me that, for the Shotgun Writing episode, they chose what to write on the basis of what they found easiest to produce. As they did not mention any other considerations in making their choices the results in figures 6.3 and 6.4 are enlightening. Description of familiar items, and personal narrative, dominate the children's choices of text type for this task. This confirms the children's rankings of these types in the final interview. Of interest, however, are the low numbers of:

- imaginative stories, suggesting that the children considered this kind of writing more difficult to do than the kind they chose — at least under the task conditions described
- non-narrative, other than simple description of familiar items. This suggests that most of the children also found this kind of writing more difficult to produce than the other kinds they chose.
Figure 6.3: Type and topic of writing chosen by focal children for Shotgun Writing episode

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Description (My family)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>Description (My dog)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Account of personal experience (On the weekend ...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Factual report (Lizards)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benito</td>
<td>Account of personal experience (On the holidays...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Imaginative story (One day in the year 2001 ...)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.4: Type and topic of writing chosen by all class members for the Shotgun Writing episode (N=28)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Imaginative story</td>
<td>2 (boys)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Account of personal experience</td>
<td>11 (3g &amp; 8b)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-narrative</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My family</td>
<td>8 (6g &amp; 2b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My pet</td>
<td>2 (girls)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- My school</td>
<td>1 (boy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Informational report</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- sustained</td>
<td>2 (boys)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- shifts to personal experience</td>
<td>2 (1g &amp; 1b)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As well as the general patterns to be found in the data considered above, there are also some contrasts and individual variations which raise a number of questions. Why, for example, did Joanne consider argumentative and instructional writing easy when all the others, (except Anna), did not? Why did Anna feel generally competent in all kinds, while Benito said he found no writing easy? Why did Lee choose informational writing for the Shotgun episode? Why did so few children choose story for the Shotgun episode when they ranked such writing as easy to do?

The children’s explanations of their rankings, and their comments from across the episodic interviews, offered some answers to questions such as these. They revealed that, in deciding whether one kind of writing was easier than another, the children had a much wider range of concerns than just the type of writing involved. These concerns are summarised in figure 6.5, on the next page. They are explored in more depth in the following sections of this chapter.

As can be seen from figure 6.5 in deciding whether one kind of writing was easier than another the children revealed that they were sensitive to the features of their task environment or context for writing, and their own sense of competence and confidence to do a particular kind of writing. They were, I discovered, unable to separate such concerns from considerations focusing only the kind of writing involved.
Figure 6.5: Summary of focal children's comments about what makes writing easier or harder for them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing is EASIER when...</th>
<th>Writing is HARDER when...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• You've done that kind of writing before and you know what to do.</td>
<td>• You've never done that kind of writing before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You feel confident that you can do it</td>
<td>• You don't feel confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You've got lots of ideas or information to write about</td>
<td>• You have to research the information and take main points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You don't have to get the facts right worked out</td>
<td>• You have to think a lot about what you're going to write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You don't have to think a lot about what to write.</td>
<td>• You can't think of anything to write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You can write what you want</td>
<td>• You have to write the truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ideas keep coming into your head</td>
<td>• You want to do it well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You've experienced what you're writing about.</td>
<td>• You're not interested in the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You're interested in the topic</td>
<td>• You're writing for real readers*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You're writing for real readers*</td>
<td>• You have to explain detail or give reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You're writing for no-one</td>
<td>• You have to write it in a certain way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You enjoy doing it</td>
<td>• You have to make it go together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You can write it your own way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.3 WRITING THAT'S FUN

During the early interviews in this study the children suggested that the kinds of writing they preferred were simply those which they found easy to produce. It was tempting to interpret this as evidence that the children were reluctant to take on challenges to their writing abilities, and that, when given the option, they chose writing tasks which involved least effort by them to produce.

However, analysing the data from across all episodes suggested another important influence on the children's writing preferences — whether they found the writing enjoyable, or fun to do. On this point my discussions with the children almost always turned to story writing. Indeed, although the focus of this study was non-narrative, it was impossible not to talk about story writing with the children. It seemed to be a natural 'benchmark' for them especially when they were struggling to compare and contrast one kind of writing with another. In particular, stories, they told me, were fun to write. Except for Benito they liked writing them even if no-one was ever going to read them. As Carlin [1986] reports about the children in his study, stories, it seemed held inherent rewards for the children as writers.

"I just feel it's fun, you know ... I like making up stories." [...] I don't find persuasive writing very interesting.] [Dorothy]

"I like writing fantasy stories and things like that. ...they're fun to write, you can make it up." [David:PW]

"Stories are fun to read and fun to write" [Anna]

The children did not often speak of a non-narrative episode with this kind of enthusiasm. On only a few occasions throughout the entire study did any children describe a non-narrative writing task as enjoyable or fun.
"[The persuasive letter] was fun because you're putting up a case. It's writing your own reasons and you're going against someone really big." [Joanne]

"I enjoyed it [persuasive writing task] very much ...'cos I've never really written something to persuade someone to let us have something." [Matthew]

"I think it's fun.[The G5 Expert Book task.] I knew everything about it so it made it easier. It was interesting ...I enjoyed it." [Joanne:G5]

I also used the final interview to clarify and check the children's preferred writing. I asked them to tell me which kind of writing they most enjoyed, and would choose to write during free writing time. Figure 6.6 summarises their responses.

Figure 6.6: Focal children's preferred kinds of writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type chosen for free writing</th>
<th>Type enjoyed most (if different)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Imaginary story</td>
<td>Story or non-fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Imaginary story or personal letter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>Imaginary story</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benito</td>
<td>Personal narrative or penpal letter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Imaginary story or non-fiction</td>
<td>Non-fiction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.6 shows that imaginative stories, along with personal letters, were the most popular kinds of writing with the focal children. As Garrard had already noted, these preferences were also reflected in the texts children actually chose to write during the year.

Further support for this finding emerged in the data I collected concerning the kinds of writing the children chose to do at home. Throughout the data collection period, I often asked each child whether they had been doing any
writing at home that was not related to their work at school. In this period none of the focal children indicated that they had done any writing at home of this kind. However, Anna, Joanne and Dorothy did tell me that sometimes they wrote at home for their own purposes. When they did this they wrote either stories, or letters to penpals, or letters to relatives. As Anna put it:

"Sometimes I've just gotta write something so I write a story, or maybe a letter, at home."

These data again confirm that simple description and, as suggested in the research literature [Durst:1984; Carlin:1986; Harris:1986], narrative kinds of writing (personal or imaginative) are preferred by children of this age. However, although these kinds were also those the children identified as easiest to write, their writing preferences were not based solely on this factor. It was significant that none of the children elected to do Journal Writing, which usually involved them in chronologically recounting their personal experiences, even though all had identified it as the easiest kind of writing to do. Even Benito, who often chose to write about his own experiences in free writing time, claimed that he would not choose to do Journal Writing. As the comments below indicate, none enjoyed Journal Writing. They also raised doubts about its purpose. The children did not see such writing fulfilling their own purposes as Garrard had intended.

"It's just to bore us I suppose. I don't like writing it that much cos over the weekend I never done anything." [Lee]

"I wouldn't choose Journal cos I know what I did." [Benito]

"Well, a Journal isn't for yourself or anybody. It's just for your teacher to read. I don't like it because we have to do it and it has to be finished by a certain time. Journals are just boring. ...you write what you've done, fact about what I've done. ...It's just for the teacher, I rush to get it done. I think it's just an exercise ...just writing." [Anna]
"We do it to show how we can write what we've done and how far back we can remember. Mr G just reads them and checks them. We know what we did, all we're doing is writing it down."
[Dorothy]

In ranking Instructions/Rules and Argumentative writing as easier than Journal, Joanne commented:

"I enjoy them more than journal, they seem easier."

The children's comments about Journal Writing point to concerns other than whether the writing was simply easy to do. Indeed, in making their free writing choices the children indicated that their preferences for particular kinds of writing were influenced by a number issues that had to do not only with the kind of writing involved but also the situational context for it's production. Such concerns are reflected in Figure 6.7 which summarises the children's reasons for their free writing time choices.

**Figure 6.7: Focal children's free writing preferences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type chosen</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Story</td>
<td>They're easy and other kids read them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Story or letter</td>
<td>Interest me most — I enjoy them I just like writing stories, if I've got an idea in my head I just write. Letters are to someone and I can write what I want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>Story</td>
<td>They're easy to write, you don't have to think a lot. Sometimes you can get fun too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benito</td>
<td>Realistic (Personal narrative / Penpal Letter)</td>
<td>It's the easiest. I can write more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Imaginary story or non-fiction</td>
<td>Probably imaginary cos we don't really have the choice to do non-fiction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lee's belief that he was not allowed to choose non-fiction during free writing time warrants discussion. Joanne also indicated that she felt a
similar constraint when deciding what to write in free writing time. As she said:

"...when I do free writing I mainly do stories because it would be a waste of time doing this [informational writing: G5 Expert Book] when I wasn't really going to publish it or anything. Cos we don't publish anything except our stories. I could if I wanted to but I don't think Mr G would let me."

Garrard informed me that this was a not a message he had intended to send. During class discussions he had deliberately spent time identifying writing options with children, and encouraging them to try a range of different kinds of writing during free writing time. Lee and Joanne's comments provide a small illustration of how children can sometimes misinterpret their teacher's instructional intentions and, as a result, operate inappropriately in the classroom. It points to the need for clarifying with students their interpretations of such things as classroom groundrules so that teachers and students are working from shared understandings.

I asked Lee what kind of writing he would choose if he believed he had a completely free choice.

"If I could I'd probably choose non-fiction cos now I've learned more things....I've done more this year than I have in any other year probably. I've learned about how to do the writing and lots of topics and that. Non-fiction is easier and faster now. If you know a lot about the thing you're going to write about you can just write down. For an imaginary story you have to think up imaginary things and you have to worry about whether the story makes sense and how it's going to go along and things like that. See what I do is just think of it as I go along." [Lee]

Lee's comment above is insightful. He rolls into a single comment concern for:

- his knowledge of the subject matter he has to write about
- his writing experience and understandings of what to do
• his knowledge of the features of different text types
• his confidence to do the writing appropriately and successfully in ways that fit with his writing strategies.

Lee's comment also illustrates just how complex were the children's reasons for their writing preferences — precisely why they found some kinds of writing easier and/or more enjoyable to do than others. The remainder of this chapter attempts to unravel this complexity, and show how the children perceived their writing preferences and performance being influenced by a range of issues that made writing easy and/or fun for them to do. In doing this I will also address the questions raised above concerning significant individual variations that arose in the data.

6.4 I FIND IT INTERESTING

The writing contexts Garrard established for the non-narrative writing episodes took account of his belief that the children's interest in their topics would influence the effort they were prepared to put into their writing. Therefore, he always tried to ensure that the children had at least some degree of topic choice within writing tasks set by him.

The children reported that this was, generally, an accurate assumption. The children's enjoyment of a particular writing task was clearly influenced by whether or not they found the topic personally engaging. Indeed, four of the focal children informed me that when they found the topic interesting they not only enjoyed the writing more but, also, found the writing easier to do.

"[If I choose the topic] it's a bit easier cos I'm choosing and I don't have to do what I don't want to do. ...it would be pretty boring writing on a topic you didn't choose." [Dorothy]
"[If the topic's interesting and I enjoy it] it makes a big difference. It's easier to do the writing cos you want to do it." [Anna]

"[If I'm interested in the topic] it's easier." [Lee]

Anna understood the importance of engagement with the topic when discussing the Persuasive Letter episode. She said:

"If you feel strong then it would be easy." [Anna:PW]

Finally, Lee attributed his poor performance in the Newspaper Report to several factors, one of which was his disinterest in the topic he had been asked to write on.

"[The Newspaper task is] boring, cos I don't like it... probably cos I don't like the topic. ...Like, see, I didn't want to do that, but if it had been on sport or something I would have put in a bit more effort."

Months later, during the final interview, Lee recalled the same issue when talking about his efforts in the Newspaper episode.

"I found that quite hard, I don't know, I just couldn't be bothered doing it so it was sort of easy."[Lee:Final]

Lee was not the only student to report that dis-satisfaction with the topic influenced his writing efforts. Anna also raised the issue when comparing the quality of her term one Newspaper Report to that of the current term.

"It's pretty good. Not as good as my other one... because I enjoyed writing that one better. I liked the subject better so I put more into it."

The children were not more specific than this about the ways in which their interest in a topic actually influenced their writing. Their comments referred only to the general level of effort they were prepared to invest in a particular task. They seemed, however, concerned to choose topics which would allow
them to be most successful in the writing, which according to them usually meant writing a lot. (This issue is taken up more closely in the next section.)

The children's comments on this issue did serve to highlight an instructional dilemma. By setting up writing tasks to ensure children's experience with a range of writing purposes and text types, Garrard also had to limit the children's choices — including the topics about which they wrote. The children in this study seemed sensitive to such constraints and attributed poorer performance in a task to them.

Beyond interest in the topic of their writing was the children's interest in the purpose(s) their writing was serving. Dorothy for example, told me that she would never again, by choice, do any persuasive writing. This was not because she necessarily found such writing difficult but, rather, she simply said,

"I don't find it very interesting."

However, echoing Anna's comment above, when I asked Dorothy when she thought she might choose to write persuasively she said,

"When I really want to have something changed."

This too, highlighted another instructional dilemma. Although Dorothy was very clear about the purpose and reader for her Persuasive Letter, she did not engage as fully as she might have with the task. As a consequence her written product may not have reflected what she was truly capable of.

Lastly, the children's interest in a topic was also closely connected to their knowledge about the topic, and whether they felt they could readily generate content to write about. For example, David chose his topic for the
Newspaper episode because he "knew a bit about it". Lee's obsessive personal interest in lizards meant that he had an enormous store of personal knowledge about them to draw on when writing about them during the Shotgun Writing episode.

"I wrote about lizards cos I like them. I know a lot about lizards, I got them at home." [Lee]

Setting up assigned writing tasks so that all children in a class find them 'interesting' enough to harness their best efforts may well be an impossible task. However, this small segment of the data does suggest, as did Sternglass' [1986] work with college students, that it is inappropriate to judge a child's writing ability on the basis of only one text, and without any attention to that child's attitude to, and background knowledge about, the topic and other task features.

6.5 I CAN THINK OF WHAT TO WRITE

Generating content for their writing was a central concern to all the children when deciding whether a particular kind of writing easy of difficult. Simply put, if ideas and information for writing came easily to mind the writing was easy. Usually this also meant that they could "write more". Several children said knowing that they had lots to write made them more confident about writing, and made them enjoy the task more. All the children reported that they found certain kinds of content easier to generate than others and, as will be examined more closely in chapter 7, their means of distinguishing between one kind of writing and another was largely according to what it was about.

The children identified four kinds of writing content.

1. The factual information about a topic needed for "project writing".
2. Their personal experience and/or existing knowledge.
3. Explaining and giving reasons.
4. The imaginary content of stories.

Projects — "The writing part's easy"

In the project episodes described in chapter 5, content concerns were effectively short circuited for the children by their varying strategies for "copying and/or rearranging" information from books. Indeed, some children openly acknowledged that, once they had located a suitable reference book, "the writing part was easy" for projects because they then had only to copy out the text.

"The writing part's easy — writing it out. But getting information is hard." [Joanne:Final] "[Only] copying out of a book [is easier than the n/p article]. This is the easiest of the things you have to make up out of your head." [Joanne:NP]

"Copying something is the only easier kind [than the newspaper article]." [David]

"At the start it would be hard because you've gotta try to find out the information. But the easiest would be to write it straight out and do the pictures. ...[Benito:Final]

"This [G5 Expert Book] is harder than the Health Project cos we had to use our own heads. See in that a book guided me a lot on what I was going to write and this we had to think up in our heads..." [Anna:G5]

[For the Health Project] we got all the information from books and that, so this[G5 Expert Book] would be a bit harder cos you have to think of everything out of your own brain. With that all I had to do was get it out of the book and rearrange everything."[Dorothy:G5]

"This is easier cos I had to look up for that." [When that's done] it's about the same ..that's got information. ...I'm good at looking up things to copy out." [Lee:G5&Final]
In the final analysis however, the children were unable to separate the difficulty of locating suitable information in a book to copy or "rearrange" from the actual task of writing. This accounts for their ranking of project writing in the final interview. Actually finding the information to rearrange or copy was harder than writing down what they already had in their heads. This data also signals that the children saw writing tasks as wholes and did not readily consider separately their component parts, or the sub-tasks involved.

All other writing episodes in this study involved the children in generating their own content without reference to books. Their reflections on these episodes provided most insight into how "thinking of what to write" affected their sense of task difficulty and enjoyment.

Existing knowledge and personal experience — "You've done what you're writing about"

After copying, the content the children found easiest to generate was that relating to their own knowledge and experience. The Newspaper episode illustrated this clearly. This writing was considered very easy by five of the six focal children primarily because the content was readily at hand.

"Easy, cos I knew a lot about it."
"The newspaper was easiest, I just had to write what we did, it was short." [Anna]

"It was pretty easy, it's things you can think of and you just put them down." [David]

"No problems really, it wasn't hard." "...you've done what you're writing about so you know what to write." [Dorothy]

"Easy, cos I already knew the stuff, all I had to do was just go and check it. This was just out of my head." [Benito]
"No problems really. It was easy actually cos I knew what to write already. It just popped out of my head and down onto paper."
"...actually if you had to do something on a topic you didn't know it would be hard [but] because we do them on topics that we know about it's easier." [Joanne]

The children's completed texts for this episode were in fact brief descriptions of a class activity which provided some details about how they went about doing it. Two constraints Garrard had imposed for this episode also influenced the children's selection of content for their pieces. Firstly, he instructed them to write generally about the class, rather than only about their own personal experience in the activity. Four of the six focal students managed to do this in their first drafts. Secondly, in order for the finished class newspaper to be of reasonable length, Garrard instructed the children to be brief, including only the important or interesting information. This forced the children to make some considered decisions about what they wrote.

"I could have said what each group's name was and what they were doing, but I didn't. It would've gone down to the end of the page. It really had to be short. ...I just thought of what was the main points of it, just the main idea, well you know, just the main things, not little things." [Anna]

"Oh he said just to do a short paragraph cos if you took a page then it would take about 30 pages for the newspaper." [David]

"I just included the interesting parts." [Dorothy]

"I couldn't think of any more." (No sense of length limit.) "[Extra information] would have made it boring, ... I don't think it's interesting." [Benito]

"Well you write what you have to do mainly, and what topics they were on and all the important things. And what marks Mr G was giving. ...Half a page was the most we could write otherwise it wouldn't have fitted in. I just wrote what I thought was important and ended it." [Joanne]
Journal Writing and Penpal Letters, (both involved personal narrative and/or description), were writing tasks which the children also considered easy because they could readily generate the required content.

"Journal's easy 'cos I know what's happened." [Dorothy]

"Penpal letters [are what we enjoy writing most]... you've got what to write about. You can remember things..." [Benito and Nik]

The Shotgun Writing episode provided further evidence that familiar content made writing easy for the children. All said that it was finding content easily which most influenced their decision about what to write.

"I just described my pet, my dog. I told about what he looks like and all the things he does. It was easy, I just had to think back and remember. ...I didn't write a story cos it takes too long to think of a good story." [Dorothy]

"The idea for a story just came to me so I thought I'd write it. It was pretty easy. But I didn't finish it, we didn't get enough time." [David]

"It was easy, I just wrote whatever came into my head. I didn't have to think about what to write, I know it all." [Anna]

"It's easy to write about things you've done so, that's what I did. I just described what I did. I told about Cleland and lots of other things too." [Joanne]

"I wrote about lizards cos I like them. I know a lot about lizards, I got them at home." [Lee]

"I wrote what I always write about — things I've done. Then I know what to write, it's easier. I like writing when I do a lot." [Benito]

Particularly interesting in the Shotgun episode data, however, was the range of text types selected by the focal children. There were three narrative texts — one imaginative and two personal, and three non-narrative — two descriptions and one report. This suggests that it was the accessibility of content to write about, not text type alone which was the children's major
concern in deciding what made writing easiest for them to produce. This finding offers some support for Flower's [1987:p.23] view that "the complexity of a given task.... does not depend on a text type, but on the writer's prior knowledge and the extent to which she or he is willing or able to transform it."

The finding above was also supported by the children's comments about the G5 Expert Book episode. Garrard had set this task in order to give the children more experience with informational report writing. Following the difficulties the children reported in "researching information from books" during their project work, he instructed them to select a topic about which they knew a lot so that they could focus more of their attention on language and organisational issues while writing. The children reported that this made the task easier for them. They put the G5 Expert Book task on par with the Newspaper Report in relation to difficulty.

"Nothing [is hard] you only have to write the things you know, it's easy." [David]

"I find it easy because I know a lots about the topic." [Benito:G5]

"It was easy... probably because I just know a lot about them, I just go straight through it." [Lee]

"It gave me the chance to write what I knew, it was fairly easy." [Joanne]

"Oh it's the same really cos I know a lot about that and I knew a lot about this so..." [Joanne]

"They're probably about the same cos you've experienced both of them." [Dorothy]

Writing that involved the children in narrating or describing familiar events, ideas, people and things then, was considered easy by the children because the content for such writing was easy to generate. But, such writing
was not entirely without its difficulties. Some children reported that "getting the facts right" could be a problem.

"...in a story, if you make a mistake people can't really pick it out but in non-fiction you can." [Dorothy:Final]

"I went there at the start of last year and I can't remember all the things that happened and what I saw and things, so it's a bit hard." [Benito:G5]

"[For Journal writing] I find it a bit difficult sorting out my ideas and remembering what I did." [Anna:Final]

"Well if we've done it ages ago we can't remember every detail ...that's why it's harder than argumentative and instructions." [Joanne: Final]

Except for Joanne who said that this issue was particularly problematic for her, (and thus ranked the Newspaper article as hard to do), the other children were able to deal fairly easily with minor problems such as remembering and/or sequencing past events and details.

Explaining and giving reasons — "Some things are complicated to write"

Another of Dorothy's comments about the G5 Expert Book episode illustrated the kind of content which the children found most difficult to generate. She wrote about "Softball" and included a section in her report about "Rules". This section, she noted, was harder to write than the other more descriptive sections headed "Positions" and "Uniforms" etc. where she listed information.

"...because you had to explain every single little bit in detail...there was a lot to write about with that one... There's lots more things to think about when you're writing [rules] cos you have to think about all the different sorts of rules and ways to get out, and how to make a run and things like that. But with these [uniforms, positions, equipment etc.] all you gotta do is say what you're wearing, why you wear it... It's difficult] 'cos you have to explain most of it because it's hard to say. Cos if people haven't played softball before you can't just say, "You hit the ball and run home!" You have to explain everything... The ones you had to list all you
had to do was think about what they were. Um, the positions was quite easy because I know the order they all go in and how you bat."

In contrast to Dorothy, David who wrote about "Football" opted not to include information about the rules of the game in his report.

"...it was too complicated to explain. ...it would take too long to write about the rules ...it would be too boring to write ...it would be boring reading it."

The notion that some things were "complicated to explain", and therefore difficult to write, was also raised by other children. Lee, for example, had difficulty during the Newspaper episode because he found it hard to explain how "counter changes" were made — "the ways of putting two colours together and all of that". For reasons explored in other sections of this chapter he, too, gave up the effort which such explaining involved. Indeed, most often in this study, unless they were challenged to do otherwise, the children did not often opt to go beyond describing in their texts.

"I just put down all the things I knew." [Benito:G5]

"I left out what I didn't know a lot about. ...[I ended] when I could write as much as I could on the thing, topic." [David]

Over and over again, the children told me that explanations and reasons were the most difficult content items to generate for their writing. Although Joanne and Anna said it was not the most critical issue at stake for them in deciding task difficulty, they nevertheless acknowledged that writing of this kind was challenging (and needed to be offset by other task conditions to make it manageable). On the basis of content alone the Board Game Instructions/Rules and the Persuasive Letter were considered most difficult to produce because they required explanations and reasons.
These kinds of writing demanded that the children do something other than describe and give information. Even though the topics were still within the realm of their own knowledge and experience, they had to operate on them in special ways. Benito probably summed up best where the problem lay.

"It's easier when you don't have to [explain and give reasons]. It's probably the thinking that's hard." [Benito: Final]

Benito in particular lacked the confidence to do the kind of thinking required for these kinds of writing. He felt safer and more confident with kinds he found easy and, therefore, said he enjoyed them more.

"I know what to write... I don't have to think much. I know I feel confident." [Benito: G5]

[Writing is easy] knowing what I'm going to write already, it's in my head. ...When I've got something that I know I'm gonna write or I know what I did." [Benito: Final]

When considering the issue of generating content all of the children described the Newspaper and the G5 Expert Book as easier than either Persuasive Letter or Instructions/Rules.

"...cos you didn't have to think of any argument to put up to Mr B." [Benito]

"Easier cos with persuasive letters you have to have reasons and solutions to problems ...whereas with this you don't have to make up reasons and everything." [Joanne: G5]

"This is easier cos you don't have to think of reasons and all that. You had to convince about the things you wanted changed. Here you just write down what you know." [David: G5]

"Persuasive letter is harder cos we had to think up arguments [but] this I don't have to think much I know I feel confident." [Benito: G5]

"They're pretty much the same ... cos all you had to do was write what you think and with this all you got to do is write what you know. They weren't all that hard. ...This is about everything you
know whereas with persuasive letters you have to think about, think of a good argument, so this would be easier." [Dorothy:G5]

"[Persuasive letter] was harder cos I tried to write nicely ... you have to write your reason and manners, you have to write to please ... you have to be polite ... I was trying to change his mind." [Lee:G5]

"Instructions are harder because you have to write what to do and when you're explaining it you have to make sure you explain it really easy so that the person who's reading it knows what to do..." [Joanne:G5]

"Easier than this. ... they're pretty easy, you have to think of instructions and set them out — explaining is alright." [David:G5]

"Easier there's no explaining to do [like in instructions]." [Benito:G5]

"They [instructions] might have been a bit harder because you have to, it's like the rules, you have to explain everything.... You have to explain every single little thing to know how to play the game." [Dorothy:G5]

"[That was] harder cos I've never written instructions before. It's different cos you have to explain." [Lee:G5]

"If you have good ideas it'd [persuasive writing] be easy." [Anna:Final]

Thus, when the children were challenged to operate in ways that went beyond relating known events and information, or simple description — to explain how or why something was done, to give reasons for a point of view — they found it much harder to generate appropriate content. Nevertheless, familiarity with the content did make a difference at these times. Thus, in order to write the rules section for her Softball piece, Dorothy reported using the following strategy.

"Well, when I was writing it, I thought back to the games that we played and how people were making the runs and a homer and getting out, and all sorts of different ways they got out and things like that."

"I was remembering back at the games I'd played — made it a little bit easier."
In the Persuasive Letter episode the children also reported thinking back to their personal experience in order to generate ideas and arguments. For example, Joanne said:

"Um, well, um, I would think about what I could do next and I thought about how when you were eating, ah well, when all your friends have gone off and that ... and so I decided to put all the things down that happened."

**Imagining stories — "You can just write anything"

Story writing was in the middle ground of the children's rankings of easy and difficult kinds of writing. This ranking had a lot to do with how easy they found it to come up with the content they needed. In earlier interviews they indicated that writing "the truth" was harder than "making up" content for a story. But as the study progressed it became clear that getting the facts worked out for straightforward informational writing, such as the Newspaper and the G5 Expert Book, was less difficult than working out what information and ideas to put in a story.

"...maybe this [G5 Expert Book] would have been a bit easier than the stories cos with stories you have to think up what's going to happen next and if it all makes sense and how it's going, but this was pretty straight forward. ...See, I've done this before, I know what's going to happen — how to make a run and all that. And in a story you have to think of how it's going to end, and how I am going to start the story, and the people involved are going to live... You can do this writing bit by bit, with a story you have to do it all together." [Dorothy:G5]

"This is easier cos in a story you have to make up things unless you're writing about things you already know, that would be easier." [David:G5]

"At the moment this [G5 Expert Book] is easier cos I've got no ideas in my head for stories, I just can't think of anything to write about for stories." [What's the problem?] "I don't know — getting too old!! I just can't think of anything to write about." [Anna:G5]
"Realistic writing [newspaper, journal, letters] is easier cos you know what you did, you don't have to try and think up like in the imaginary you gotta think up what the character's gonna do next or gonna fight or something. I know what I did." [Benito: Final]

"It's [newspaper] easier than writing stories" [if topic is familiar]. [Joanne:NP]

In contrast, "thinking of what to write" for an imaginative story was relatively easy when compared with the kind of "truth" demanded by instructions/rules and persuasive writing. Stories, the children believed, gave them licence to write anything that came into their heads, where they, as writers, had the power to change the details and events as they pleased. Except for Benito, they felt quite capable of weaving a story together from their imaginary information base. Hence story writing was easy. Indeed, the children's preference for imaginative writing or penpal letters most clearly arose out of the fact that they found it easier to generate content for these than for the Instructions/Rules or Persuasive Letter.

"[I like] writing imaginative...because you can think of your own ideas." (Jason)

"Fantasy ...because...I just think of something to write and it all comes into my head and I just write it down. but with this [persuasive writing] it's hard ... because I can't think of most of the things that I could get." [Alison J.:PW]

"[I prefer] story writing ... I can think up ideas ... anything can happen." (Alison L.)

"This one's harder [than stories] because you have to think of the truth. ...Because with stories you can just write what you want to write. You can't really say whether it's true or make believe or anything. But with this it's got to be true. So you wouldn't have to change it." [Nicole:PW]

"You have to have it [persuasive writing] in the right words, in stories you can just write anything, it doesn't have to be real." [Alison L.:PW]
"Stories are easier 'cos you can write anything you want but with this you have to write a certain thing ... like convincing him and that. It's hard." [David:PW]

"...you have to give good reasons but you don't need many reasons for stories and things like that. You just write anything." [Dorothy:PW]

"It's very easy to write stories, but it's not as easy to do this. ...with this it has to be real so that everyone can read and understand it." [Joanne:PW]

"With this [persuasive writing], you've just got to put main points down ... sometimes it's harder, it depends" [on whether you've got a good idea for the story.] [Dorothy:PW]

Understanding the children's perspectives on the relative ease they found in generating content for story writing relates closely to their writing strategies and understandings about the linguistic structuring of different kinds of writing. These issues are considered in chapters 8 and 7 respectively.

I wrote a lot

A final insight into the children's concern for readily being able to generate sufficient content for their writing comes from the ways in which they judged their finished texts. The children did not often make critical self-evaluations of their written texts — they were usually content with their efforts. However, when they did express concern or comment on them, their responses paralleled an important criterion by which the children self-assessed their completed projects — it almost always focused on how much they had written.

For example, when evaluating their writing for the Newspaper episode only two children suggested that they could have done better. Both were concerned about how much they had written.
"I think it's OK. ...I could have done better. I could have put more information that isn't boring." [What kind?] "Don't know." [Benito:NP]

"Actually, I think I could have put a bit more into it but it's good enough." [What else?] I don't know ... um, where people got their information from. ...I didn't think Mr G would tell me to do more or anything cos I thought it was fairly good." [Joanne:NP]

Others too commented on their completed texts according to how much they had written.

"Yeah, [I think it's] really good. I've got a fair lot done." [Lee:G5]

"I think I handled it pretty well. I wrote a lot." [Dorothy:G5]

"I think it's good. I find it easy because I know a lot about the topic." [Benito:G5]

When talking about revisions he had made and intended to make to his G5 Expert Book text, David showed that his prime concern was at the content level of his text.

"I left out what I didn't know a lot about. It's mainly the things that I know that are in here. Some important things might not be in here cos I don't know them. ...I didn't have much things on training so I took that one out. ...I crossed out training cos I don't know much on it."

"I have to fix up a few things — the shorts bit and, ... teams, heading for rules cos it's a bit different now — it was too complicated to explain; more on handballing. [But overall] it's good." [David:G5]

Similarly, in the Persuasive Letter episode some children were concerned that their letters would not be very convincing because they had only a few arguments.

"If I change that [where he repeated himself] then it's only going to be half a page and I want to convince him even more than what I should. ...so we do, so it's definite that we could have it. [If he changes it then it will be shorter]... and then there's less chance that we will get it changed." [Matthew:PW]
"I didn't have much. I didn't think he'd take any notice of me. There wasn't much there." [Alison L.]

Finally, to return to the children's preferred kinds of writing, they revealed how important their ease in generating content for writing was to their attitude towards a particular writing task.

"I think it's [G5 Expert Book] fun. I knew everything about it so it made it easier. When I was writing it felt as though I was just writing it for something to do... It was interesting... I'm pleased with what I've written... I enjoyed it. I like this writing the best and the Newspaper one. They're the same really cos I know a lot about that and I know a lot about this." [Joanne:G5]

"Yeah, [I enjoyed it because it's] easy." [Anna:G5]

Overall, the children made clear distinctions between the sort of content demanded by different writing tasks. Although they often expressed concern about writing "enough" or "a lot", the children were well aware that it was the nature of the content, not the quantity, that was hardest issue to deal with in some writing tasks.

"[Only having to write a short piece] wouldn't make any difference because ...I still wouldn't know what to do." [Joanne]

"It's easier if it's short but a long letter would still be easier than a short Newspaper Report." [Anna]

"[Length makes] no difference really. It's still hard for instructions if it's short." [Benito]

"Length makes no difference [to how hard some kinds of writing are]." [Lee]

"You don't have to think a lot but a long Journal would be easier than a short set of instructions." [Dorothy]

Clearly, how the children perceived the challenge of finding content for their writing influenced their writing preferences and performance. Chapter 7 considers how content issues dominated their distinctions between text
types. Chapter 8 examines how concern about what to write influenced and was influenced by their writing strategies.

6.6 PEOPLE ARE GOING TO READ IT

Garrard considered it important that the children had a clear sense of purpose and readership for writing tasks he set up for them to do. He operated on the belief that:

"I think that with all activities if the students see a purpose for it ...they'll be more keen to have a go at it because they can see a reason for it. It's not just a case of doing it for Mr G, there is a reason for doing it — it becomes more of a learning experience."

The children indicated that, generally, this assumption was an accurate one. When confronted with a writing task which they saw as "for no-one" the children reported that this affected both their attitude towards writing, and their performance in terms of the effort which they put in. Anna summed up her perspective on this issue nicely:

"If no-one is going to read it, what's the point?"

Dorothy's extended responses on this issue, however, indicated that, of all the focal children, she was most influenced by the reasons she perceived for doing her writing tasks. Her comments, below, were consistent with similar statements she made about doing project work (cited in chapter 5).

"You just have to explain yourself a bit more. You put more detail so they can understand what you're talking about. You put more into it if other people are going to read it." [Dorothy]

"The [persuasive letter] that was real I tried to explain it a bit more. I tried to give better reasons and real reasons and good reasons. But the other one was just in my book and I knew no-one was going to read it, it's not going off anywhere, so I didn't try, I didn't give very good reasons for that." [Dorothy]
"If the kids are going to read the stories I try to make it more imaginary or more interesting to read, not boring. Cos if they're boring, no-one will read them." [Dorothy]

"If the penpal letters were pretend you wouldn't write everything you really wanted to tell your penpal, you'd just write really quickly." [Dorothy]

"...When it's for people my age you have to think of exactly what they're going to be interested in and that, but if [it's just going in my book to be marked by the teacher] I'll just quickly write anything up, it doesn't matter if they're not interested cos no-one's going to read it. I wouldn't care about the mark." [Dorothy]

"No-one read the instructions but that didn't make a difference. I wouldn't have changed them much anyway. [But with the Board Games set] you had to put lots of detail in them so that everyone could understand how to play your game." [Dorothy]

All the children, in fact, acknowledged that they were prepared to put extra effort into their writing when they perceived 'real' reasons and readers for doing it. This, they noted, made the actual writing task harder to do.

"Sometimes I try harder when it's for other kids." [Lee]

"If it's for somebody else it's hard to work out what information to use, whether they can understand it. ...With Journal it doesn't really matter to me cos I'm writing it and Mr G. is checking for mistakes and that's it. So that doesn't really matter." [Joanne]

"...when you do write it for someone it makes it just that bit harder." [Joanne]

"It's harder cos you're actually going to send it and they're actually going to read it. You have to think about the wording, spelling." [Anna]

"A real reason makes it harder cos with Persuasive you got to think of an argument, think of what it's going to be about, um..." [He found it hard to articulate his thinking here.] [Benito]

In comparison, writing that was not for 'real' reasons was "easier".

"It's easier if it's not for real reasons. You don't have to worry about capitals and whether you've described it well and things like that."
"Knowing that you don't have to write special for anyone in particular [makes writing easier for me]. You can just write what you want and how you want it and you don't have anyone correcting it and saying that's not right. ...in my stories I don't have to come up to anyone else's standard except my own. Well, if I'm publishing it for someone else I have to have it up to a certain standard, but stories aren't meant to be perfect. You can't really get information out of a story ...it's easier when you don't have to get the facts worked out." [Joanne]

Lee, however, added more dimension to this issue. He talked at length about how his sense of audience affected him on different writing tasks. While he reached the same conclusion as the others — that writing for real readers was difficult — he also revealed far less confidence in his ability to do so successfully on certain occasions. Lee considered each writing task on its own merits and identified a point where, for him, the pressure of writing for readers other than peers and teachers was almost too much for him. Notably, this was when he wasn't sure how to do the kind of writing involved.

"It depends on what we're doing.[For example, stories for other kids?] Depends what age they are, for little kids you have to change the words around and write bigger and make pictures clear, short words. That's harder sometimes cos sometimes you can't change words and that. ...It's just the same as writing for the teacher, except we gotta write it neater."

"[The persuasive letter] to Mr B. That wasn't too hard really when you think about it, it just made it harder when I was doing it, it made it harder. They might think it's stupid, the teacher doesn't care much so long as I did it right."

"It was hard because I tried to write nicely ...you have to write your reasons and manners, you have to write to please ...you have to be polite ...I was trying to change his mind."

"Yeah, it (real reasons/readers) puts you under more pressure and you sort of ...it puts more pressure on you — with story writing it doesn't much cos I know I can do it but with instructions or a newspaper I don't know how to do it. ...my stomach turns. But it depends who it's for. If it's for the kids in the school, you know, I don't worry about it or put my best effort in."
[Writing for parents is the] same... puts you under pressure, my stomach churns a bit. ...It'd be OK after I've done it but if I know it's not good I still get worried." [Lee]

Anna also said that different readers had different affects on her. These were in relation to her attitude towards her reader and purpose for writing, and her perceptions of the expectations of different readers.

"Well, if it's for parents it has to be perfect and, but well, for the class it's got to be pretty good cos you've gotta let people understand what you're trying to get across." [Go for a 10 if it was for marks in her record] "But it's the same really, I'd just do my best work." [Anna]

"I'm not that keen on Mr B. ...I found it [persuasive writing] harder because it was to Mr B and it had to be perfect ...he's stricter. ...It's hard if it's for someone you don't really want to write to." [Anna]

[The writing I like best is] "Penpal letters because it's someone you want to write to and you know a lot about and you can tell things, you know, what happened in school and everything." [Anna:G5]

Anna summed up the irony she felt when writing for real readers and reasons.

It's harder to do the writing but easier to do it." [Anna]

She explained further by saying,

"When you're writing for someone, you know, its just easier cos ...you know what standard of work you've got to do."

For Joanne, writing for real readers and reasons made a significant difference to her easy to difficult rankings of different kinds of writing. At the time of doing the Persuasive Letter she said,

"It's fun, because you're putting up a case. It's writing your own reasons and you're going against someone really big [the deputy principal]."
Months later Joanne recalled the same enthusiasm for the task and, unlike all the other children, ranked both instructional and argumentative writing as easy to do because:

"I enjoy doing them [arguments and instructions], if I didn't enjoy it I think it would probably be harder and I'd put it down the bottom." [ie. she'd rank them as hardest to do.]

Lee, however, continued to sound a warning about the dangers of generalising about all children on the basis of majority statistics. When he felt lacking in experience and confidence with a particular kind of writing he didn't want to also have to deal with the pressure of getting it perfect for an external, and perhaps critical, readership. He described the way he would prefer to go about learning to handle less familiar writing tasks:

"I need more experience doing them really. Start off with just doing it for the teacher and then start, maybe share with the class and another class and then maybe other people." [Lee:Final]

Benito and David spoke least about readership and purpose concerns while writing. Benito seemed preoccupied with getting something, anything, down on paper, while David seemed more intent on pleasing the major audience he perceived — the teacher.

The children's attitudes towards, and engagement in, particular writing episodes were affected variously by how they perceived their readers and purposes for writing. In turn, they reported that this affected, both positively and negatively, their writing performance. Real readers and reasons for writing made the writing harder to do but they reported being more willing to take up the challenge, and put effort into, their writing. Often, this was because they enjoyed such a challenge. On the other hand, Lee found the challenge threatening if he did not feel confident of success. As noted in the
previous section, his coping strategy was to try, if possible, to avoid the task altogether.

The children's varying perceptions of the expectations of different readers were also interesting. For example, whereas Dorothy perceived her peers as responsive, even critical, readers of her writing, and said she adjusted her writing accordingly, other children had varying perceptions of the amount of extra effort required to write appropriately for their peers as readers. Indeed, Anna noted that displayed writing wasn't necessarily read by other children in the class, hinting that there were occasions when she doubted that her writing would be read and responded to by them.

Lastly, while the children spoke about their willingness to put extra effort into their writing when it was for readers and purposes they found engaging and relevant, they were less able to describe how they adjusted their writing to meet the particular demands of a writing situation. In fact, during the Newspaper episode three focal children said they did not adjust their writing at all to take account of their perceived readers. Joanne's comments on this issue illustrate a zone of confusion in relation to this point.

"[A real audience doesn't make any difference to how I write] because I'm writing my own ideas and I'm not writing anybody else's ideas..."

[What if it's just in your book for a mark?] "I don't know. I'd probably want somebody else to read it and I'd probably want to publish it or something. If it wasn't very good I wouldn't. I'd probably write it the same."

[Do you think of who's going to read it when you write?] "No, I just write and write and write."

The data reported in this section offer some interesting insights into children's individual interpretations of their audience for writing. Even
though they had the same information from Garrard in each writing episode, about readership for their writing, the focal children interpreted 'what was going on' in quite different ways. Some showed explicit concern for their readers while others seemed little influenced by the issue. Others, such as Joanne, claimed that writing for a genuine readership made her put more effort into her writing but she contradicted herself by saying she would write "the same" for no-one. This signals a need for children to identify explicitly who they are writing for, what the needs and expectations of their readers are likely to be and, how they might best go about meeting them in writing. Also, yet another instructional dilemma emerges. It lies in finding the balance between giving children the opportunity to try out their skills in a non-threatening way with the teacher as "trusted adult" [Britton:1970] and the fact that they report not really drawing on all of their resources when writing only for the teacher.

To find out more about how the children did adjust their writing to meet the needs of readers, I needed to turn to the data concerning their writing processes and strategies which is reported in chapter 8.

6.7 I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING

Throughout the episodic interviews, I became aware that the children had had very limited experience with some of the kinds of writing Garrard set up for them to do in the study. In order to check this out, in the final interview, I asked them to tell me what experience they had had in the current or previous school years with the kinds of writing that they named. Their responses are summarised in figure 6.8, which is shown below.
Figure 6.8: The focal children's recalled experience with different kinds of writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very familiar (Frequently across school years)</th>
<th>Familiar (Occasionally in previous years)</th>
<th>Unfamiliar (Only once or never done before)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Project writing</td>
<td>• Penpal/Personal Letters</td>
<td>• Persuasive Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Story (except Benito)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Instructions/Rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Journal</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Newspaper Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Informational writing (other than projects)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the exception of Benito, who reported avoiding story writing as much as possible throughout his schooling, because he found it difficult, all children reported the same general range of experience with these types of writing. This finding corroborates those of Wilkinson et al:1980; Martin:1985, Christie:1987(b), Harris and Wilkinson:1986; Hoey:1986; Medway:1986 and Wilkinson:1986. Most relevant to the present study is the support this finding offers for Martin [1985] and Christie's [1987(b)] claim that non-narrative kinds of writing are neglected in Australian primary schools.

Garrard's program was, in fact, expanding the children's writing experience into new areas. It was significant that all the children said their lack of familiarity with some types of writing, (notably all non-narrative), influenced how well they were able to do them, and how confident they felt about tackling them. Indeed, in deciding whether a type of writing was difficult or easy, Lee identified this issue as a critical factor for him.

"I find [stories] easier than other different sorts of writing like newspaper writing and things like that ...I don't even read the newspaper and that, I don't know how it's set out and things like that."
"I need more experience doing them [the kinds he found difficult] really." [Lee:Final]

"If you haven't done it before it's harder. I don't like it because it's harder. Maybe project writing I find a bit easier than the others because I've done heaps of projects before and that makes it easier because then I know what I'm doing. Same for the others. ...Instructions were sort of hard because I haven't done it before" [Anna:Final]

"I've done lots of stories — heaps. ...I'm getting used to writing them. Like if I did lots and lots of instructions I could get better at it and I could find it quite easy, but I don't do lots of them. Like if I did lots of persuasive letters I might, you know, understand how to do it and exactly what to do and just get really good at writing a persuasive letter. But I don't do lots of them." [Dorothy: Final]

"I just find it [instructions] hard. If I did more I might be better at it." [Benito:Final]

The children's comments indicate concern with what a particular kind of writing is supposed to be like — their need to know what to do, in writing, to achieve success in the piece. They point to the children's uncertainty about how to use language and organisation in certain kinds of writing — an issue also highlighted by researchers such as Martin [1985] and Christie [1986]. This uncertainty was also reflected in the children's knowledge about the linguistic features different text types, an issue which is examined closely in the next chapter.

As well as signalling the children's inexperience in actually producing certain types of writing, the data also offered insights into how the children's reading experience influenced their familiarity with, and confidence to produce, certain kinds of writing. For example in the Shotgun Writing episode Lee produced a surprisingly fluent piece of informational writing about lizards, shown on the next page.
Lizards

Lizards are cold blooded animals so they are reptiles. The blue tongue lizard is most common and is found in suburban gardens. They have a nasty bite. They have dirty little teeth and lockjaw when bite. They feed on snails, insects vegetables and egg. Their colour is grey, dingie brown, black and white. There is another one that lives also in the suburban gardens. It is called the sleepy lizard which also feeds on snails, vegetables, insects and berries. It grows about 20 cm and has thick rough scales lapping each other. It has several names, shingleback, two headed lizard, pine cone tail lizard, bogie lizard. The sleepys are slow moving animals. The blue tongue lizard is reasonably fast they grow up to 40 cm long. They protect themselves by opening their mouth and hissing. They have several enemies, other lizards, snakes and rats. They lay live young sleepy — they lay 2 and blue tongues lay up to 24 baby lizards.

I asked Lee how he knew so much about lizards and how he came to write in the way he did.

"I've been interested in them for about two years and I read about them and when I see a book about them, say reptiles, I just pass the snakes and look at the lizards and things like that. ...I remember it all cause I'm always reading it all the time."

Clearly, the "bookish" style of his writing, (my first thought was that he had copied it), was influenced by this book experience.

Similarly, during our interview about the Board Game Instructions/Rules episode, David told me that he drew on his experience with reading, and the rules and instructions of commercially produced board games to come up with his own set, shown on the next page.
INSTRUCTIONS
Recommended to 6 — adult
4 people can play
Equipment: The board, counters and dice

RULES
1. Roll the dice to see who goes first. The person who rolls the most must go first.
2. Roll the dice and go forward appropriate spaces.
3. If you get a six have another shot.
4. The first person to get to the finish is the winner.

KEY
Green: Go back appropriate spaces
Red: Go forward appropriate spaces
Blue: Normal

David was the only child in the class to so clearly distinguish between instructions and rules in his text. His use of the terms "recommended" and "appropriate" was also interesting. I asked him where he'd learned to use them. His reply was simple.

"...I just got ideas from games. ...I read books"

Lee and David's comments provide some evidence that, when writing, the children drew on the models with which their reading experiences provided them. This finding supports work examining this issue by other writers and researchers such as Smith:1982; Eckhoff:1983; Stotsky:1984 and, Comber and Badger:1987. To explore this issue further, I examined information about the children's reading preferences provided in their written "Confessions of themselves as readers" which the school librarian had asked each student in the class to complete. This included information about the kinds of reading
material each student preferred and read most often. Fiction featured in the reading preferences of all the focal children except Lee who, as he had also told me, preferred non-fiction.

The impact on the children's writing preferences, and performance, of their inexperience with certain kinds of writing seemed to amount to lack of confidence with, and avoidance of the challenge, involved in producing them. This was probably best summed up by Lee.

"With argument writing I didn't know [how to do it], and the newspaper. It worried me a bit. I thought, "Oh I'm never going to get this right". And with the instructions I thought, "I'm not going to do this", so I got Matthew to do it and he did it, cos I didn't know how to do it."

Chapter 7 examines closely the children's perceptions of the distinguishing features of different kinds of writing — what they knew explicitly about the functional and linguistic demands of each kind.
CHAPTER 7:  
THE CHILDREN'S KNOWLEDGE ABOUT DIFFERENT KINDS OF WRITING  
"I don't know why it's not the same, I just know it won't be"

7.1 INTRODUCTION  
The children's statements about what made certain kinds of writing easy or difficult revealed that they were not only sensitive to the contextual features of their writing situations but, also, that they were aware of the varying demands of different kinds of writing. Their confidence to successfully complete a writing task was influenced by whether they believed they "knew what to do and how to do it". They saw such knowledge as significant in their writing performance.

In the course of the episodic interviews with students through to the final focused interview I was alert to, and probed,

- the children's knowledge of different text types
- how, if at all, they distinguished between different types of writing, and
- how this knowledge revealed itself in the written texts they produced.

This chapter examines the data on the first two issues which constitutes some of the declarative knowledge which Hillock's [1986] refers to as one part of "the writer's repertoire". It looks at the kinds of writing the children identified in the final interview, and then describes the criteria the children used to distinguish one kind of writing from another. The third issue
concerning how the children used their knowledge as they wrote is considered in Chapter 8.

### 7.2 KINDS OF WRITING IDENTIFIED BY THE CHILDREN

During the final interview I asked the children, "How many different types or kinds of writing can you think of?" Each kind they identified was written onto a card as a focus for later discussion. All the children found this difficult to do. At some stage all referred to their "draft books" to remind them of the writing tasks they had done in the current year.

Figure 7.1, below, shows the kinds of writing (and the various labels given them) identified by each of the five children who participated in the final interview. Figure 7.2, on the next page, summarises this data according to the frequency particular types were mentioned by the children.

**Figure 7.1: Kinds of writing identified by focal children in final interview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Total Kinds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benito</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Joanne:** (9 kinds)
  - Story Writing; Topic Writing; Argumentative Writing; Penpal Letters; Report of What We've Done; Journal; Instructions; Poetry; Good/Bad Experiences.

- **Anna:** (9 kinds)
  - Story Writing; Letter Writing; Journal; Project Writing; Persuasive Writing; Instructions; Description; TV Program Summary; Newspaper Article/Report.

- **Dorothy:** (13 kinds)
  - Stories; Non-fiction; Journal; Modified Stories; Letters-Penpal; Things we're going to do; Describing; Instructions; Newspaper Articles; BTN (TV program summary); Spoonerisms; Story Plan; Computer Writing.

- **Benito:** (6 kinds)
  - Imaginative/Unrealistic/Story Writing; Realistic Writing; Persuasive Writing; Project Writing; G5 Expert Book; Instructions.

- **Lee:** (9 kinds)
  - Descriptive Writing; Imaginary/Fiction/Story Writing; Newspaper Writing; Argument Writing; Non-fiction Writing; Journal Writing; Letter Writing; TV Program Facts/Summary; Instructions/Rules.
The children’s lists were telling in themselves. They did not include kinds, which I knew they had done that year, outside of language arts time, such as science reports, lists and notes from books. As when telling me what made writing easy, difficult or fun for them, they also tended to distinguish a type
not only on the basis of text features but, also, on the situational constraints of particular episodes. Hence, for Dorothy, a modified story was different from a story she had made up completely by herself. This finding was consistent with the children's concerns when deciding whether a task was easy or difficult.

In contrast to Dorothy, Benito immediately came up with a general category which he called "realistic writing" which he defined as "being about what I did". In this category he included specific writing tasks such as Journal, Penpal Letters and the Class Newspaper Report.

In order to prompt all the children to think in this more general way, I asked them to group together items in their list that involved similar kinds of writing. This was a useful strategy for getting the children to think about the essential features they believed distinguished one kind of writing from another. It led those who had listed "describing" as a separate type to say that it could also be part of other types. Benito, however, remained unable to account for the G5 Expert Book which involved him in informational writing without "doing research" from reference material. As the comments below illustrate, the children found grouping similar types together quite difficult to do — they were unused to thinking and talking more generally about the features of different text types.

"This is hard. They're really separate you know." [Anna]

"I don't know if journals are a type of writing ... I don't know ... I'm confused." [Joanne]

"I don't know why [one kind isn't the same as another], I just know it won't be." [Lee]
Indeed, throughout the interviews the children's efforts to describe the text features that distinguished different kinds of writing were the most tentative, and uncertain, of all the issues to do with their writing that we discussed. Their comments were 'slippery'. They groped around for labels and ways of describing what was perhaps, in the main, intuitive rather than explicit knowledge. They seemed to lack the language to talk about it. Vague comments such as those below were typical and I had to work hard, often without success, to get elaboration. In answer to the question, "What kind of writing were you trying to do?" the students made comments such as the following:

"It was information we had in our minds about the stuff." [Benito:NP]

"We just had to write up about something we had done in term two." [David:NP]

"I've forgotten the name of it now. Non-fiction or something... A non-fiction book. ...you're not allowed to put in your own experiences...'cos then it would be about you and that would be like a fiction book, sort of." [David:G5]

"It's an expert book. You know a lot about it and just write up about the subject you know a lot about. ...explaining I reckon. ...you tell someone about something if they don't know anything about it you tell someone. I'm not really clear what kind of writing it [G5 Expert Book] is." [Anna:G5]

Similarly, if I challenged the children to compare two kinds of writing in ways that went beyond the bounds of the distinguishing criteria they had established, they became confused.

"Reports are facts - sometimes stories can be fact - but this is fact fact." [Anna:NP]

"A story is imaginary, Journal's not. You can have real stories but, um, it's something that you're writing about, it's not what happened to you. Cos if you're writing about what happened to you it's really a Journal. [So I couldn't tell a story about what happened to me?] That'd be a Journal - well, if you made up
When trying to identify and describe the features that distinguished particular types of writing the children often described specific features of the writing episodes rather than talk more generally about particular types of writing. For example, a Newspaper Report was not *any* newspaper report but the ones they had done that year. Therefore, the distinguishing features the children identified for "newspaper reports" included the topic and the audience for whom they wrote theirs.

"Fact about what the class has been doing. About G5 not just me. We could write about "we". It's for parents. You write in the order of what happened. Reports are facts..." [Anna]

The fact that none of the children could recall ever doing any writing of this kind before may help to account for response such as Anna's. It is difficult to generalise from only a few experiences. On the other hand, they may have done other "newspaper reports" that they hadn't recalled, but not have generalised them into a category of their own. The children's frequent inclusion of task features in their distinguishing features for some types of writing points further to their lack of familiarity with thinking and talking more generally about text types. Overall, their responses suggested that what knowledge the children had was closely tied to the particular situations in which they had actually done each kind of writing. They viewed writing tasks as wholes and considered the contextual constraints of the tasks they undertook as significant as the "within text" features of their written products.

Nevertheless, the children's comments throughout the interviews, however tentative and clumsily worded, provided valuable insights into
The children's knowledge about different kinds of writing

this aspect of their writing knowledge. By pulling together the data from all interviews I was able to find corroboration for, and elaboration of, what they said. In reporting this data I will focus on the kinds of writing most frequently mentioned by the children since:

- they reflect the major groupings that they came up with when I asked them to group similar kinds of writing together, and
- they account for all the non-narrative writing episodes I collected data about during the study.

These kinds of writing were:

- non-fiction
- story
- journal
- newspaper report
- instructions/rules
- penpal letter
- persuasive

7.3 HOW THE CHILDREN DISTINGUISHED BETWEEN KINDS OF WRITING

Writing was not all of a piece for these children. They did have criteria for distinguishing between one kind of writing and another. Primarily these were:

(i) what the writing is about (its topic or content), and
(ii) what the writing has to do (its purpose)

Less often they incorporated a third criterion — who the writing was for (its intended readers). This was closely related to purpose they perceived for particular kinds of writing. The linguistic features of different kinds of writing were, by comparison to (i) and (ii), mentioned very little by the students. (Appendix 2 provides summaries of individual student's comments about the features of each main type of writing they identified so
that the reader can gain some sense of the similarities, and variations in, the children's understandings about the features of different kinds of writing.)

What the writing is about

The students' basic criterion for distinguishing between one kind of writing and another was whether it was fact or fiction. (A distinction which students of similar age made in studies by Langer:1984 (a),(b);1985, (b); Carlin:1986 and Raphael et al:1989.) Story was the only type of writing mentioned in the category of fiction. Alluding to the entertainment function/purpose of stories the children said things such as, "They are fun to read and fun to write." Often, children would begin by saying the writing was not a "story". But, as indicated above, when confronted with the possibility that stories could also be fact, they were unable to satisfactorily explain the difference, hence statements such as Anna's that the newspaper was "fact fact".

Informational types were further distinguished according to what they were about. There were those that were about:

- a general topic that was sometimes, but not always, "researched" beforehand. It excluded the writer's personal experience and/or opinion of the topic.
- themselves as a member of a group — what "we did" and how "we felt" rather than what "I did" or "I felt" etc.
- themselves in personal writing such as journal entries and letters — what "I did" and "what I think/believe/feel".

These distinctions appear to have been influenced by Garrard's input prior to the children undertaking the G5 Expert Book and Newspaper episodes. On both of these occasions Garrard made specific mention of the
requirement that they write generally about their topics rather than describe their personal experiences.

What the writing has to do

The children also distinguished between non-story and/or factual kinds of writing according to their purpose. Those that were intended:

- to persuade someone to change or do something
- to explain how to do something, or
- to give information.

As noted in the previous chapter, the task of explaining and/or giving reasons that persuaded was a purpose many of the children said they found difficult to fulfil in writing.

Who the writing is for

Within the personal writing category of informational types of writing the students made further distinctions. All saw journal and penpal letters as distinct from each other on the basis of the likely readers of the writing, and the reasons they perceived for actually doing it. As was seen in the previous chapter, this distinction was significant in relation to the students' engagement in, and choice of, writing tasks involving personal writing.

Figure 7.3, on the next page, summarises the distinctions children made between the main kinds of writing they identified.
Figure 7.3: How the focal children distinguished between different kinds of writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACT</th>
<th>FICTION/FANTASY/IMAGINARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Persuasive</td>
<td>• Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make points; give reasons; give a good argument;</td>
<td>Make up things; characters; plot; scene; background; a fantasy place; setting; sad parts; good parts; mood change; ends in a happy way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>give solutions to problems; tell them what you want changed and how</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to change it; try to change someone’s mind; convince them; persuade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instructional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell people how to do something; you have to explain; number them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in order of what to do.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Informational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. About a topic eg. projects — information about a topic;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explaining and giving information; it has to be researched</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. About themselves as a member of a group (What &quot;we did&quot;) eg.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>class newspaper article — telling people what we’re doing; you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write what happened around the class or school; describe and explain;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it’s based on the whole class — telling what the class did.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. About themselves (What &quot;I did&quot;) - For the teacher to read eg.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>journal entries — your experiences and what you’ve done</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- For &quot;genuine&quot; reader eg. penpal letter — writing about yourself to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some-one else; asking questions about them getting information from</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The children's classification is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, it corroborates the data reported in the previous chapter. Story remained the children's basic reference point for thinking about different kinds of writing. Their classification matched their comments about the different kinds of content they identified in relation to what made writing easy or difficult for them. Their concern for issues to do with readership also entered into their classification.

Secondly, there are some interesting parallels between the children's comments about what made writing easy or difficult for them, their classification of different kinds of writing, and Wilkinson's [1986(a)] notion that language falls into three broad categories or "acts of mind" (associative, chronological, and logical). Considered together, these data support Wilkinson's suggestion that producing writing that is either "associative" or "chronological" is a less demanding task for children than the "logical".

Overall, apart from a few individual variations, all the children's texts that I examined during the study reflected the features in figure 7.3. They did not include inappropriate content in their texts, and they made linguistic choices reflecting their concern for the different writing functions which they identified. The next section considers what the children actually said of their knowledge about the linguistic features of different kinds of writing.

What the writing is like
The children demonstrated that they were very clear about differentiating between different kinds of writing according to function, content and reader constraints. However, they rarely volunteered any comments about the linguistic features of different types of writing. The data suggests that such considerations were not uppermost in their minds when talking about
The children's knowledge about different kinds of writing 165

writing. It also supports Langer's [1986] observation that children's sense of function precedes awareness of form. Even when I particularly asked for such information the children most often either misunderstood my questions, or were unable to answer them. This suggests that the children operated on whatever linguistic knowledge they did have at an intuitive or tacit level. It is possible that this influences the way they actually go about their writing. This is discussed further in Chapter 8.

Figure 7.3, shown previously, represents the understandings about different kinds of writing that were virtually common to all the focal children. However, as far as linguistic features were concerned there was little agreement or commonality in those they did mention. Figure 7.4, shown below and on the following pages, shows all comments made by the focal children about the linguistic features that distinguished particular kinds of writing.

Figure 7.4: Focal children's comments about the linguistic features of different kinds of writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STORY</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>You have to worry about whether the story makes sense and how it's going along and things like that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>You have to think up what's going to happen next and if it all makes sense and how it's going. You have to think of how it's going to end and how am I going to start the story and how the people involved are going to live — you have to do it all together. You have to think what goes into the next part of the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Characters, a fantasy place/setting; sad parts, good parts, mood change, ends in happy way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Beginning, middle and end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benito</td>
<td>Characters, plot, scene/background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Beginning, middle and end.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>Order doesn't matter cos you're only writing about one thing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>You write in the order of what happened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benito</td>
<td>Better in order of what happened (but doesn't have to be).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PERSUASIVE

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Put all the facts first, all the facts and then the reasons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>You just got to put main points down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benito</td>
<td>Tell them what you want changed and how it should be changed and maybe try it out or something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### JOURNAL

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>It can sort of go in any way, the order of the ideas doesn't matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>You just keep writing writing until you run out of things and then you just end it off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>You have to put each fact in the right order (time).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benito</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### NON-FICTION

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Set out in book form not just a little paragraph, a whole lot of different sorts of information, pictures. It has to go in order from the most important to the least important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>You put them under headings and that. Sometimes you put it from most important to least important but I don't do that much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>You have to put in sub-headings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Got to be presented well - maybe in project book, title page, diagrams, pamphlets. You gotta organise your information under sub-headings and that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benito</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 7.4 shows clearly the limited range of responses offered by the focal children on this issue. It is important to note, however, that the bias in their comments about how different kinds of writing were ordered, or organised, was influenced by my questions. This was an issue which I deliberately asked the children about, using questions during the interviews such as:

- does this kind of writing need to go in any special order?
- what made you decide to start as you did?
- what made you decide to finish as you did?

I did not, however, pose similar questions to probe the children's knowledge of the kind of vocabulary, sentence structure and style typical of various purposes and readers for, and kinds of, writing. Nevertheless, the fact that the children did not initiate comment on such features indicates such
concerns were not in the forefront of their minds when they tackled a writing task.

Although the children were far less clear, or able, to talk about the linguistic features that distinguished one type of writing from another, their written products showed at least tacit awareness of what different texts required. Insight into the children's tacit awareness of linguistic features came from my observations, and their self reports, of how they actually went about writing. This data is examined closely in the following chapter.

To sum up, the data reported in this chapter suggest that any ability the children showed to write in ways that were linguistically appropriate to their purposes, topic and readers was largely intuitive. This offers some explanation for the uncertainty with which some of the students approached unfamiliar non-narrative tasks. On these occasions they knew what to do, but were not so clear on how to do it, and what the writing should look like when done. These data also suggest that the children's acquisition and development of linguistic knowledge has been haphazard rather than systematically attended to by their teachers during their schooling. This observation has also been made by systemic linguists such as Martin [1985], Rothery [1986] and Christie [1986] who find it alarming.
CHAPTER 8: THE CHILDREN'S WRITING STRATEGIES

"It just popped out of my head and down onto paper."

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 6 dealt with the children's attitudes towards particular kinds of writing, and the influences that they perceived on their writing performance. Chapter 7 dealt with the children's explicit knowledge of the features of different kinds of writing. These insights, however, are not enough to fully understand the nature of the children's writing performance, in particular what they produced on paper in fulfilment of the tasks they were set. During the data collection period, therefore, I also considered how the children went about particular writing tasks. My purpose was to find out as much as possible about what Hillocks [1986] describes as a writer's "procedural knowledge". I was interested, therefore, in the children's strategies for writing, if and how they acted on their writing knowledge, and how, if at all, they varied their strategies according to the type of writing they were attempting or, the features of their writing context which they said influenced their efforts. In particular I wanted to find out what writing options they had available to them, and whether they had a repertoire of strategies from which to draw when tackling particular writing tasks. In this sense, I was also interested in considering a third category of writers' metacognitive knowledge suggested by Paris et al [1983]. This is "conditional knowledge" or knowing when and why to use other kinds of
information. As Paris [1986,p.119] remarks "an expert with full procedural knowledge could not adjust behaviour to changing task demands without conditional knowledge". Thus my key questions in relation to this aspect of the study were:

• How did the children's attitudes towards, and understandings about, particular writing episodes actually affect how they went about writing, and the products they produced?
• How did they use their knowledge of the features of different kinds of writing when they wrote?
• What insights did they have into writing processes?
• What range of writing strategies did they know about, and apply, before, during and after writing?

By combining this information with analyses of the children's written products I hoped to develop a more comprehensive picture of their performance as writers, than by analysing their products alone. My concern, as was Langer's [1984(c)], was not to document the children's deficits in relation to the performance of expert writers, but rather, to gain insight into what they were doing or trying to do as they wrote.

Preferred methods for collecting data on these questions would have involved observing and having students think aloud while writing. (The work of researchers such as Hayes and Flower:1980; Flower:1987; Scardamalia and Bereiter:1983; and Langer: 1986 illustrates the effectiveness of this research tool for gaining insight into adult and child writers' cognitive processes while writing.) However, such methods were beyond the resources of this study. The data it was possible to collect were the children's self-reports of their writing strategies — their recollections and descriptions of what they did before, during and after writing. On some occasions, too, I
was able to observe as children wrote and I recorded these occasions either on audio tape, (when they were working in groups), or in my field notes. For some episodes these data were collected at several points during the children's writing. Although writers may not always do what they say they do, it was possible to cross check these data in order to ensure their accuracy. To do this, I checked what the children said they did against the evidence available in their written products (notes, drafts with revisions, final copies). I also checked what the children said they did against Garrard's descriptions of the instructional advice he offered them and what he expected them to do.

The remainder of this chapter considers the data from across the non-narrative writing episodes in terms of what it reveals about the children's unaided approaches to, and strategies for, the recursive phases of pre-writing, writing and revising their texts. To do this I will focus primarily on what the children did without explicit, or structured, support from Garrard. Chapter 9 will consider some of the ways in which Garrard intervened to influence the children's strategies for writing.

8.2 THE PRE-WRITING PHASE

There was little evidence that, when left to their own devices, the children engaged in any significant kind of pre-writing, or planning, activity before they started writing. Their only reported strategy was that of thinking through as many ideas as possible before writing — illustrative of what Flower and Hayes [1980] call a "think-it-say-it" model of the composing process.

"I just thought of a list of ideas and then just writ them down...
[Dorothy:PW]
"We didn't write down [the ideas they'd thought of], we just kept them in our head as we went along." [Benito and Nik: PW]

"It's things you can think of and just put them down." [David:NP]

"I just thought of the main ideas, main things that happened and I just wrote them up sort of thing, like main points." [Anna: NP]

None of the children made notes or jottings in preparation for writing. Although Garrard allowed and encouraged them to talk with friends about their writing ideas, before and during writing, the children reported that they did not do this very much unless Garrard structured the activity so that they had to. In short, explicitly planning their writing before commencing the draft was not an approach they either used nor, indeed, saw much reason for.

"...you don't want to sit around thinking of a plan cos when I write a story I just write and the story comes in my head as I'm writing it along. I don't really think of what's going to happen at the beginning, I just write."

"When I've got, um, projects and things like that and I've got the information there with me, all I do is copy it out, if it's alright, and just rearrange it and that and I don't need a plan." [Dorothy]

"I never make plans, I just do it." [David]

A number of children were not even prepared to acknowledge that they thought at all about what they were going to write before putting pen to paper. They showed no explicit awareness, or control over, what they were doing. For them, the writing just "happened".

"It just popped out of my head and down onto paper." [Joanne:NP]

"I just write it out as I go along." [Lee: Final]

"I went straight into it. I didn't think about it or anything." [Lee: NP]
This then was the children's preferred way of operating — they operated on the belief that they could somehow tip the information out of their minds in the appropriate (organisational and linguistic) way without any kind of explicit pre-writing or planning strategy. However, when Garrard intervened to change their approach, the children did report positive effects on their writing. This data will be considered in Chapter 9.

8.3 THE WRITING PHASE

The children's basic 'head-to-paper' strategy for writing was that which they reported using as they worked towards the completion of their drafts. Dorothy and other children in the class described clearly their ongoing use of this approach.

"I just thought of a list of ideas and then just writ them down... But when I got half way through...I thought of some others and added them in." [Dorothy: PW]

"I just wrote... I had just about all the ideas in my head before I started writing, well, some things when I was writing I had to think of more ideas..." [Alison: PW]

"I just thought of ideas... and then I just tried to think of some more." [Jason: PW]

"I just wrote down and thought of them... I wrote parts down and then thought of them and thought of other things to write down." [Annette: PW]

The children's comments indicate that it was finding content to write about which dominated their thoughts while writing. It will be recalled that this issue was also central in the children's considerations of what made writing easy, difficult, or enjoyable for them. On the surface, this finding supports Bereiter and Scardamalia's [1985,p.68] observation that,
"...with children in the elementary grades, "thinking of what to write" looms as an enormous problem from beginning to end of the composing process."

It did, in fact, appear that the focal children were using a "knowledge telling" strategy [Scardamalia Bereiter and Steinbach:1984] in which these researchers describe the writer's primary concerns as being what to say next. As a result, they suggest, the writer either simply tells all that is known about the topic or, when necessary, selects from all that is known items relevant to the writing task in hand.

From the data available in this study, however, it is impossible to know exactly what kind of thinking, such as that involving mental planning or organisation of their texts, was going on as the children wrote. Whatever they were doing, it certainly was not something they were readily able to talk about, reflect on nor, perhaps, control. As the previous chapters have indicated, there is evidence that the children were concerned and thinking about a range of issues as they wrote. Their written products, self-reports and my observations did offer some insights into the nature of this thinking. Most often, these insights emerged when the children confronted problems with their writing — when the flow of their pens on the paper was interrupted by their perception that they needed to think more than usual about an issue or idea as they wrote. The following sections consider the data relating to the children's thinking during writing about:

- what to write (the content)
- how to write it (the language)
- how to set it out (the organisation)
- their reasons for writing (reader and purpose).

Each section will attempt to deal in turn with these issues. However, overlap between sections has been impossible to edit out, highlighting the
fact that, for the children, these issues were inter-related, not serial, considerations as they wrote.

Thinking about what to write

In chapter 6 I have shown that, when deciding whether a particular kind of writing was easier than another, the children were greatly preoccupied with how readily they could identify content to write about. "Thinking of ideas" also characterised their descriptions of how, generally, they went about writing. Their 'head-to-paper' approach to writing excluded any explicit pre-planning strategies which many expert writers use to ease the pressing nature of this problem as they write their drafts. [Flower:1985] Instead, the children's approach effectively kept this issue always in the forefront of their minds as they wrote.

An audio tape of a group of three boys working collaboratively on the task of writing instructions for their board game illustrates how these children thought about their content before they wrote it down. Earlier, the class had worked with Garrard to discuss features of rules and instructions for board games. Together they made a list on the blackboard of possible items to include. The group of four boys, however, ignored this content guide and proceeded through the task in a way that is characterised by the following excerpts from the transcript.

| R: Put Rules, rules on top. [Benito is the "scribe"] |
| B: My pen doesn't work....this is only a rough copy ....What's the first rule? Um, how many players. |
| N: The idea of the game. |
| B: What's the idea of the game? |
They spend a few minutes discussing this and decide to start with something else.

B: OK the second one, what's the second one?

N: The idea of the game.

More discussion about what the idea of the game is.

B: What's another one? Umm...

R&N: Equipment

This leads to a discussion about rules for using dice and how many there are to be. Benito keeps listing items of equipment as they talk. In the course of a complicated discussion about the wording of a rule a new issue accidentally emerges and is taken up by the group.

B: How can I start? Um start at the start! [Some discussion]

N: The one who throws the highest no. starts.

Benito is unsuccessful in getting the group to concentrate on the problem with the rule. Nik raises a new issue that pops into his mind.

N: How the game finishes

Again Benito tries to solve the problem about starting the game but Nik diverts attention back to the finishing rule.

N: OK number six — How to finish

More discussion to clarify how this will happen. When Benito finishes writing he asks...

B: Um, um, what's next? ..... 

N: How many players.

They decide on 2—4 and there's some discussion about where it goes on the page.

B: What's next, I can't think of anything....

N: How to set up the game.

B: Who's not going to know how to set up this game?

R: Where they start from?
During their discussion the boys are dealing with one item of content after another. But in doing this they are thinking and talking about what counts as content in this task. Together, they are trying to determine what needs to be said and why. The text they produced, shown below in draft form, was a list.

### Rules

1. age 9 to Adult  2 to 4 players

2. The idea of the game is not to land on the green triangles and to get from start to finish

3. equipment 2 dices board counters

4. Whoever throughs the highest number starts

5. If you land on a six and a 5 you have to take 5 from 6 which leaves 1

6. I you get a six you get another shot

7. Green's bad, yellow good and pink normal

8. The first one to get to the finish wins.

9. If you land on 53 and you roll a two or higher you go forward as many as you can and then go back as many
The boys' text reflects little of the effort they expended in producing it. The transcript of their discussion offers no evidence of the backward and forward looking planning which Bereiter and Scardamalia [1981] and Hayes and Flower [1980] believe distinguishes the behaviour of proficient writers. Yet, although they were dealing with one item of content at a time in "what next?" fashion, simultaneously, as will be shown in the following sections, the boys' decisions were shaped by their sense of purpose for writing, the reader needs they perceived, and thoughts about how they could word what they wanted to write. Further, their efforts at revision suggest that the boys lacked the specific genre knowledge necessary to approach this writing task in any other, perhaps more organised, way.

Thinking about what counts as content and deciding what to include in her writing was also an important issue for Dorothy during the G5 Expert Book episode. She wanted to include an explanation of the rules for playing softball and recalled clearly the challenge this presented to her. She found it hard...

"...because you had to explain every single bit in detail ...there was a lot to write about with that one. ...There's lots more things to think about when you're writing [the rules] 'cos you have to think about all the different sorts of rules and ways to get out, and how to make a run and things like that. ...'cos you have to explain most of it because it's hard to say. 'Cos if people haven't played softball before you can't just say. "You hit the ball and run home!" You have to explain everything."

Dorothy described her strategy for coping with this writing challenge.

"Well, when I was writing it, I thought back to the games that we played and how people were making the runs and a homer and getting out, and all sorts of different ways they got out and things like that. ...I was remembering back at the games I'd played — made it a bit easier."
Dorothy's writing reflects her use of this strategy — it reads as if she is "thinking aloud" on paper. Her text is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To make a run in a softball game you have to hit the ball that has been pitched to you by the pitcher and run to first base if you think you hit the ball far enough that you think you can make it to 2nd or 3rd base go for it. If you make it home without getting out that is called a Homer but if you make it home stopping at any base that's just a run. When the pitcher pitches the ball between your arm pits and your knees and you miss it that is called a strike but if the ball is pitched over your arm pits and under your knees that is called a ball. Once you have 4 balls you are allowed to go to first base without the other team being able to get you out. If you get three strikes you have to run as fast as you can to first base but if the ball gets to the base before you do your out. There are two ways of playing softball one is normal rules and the other is carnavel rules. Carnavel rules is played in a limited time of 10 minutes in that 10 minutes your team has to make as many runs as they can. When 10 minutes is up the teams swap over. In normal softball after 3 people are out the teams swap.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another example of the children's preoccupation with finding suitable content as they wrote comes from the Persuasive Writing episode. In beginning their letters the children made various attempts to use Garrard's instructional guidance concerning how to introduce their topic. Next, they wrote reasons for changing the rule they were arguing against. All the children's texts suggested, as they had also told me, that they dealt with one idea or reason at a time without considering how they might be ordered differently or more effectively. Dorothy's text was typical — a "What next?" writing strategy [Bereiter and Scardamalia:1982] is suggested by her repeated
use of "I also think ...". It is shown below in final draft form. (Included in brackets are the other parts of her letter.)

[To Mr Brown,
I am writing to you regarding the school rule which does not enable us to go behind the blue unit and on the mounds. I understand the rule at the present time because we are out of sight of the teachers but I think that the grade 5,6 and 7's are responsible enough to go there and behave themselves.]

I think that if anyone goes there they will go with their friends so if some one falls or hurts themselves one of their friends will go and tell the teacher. I also think that being behind the blue unit isn't that bad because it's the same as being at the end of the oval because the teacher can't see you very well and plus it is quicker to get behind the blue unit than to get to the end of the oval. I also think that being behind the blue unit will provide shade and you could go there and eat your food. Also on the mounds there are a lot of trees and you could sit on the steps and eat your food in the shade.

[I hope something can be done about the situation.

sign: Dorothy M.]

Dorothy described how she went about writing her text in the following way:

"I just thought of a list of ideas and then just writ them down. ... But when I got half way through I thought of some other ideas and I added them in."

During the interview relating to this episode Dorothy contrasted this type of writing with the more difficult forward/backward planning she thought was necessary in story writing.
"Sometimes [story] is a bit harder because you have to think what goes into the next part, but with this you've just got to put main points down."

However, in the final interview, Dorothy changed her mind about this saying that thinking of good arguments or reasons in persuasive writing was harder than organising ideas and events in a story. As did the other children, (as reported in chapter 6), she finally decided that identifying appropriate content, (convincing reasons), was the biggest challenge to be confronted in this task.

In contrast to the Persuasive Writing episode all the children, except Lee, considered the Newspaper Report easy because they could easily identify suitable content for it. However, even when this constraint was lessened, the children did not necessarily shift more of their attention to other writing issues. For example, of this task David said:

"It's things you can think of and just put them down."

Interpreting the task in this way influenced clearly the way David went about it. His text, shown below, reflects his claim that not only did he not do any plans but that they were unnecessary "because the order of the ideas doesn't matter." On this occasion what did matter was coming up with appropriate content.

**Story Maps**  
For the story maps we had to draw a story map in pairs. We had to choose a book and do a story map on the book. There were 20 or so books to choose from. A story map is a series of pictures which when looked at tells a story instead of writing a story. Joe and I did one one the book 'When I Chopped My Toe'. We did another one and that was on the book 'The Three Little Pigs'. 
As already noted at the beginning of this section, considering the children’s preoccupation with the issue of finding content when deciding whether a certain kind of writing was easier than another, it is not surprising that, as they wrote, content decisions were uppermost in their minds. But, as suggested in each of the examples above, although they seemed to be applying a "What next?" strategy [Bereiter and Scardamalia: 1982] it did not necessarily lead to a mindless process of memory dumping in their written texts. There was evidence, in the children’s self-reports and their written texts, that they considered the appropriateness of the information or ideas they thought of writing down. They did this according to the ways in which they interpreted the constraints of their communicative context for writing and, how they construed the demands of the writing itself. The clear, functional differentiations that the children made between different kinds of writing were also an obvious influence on their decisions about what counted as appropriate content for their writing. They seemed to be doing more than "telling all they knew".

Thinking about the language to express their ideas

During the G5 Expert Book episode Anna described a writing problem she confronted in the following way:

"[Sometimes I had trouble] trying to write up the ideas, trying to find the right words to put."

Her reported solution to this problem was:

"I just sat there for a while, I just had a quick think."

Anna was unable to say more about the nature of the thinking she did supporting Flower’s [1987, p.6] observation that:

"...much of the cognition of writing, like that of any problem solving act, is fleeting. People perform fascinating intellectual
manoeuvres, but once those manoeuvres accomplish their end, thinkers wipe the mental state, recalling only the result they struggled toward..."

However, Anna's comment illustrates a particular problem with which the children sometimes struggled as they wrote — decisions concerning how to word what they wanted to write. As they wrote they needed to find the right language to express their ideas. Some children reported that it was not only thinking of the ideas but, also, finding a way of writing them down that was hard, particularly in the Persuasive and Instructions/Rules episodes. Whereas during the episode quoted above Anna was able to solve her problem by "having a quick think" other children were not so fortunate. For example, in the Newspaper episode Lee wanted to explain how the class had made "counter changes" during an art activity. Of this task Lee said:

"I got one of the hard ones [topics] to do. ...it was hard to describe. Like it had to go round in circles and that, two different colours next to each other. It's complicated to explain. ...I couldn't figure out what to do, what to write. So I didn't do much."

Unable to work out easily, in his head, how to explain the process of making "counter changes" Lee abandoned the effort. The text he produced appears below.

```
The class made some counter changes. We had to do one each. They are circles that are made by compasses. We were only aloud to use two colours.
```

The dilemma some children faced when thinking about how to word what they wanted to write is further illustrated excerpts from the audio tape of the group of boys working on the Board Game Instructions/ Rules. (Shown on the following pages.)
The boys are trying to decide whether they will have two dice for their game and what rules will govern their use.

R: Are we going to have two dice?

B: Say if like you get a five and a two you gotta take two away from five. That's going to be hard to explain [in writing]

Some decision making about whether to have one or two dice — R rolls the dice! They ask me.

ME: With two dice the game goes faster.

B: Yeah but if we have two dices, say you get a six and a three, you take 3 from 6 and it equals 3 so you gotta move three spaces. [They vote] Majority rules but how do we explain that?

Ronald disagrees and suggests one dice again, Benito tries to explain again.

B: Like if you land on a 6 [yeah] and the other one lands on a 2 [yeah] you take 2 away from 6 and that leaves 4 so you gotta move 4 spaces.

R: Yeah so what about you can never go forward.

B: Yeah! You gotta move 4 spaces forward, not backwards.

R: OHH! So you take the lowest number away

B: From the biggest number [R: Yeah OK] and move how many is left. OK so how do we explain that?

Between them Ronald and Benito have solved the problem but they do not recognise this. Ronald continues by considering the repercussions of such a rule.

R: So you never can get 6 can ya?

B: Yeah [no] if you get two sixes, 6 take 6 is nothing so you can't move.

R: Yeah, you never can get 6, you never can move ahead 6 can ya?

B: No [see] that's good, that's good.

Nik, who has been silent for a while, tries to change the topic...
N: How to start it that's what's....

B: Hang on hang on we're doing this, what we just said then um, how do we explain it?

N: I don't know

B: Umm umm say if you land on a two dices. Say if you land on two sixes or...um....how do we explain it? Give an example or...

The discussion is diverted to another rule for several minutes, then Ronald suggests that they avoid the problem rather than try further to solve it.

R: I don't reckon we should have that subtraction bit because it's too hard to understand.

B: Yeah we should have the subtraction bit.

N: Yeah

B: How do we explain it? If you land on a 6 (R: yeah)... and a 4, you have to take 5 away from 6... (N&R: Yeah)... Shall we put that down?

R&N: Yeah

Benito starts by speaking each word aloud as he writes, writes silently, then reads aloud what he's written to the group.

B: If you throw a six and a five you have to take five from six.

R: You gotta take six from five. Oh yeah five from six.......

Oblivious to Benito's problem Nik switches to a new rule while Benito keeps writing.

N: OK number six — How to finish

R: How to finish? You know how to finish you just got to go round until it's finished!

While this discussion continues Benito goes over to look at the Monopoly rules. He says they are "no help because they look too hard to read". He returns to find the others discussing a different problem.

N: Number six! Special number, you know, when you get a shot.

B: No aren't we going to have two dices. And when you get a six, two sixes it leaves nothing and .... Yeah, so if you get a six you
have another shot so it'll make the game more exciting.

The discussion continues at length about the previous rule and good and bad squares on the board.

The dilemma is clear, particularly for Benito who's task it was to scribe for the group. As he kept asking, how were they to explain their rule in writing? Even though they came up with the solution during the discussion it did not appear in the written version which is shown below.

If you land on a six and a 5 you have to take 5 from 6 which leaves 1

After observing the boys' difficulties in "explaining", the following week, I invited all the children in the class to attempt writing an explanation of this rule for the group. I asked them to begin with, "To move forward in this game you must ....". Of the nineteen children present in the class at the time, ten were able to provide a clear, explanation of the general principle involved such as Jason's below.

To move forward in this game players must roll both dices and subtract the lowest number rolled from the highest number rolled. The answer is the number of squares you move.

Jason

The other nine children did not describe the general principle as Jason did but, instead, as did Benito, gave an example, such as Tricia's explanation on the next page.
To move forward you must throw two dices. If you get 6 and a 5 you must tack 6 from 5 and move forward 1 space.

Tricia

Another very similar problem of finding the language to convey a particular idea arose later in the boys' discussion and writing of the Board Game Instructions/Rules. On this occasion they were trying to explain to me exactly what I would have to do in order to finish playing their game.

B: How game finishes?? The game finishes at the finish! Oh the game finished um, The first one to the finish, the first one to the finish wins.

Nik dictates the above as Benito writes.

ME: Do you have to land on it exactly?

B: What?

N: Yeah

ME: What if you are here and you throw a six, what happens then?

B: 1,2,3,4,5,6 [Demonstrating]

ME: Or you can sit there and wait until you throw a one?

B: No

ME: You have to go forward and then back until you land directly on the finish?

B: If you get a two you gotta go 1,2, and you're back where you started.

ME: Are you going to put that down in the instructions?

B: I don't know how to write it though.

N: Um, er, write ... at the end.............
B: Um what was it? What's that thing you were saying?
N: How the game finishes
B: But we've already got that..... If

There is some muddley talk then Benito talks out loud as he writes.

"If you're on 53 [the last square before finish] and you roll a two or higher you gotta do as many............ "

He then reads his writing to the group and seeks their help to complete the explanation.

B: If you're on 53 and you roll a 2 or higher you what?
R: Stay there.
B: No, go forward [and then] backwards the same.
ME: So to finish you have to land exactly on the finish square?
B: Yeah ..... Go ..forwards as many [while writing] ...can ...

The written version of the rule, which Benito finally recorded for the group, is shown below.

If your on 53 and you roll a two or higher you go forward as many as you can and then go back as many

Again, when I invited all the children in the class to attempt a written explanation of this rule, (after I had demonstrated it), fewer children than before were able to do so satisfactorily. Three of the nineteen children provided a clear explanation such as the one, by David, shown on the next page.
To finish this game players must roll the exact number to get to the finish. If a player rolls more than the exact number the player has to move back the remainder of the number. For example, a player is on the second-to-last square and rolls a five, the player has move forward two, then move back four.

David

Kroll [1986] has highlighted the challenges facing students when they are trying to produce explanatory writing. However, while he concludes that his study shows that, "the principal factor underlying development ...appears to be a growing capacity to generalise information and to use higher levels of abstraction in their written explanations", it remains unclear as to how students actually learn to do this. The question remains, why were some children in Garrard's class able to write a general explanation, while others were not? Again, the notion that "logical" writing is more difficult for children than "associative or narrative" [A. Wilkinson:1986(a)] seems relevant. Whether this is due to lack of experience or cognitive immaturity also remains unclear.

Similar problems were confronted by Joanne in the Persuasive Writing episode. At the end of her draft she wrote:

away to stop people littering with the bins on the oval is to have two teacher taking notes on who has what if they say you get a punishment of picking up papers.

Joanne told me that she was concerned about what she had written.  
"Well, I thought of an idea that wasn't very good I put that there — that teachers could stand there and take notes of what kids
were eating and at the end of the day if they found that certain thing on the ground they could get those people..."

"[I had problems with] this bit, when I was writing it. I didn't really know what to say. I knew what I was saying but, umm, I couldn't really write it so that people could understand it."

Clearly the meaning Joanne intended to communicate did not come easily to her but at least she was aware that a problem existed, and that she needed to do something about it. Ultimately, Joanne deleted the entire idea from her letter but not, as Lee had done, because the problem was too hard to solve. Rather, she told me that she considered it an unrealistic solution to the problem of litter on the oval and, showing sensitivity to her readership, that Mr B would think it was "stupid".

"...because it will take too much time, like having notes and papers and that. Mr B won't be convinced cos he's a fairly strict teacher and its going to take a lot of trouble and time up ...cos we'll have to take more bins on the oval and things like that."

From the examples above it seems then that the children's complaint that "you gotta think what to write" was not only isolated to coming up with the content or ideas for non-narrative writing. They also had to think about the language that would carry their ideas for them — on some occasions they found this hard to do. Struggling with such concerns clearly took up varying amounts of the children's thinking time when it became a focus of their attention while writing. However, the interesting thing was that the children rarely, if ever, tried out different ways of expressing their ideas in writing before selecting that which they thought was best. Their drafts reflected few if any, during writing changes to their texts. Rather, they appeared to do all the thinking in their heads and, having written something they deemed satisfactory, (or having avoided the problem altogether), left that problem and moved on to the next idea or piece of information they were going to deal with. Unfortunately, the outcome of
this process was not always adequate. For example, in his persuasive letter
Benito wrote what appeared to be an opposing argument to his thesis that
children should be allowed to ride their bikes on the oval path.

The path is too narrow to walk on when other people are going
the other way with their bikes and the peddles might get caught
and we might fall over and get hurt.

Thinking about how to organise their writing
Chapter 7 showed that, overall, the children had little explicit knowledge of
the organisational features of different kinds of texts. All indicated to me
that writing a story involved thinking about how it was "going along".
Indeed, Benito disliked writing stories because he found this hard to do.
Although the children were able to describe the larger organisational
patterns in "topic writing" such as headings and sub-headings, they were less
explicit and consistent in their comments about the organisation of texts that
were not stories.

Nevertheless, as they wrote, the children reported making some
organisational decisions about their writing which were reflected in the texts
they produced. Even when they did not specifically comment on this issue,
their written products were evidence enough of some intuitive
understandings about this issue at work.

As already noted in chapter 6 the children all said that Journal Writing was
the easiest kind of writing they had to do in school. In large part, this was
because the content was readily at hand — reporting or reflecting on things
that had happened to them in their daily lives. Most said that this kind of
writing involved chronological organisation of the information — "You do it in the order that it happened". It was interesting that Anna, one of the most competent writers in the class noted that she did not always find this easy. She therefore ranked Journal writing among the kinds which gave her a "bit of trouble".

"I find it a bit difficult sorting out my ideas and remembering what I did."

A number of the children also saw that the Newspaper Report lent itself to chronological organisation. However, although both Anna and Dorothy said they used this structure, their texts did not reflect this.

"...it's in the time order of what happened." [Anna:NP]

Anna's text

![G5 COUNTDOWN SHOW](image)

"Oh I just wrote from the beginning of the disco, when it started and the time and all that. And then to the end where I said the disco was really good. I just started with the beginning of the disco and as I went through I just kept on going." [Dorothy:NP]

Dorothy's text is shown on the next page.
Disco

Last term we had an end of term disco it was really great. It started at 8.00 and ended at 9.00 all the kids from grade 5, 6, and 7 who wanted to come came. A committee was organized to be responsible and to set up everything on the day. You had to pay 50c for a ticket to get in. The committee was responsible of getting the music and making sure there was enough music for the whole night. Mrs Steinburg helped the committee get the speakers ready and helped them with any problems. Mr Garrard and Miss knauhease were the teachers supervising and they did a great job. The disco was a big success and everyone enjoyed themselves.

Dorothy

Benito organised his Newspaper Report chronologically but, during the interview about it, he was unable to say this was what he was doing. Instead he worked on a tacit understanding. As he said:

"What just came into my head I put down."

Benito's Newspaper text

Spor Information books
Last month the whole class did a sports information book together on touch football it worked out really good. Then the week after we got into 5 groups and we each did a different kind of sport. One group did table tennis another did volley ball, another did hockey and another did Netball and they all came out very good and colourful.

Benito

When their writing tasks demanded something other than a chronological unfolding of events the children usually approached the task in one of two ways. They either listed items of information as they came to mind, (as
indicated by Dorothy and Anna's Newspaper texts above), or they consciously tried other organisational structures for their texts.

When coming up with appropriate content was a challenge for the children they tended to resort to a listing strategy as they wrote. This was obvious in the body of Dorothy's persuasive piece, shown on p.180. However, some children also used this approach even when the content was not difficult to generate. David's newspaper text shown on p.181 illustrates that he did not construe the task of writing this piece as involving anything other than putting down what he knew in the order that it came to mind. Indeed, he told me that "the order of the ideas doesn't matter". I found this a particularly interesting comment considering the superior organisation of his first term Newspaper report, which appears below.

Computers
In our class we have got two Amstrads 128s with two monitors and a disc drive. There is Taswords and Logo. Taswords is a much more complicated Bank Street Writer. // Half the class has been making a Softball book. They are going to type it in and print it out. The other half is doing one too. Sometimes when we have finished Maths or Spelling we can play games on the computer. There are ten games that we have got. We can also use it to publish our own stories.

In the text above David made a conscious decision to write an introductory sentence for his piece. In fact, the first two sentences of his report were written last in his draft and inserted at the beginning in his final copy. I asked him why he had done this.

"It's a bit of an introduction, otherwise they [readers] wouldn't know what you were talking about."
For his term two report, however, David was content to leave his "introduction" in the middle of his text even though this decision resulted in a less connected piece. His decision suggests that thinking about the organisation of his writing was not an automatic response for David as he wrote. It is also possible that he was not as engaged with the task and as concerned about his readers when writing the term two piece.

Joanne also elected to write a simple description using a listing strategy in her Newspaper Report. Although she did this by following on from a topic sentence, she too seems to have interpreted the task as one of fact telling. Her final draft appears below.

```
Technology projects
We have just finished our technology projects. I did mine on television other people did theirs on aeroplanes, cars and the telephone. Most people did theirs on television. We had to write away and get pamphlets. We did them on a backdrop which we papier mached then we painted it different colours. Mr garrard is giving the projects something out of 50.

Joanne
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During the G5 Expert Book episode the focal children showed varying understanding about and concern for introductory or topic sentences in their factual reports. Garrard had helped the children identify content and major headings for their writing, but he left it up to them to decide how to write their information up under each heading. (The significance of this pre-writing strategy is considered in the next chapter.) Both Anna and Dorothy said that they deliberately organised sections of their texts by writing first a
topic sentence, and then following with supporting details. For example, Anna began her section on "Positions" with the following:

| There are seven positions on a netball court (that's seven each team) they are ..... |

Anna told me she did this because,

"It sounds right, you can't just go, really putting goal attack — you've got to have words in front of it. ...I introduced my subject first and then I started writing up my ideas."

Dorothy was less explicit about what she was doing, but she too, used an introductory strategy for 5/7 sections in her draft. For example, her section on "Uniforms" began as follows:

| In a game of softball the players have to wear a uniform. They are worn so that you can tell one team from the other. The uniform is mostly made up of ..... |

She explained her strategy in the following way.

"...I started off by saying that every game you have to wear a uniform and why the uniforms are worn..." [Why?] "That just like starts it off and then I told what the uniform was." [Why?] "It makes a bit more sense... it makes it sound better." ...I put some introductions and that, then just told about the heading."

While drafting her G5 Expert Book piece about "Queensland", Joanne also showed conscious concern for writing introductions to each of her sections. When I asked her if she were having any problems with her writing she identified this as a major challenge.
"...what to write before, like what to write at the beginning [of each section]. ... an easy way of explaining it... an introduction."

I asked her to show me what she had done.

"Well, for Towns I put that, "There are many big and little towns in Queensland." and then I went back to [my ideas list for] Towns, and I named them. And I did the same with all of them, except that I added the bits that I knew."[ie. new ideas that came to her, not on the list.]

She did this for three of her four sections, She explained that "Wildlife" didn't need an introduction "because everybody has wildlife, animals." (Her logic here seemed to be that, as far as she's, concerned there is nothing different about Queensland wildlife to that of other states, therefore the section needs no introduction.)

She was not happy with the introduction she wrote for "Towns":

"I don't think the bit about the big and little towns is very good, and I don't know what to put in its place."

Joanne did not try alternative ways of introducing this section of her text by writing them down for perusal —.perhaps, because she lacked the linguistic resources to do so. Whatever her reasons, she left the problem and moved on to the next section.

Joanne also had some thoughts on the way she finished each section:

"I just finished it off so that when they read it they wouldn't think like, you know, I've read half way through it and then it got cut off."

She didn't put endings on all her sections because, she said, she was unable to think of one that would work. Again, there was no evidence of her trying out possibilities on paper.
Joanne summed up succinctly the organisational understanding she was working from for this kind of writing:

"You have to have the introduction at the front and an ending and then in the middle you can have anything."

She also highlighted how she felt about this aspect of the task which, overall, she said was easy because she knew a lot about the topic.

[The easiest part of doing this writing] "is the list of information about the thing. Introductions and the headings wasn't as easy as about the topic itself."

In contrast to the three girls, the three focal boys showed much less concern for the organisation of each section of their G5 Expert Book texts. David's writing reflected little sense of organisation other than an attempt to deal successively with each idea on his previously brainstormed list. I asked him if he had any special way of beginning each section.

"No, I just started writing my ideas."

Likewise I asked him about how he ended each section.

"Just ending my ideas. [I finished] when I could write as much as I could on the thing, topic."

An extract from David's text is shown on the next page.
The equipment used in a football game are goal posts and point posts to decide whether it is a goal or a point. The seats are for sitting down on. Some ovals haven't even got seats. The football is an egg shape and varies from size to size as different age-groups play.

**Uniform**
There are lots of types of footy boots for example Dadora, Puma, Adidas and Dunlop. Some footy boots have screw-in sprigs. They are sprigs which you can screw off and wear like shoes. Gernseys come in sleeveless or sleeves.

**The Oval**
The size of the oval depends on the age-group who is playing. Except in Mini-League they play on a full size oval. There are 18 positions on a football field for U13 and above. These are the positions. 1/2 Forward Pocket 3 Full Forward, 4/6 Half forward Flank, 5 Centre Half Forward, 7/9 Wing, 16 Rover, 17 Ruck Rover, 8 Ruck, 18 Centre, 10/12 Half Back Flank, 11 Centre Half Back, 13/15 Back Pocket, 14 Full Back.

Benito had completed drafting two sections when I spoke to him about his writing. He too, used his previously brainstormed and categorised lists of ideas to guide his writing of each section. His writing strategy was simply to treat one idea at a time. He showed no awareness of, or strategies for, organising each section in any way. Benito's draft is shown on the next page.
Expert Book

History
The caves in the Flinders rangers have been there all the time but the Aboriginal have painted in them. The Kanyaka ruins is just off the main road, between Hawker and Quorn the ruins show how the houses were built a long time ago.

Wildlife
There are lots of fly's in the Flinders Ranges and they all go all over the back of people and anoy the people. There are lot's of kokatoo's in the trees at the Flinder's Range's and they are always chirping. Up near St Mary's Peak there are lot's of lizards there are Geckos, skinks,. Every morning the birds chirp and they wake people up. There are Kookuburas, kokatoo's, rosella's, badgie's. On the tracks through the mountains there are lot's of rabitts white ones black ones.

[Interesting Places; Recreation Activities; and Land Forms were headings yet to be completed.]

Finally, Lee was insistent in describing his writing strategy in the following way.

"I just wrote it straight away, like that." [No special order?] ...straight out of my head."

Lee's text however, showed at least an intuitive sense of idea organisation since he put obvious groups of ideas together rather than writing directly from his list. He also wrote a general introductory paragraph. Lee eventually described his strategy as one of writing ideas in order "from most important to least important". His text is shown on the next page.
**Sleepy Lizards**

The sleepy Lizard is known as the stumpy tail lizard, it has several names as shingleback, two headed lizard gogie tail and the pine cone lizard its tail looks like its head and cun mistaken. the arnt very fast mooving and dont go any further than a km

**Colours**

There colours come to a range of yellow, black, grey orange brown and white which helps them to be camouflaged in brs (?) bushes grass and shrubs and sometime on the sand

**Texture**

they have a rough and hard back with over lapings scales whisc gives them protection from predarters which are looking for something to eat and cant get there teeth through there back

**The babies**

they have two babies when the second one comes out in a sack because it is weekest and also is atached with a cord and the mother will eat the sack away and the cord. then the babies is free. Once born the mother doesn't look after the babies. but they dont always have 2 babies. if they do have one it will sometimes come out in a sack and will come out healthy and big.

**If you get bitten by one**

when a sleepy lizard bites you it will lock jaw and want let go. you have to kill it to be able to get it of when its off it will swell and you will need a needle.

**Size**

The sleepy lizard dosnt grow very long but can grow to about 35 cm

Overall then, the children had differing perceptions of the need to write topic sentences for each section of their informational pieces. Dorothy and Anna automatically, and easily, wrote "introductions" for most of their sections. They were also able to talk about the function of this organisational strategy in their writing. So too was Joanne, except she acknowledged this as more difficult to write than the other parts of her text. She, alone, also expressed concern for an "ending" or summary statement for each section.
On the other hand, Lee provided topic sentences but was unaware of his use of this strategy and its function in his writing. Rather, he operated intuitively on tacit knowledge which he had most likely gained from extensive reading about lizards in non-fiction books. In contrast to Lee, David who, during the project episodes had been able to tell me about the function of topic sentences in the non-fiction books he was reading, did not transfer this understanding to his own informational writing. Lastly, Benito neither talked about nor showed awareness of the need for topic sentences in his own writing.

I have dealt at length with this issue in order to illustrate how children's use of organisational devices, such as topic sentences, in their writing might be influenced by a number of things. Firstly, and obviously, children need to know about such devices and how they work in writing. Of the six focal students only Benito seemed to lack such knowledge. Secondly, knowledge about the functions organisational devices serve in other people's texts does not necessarily transfer to use in one's own writing, as evidenced by David. Thirdly, even knowing what is needed and why, as Joanne did, is no guarantee of competence. This knowledge presented Joanne with a writing problem which she could only partly solve. Fourthly, Dorothy showed how an automatic organisational writing strategy can be disrupted by concern for other, more immediate writing problems. She was so preoccupied with working out what she was going to write in the rules section of her G5 Expert Book text that, as can be seen from her draft shown on p.179, it lacked the organisation of her other sections.

It was unfortunate that Dorothy did not take her writing for the G5 Expert Book beyond the draft stage. This would have offered insights into whether, in reviewing her text, she added introductions to the sections that were
missing them. As she said of this kind of writing later, "You can do it bit by bit", implying that each section of her total piece did not need to be closely connected with the others. Only Anna managed to consistently write introductions for the various sections of her draft G5 Expert Book text.

This variation between the children's explicit awareness of organisational issues when writing and their actual use of organisational features in their finished texts was quite typical of all the writing episodes. Indeed, in the Persuasive Writing episode the children seemed not to notice that their writing lacked structure. What is more, different children showed different awareness of, and willingness to grapple with, organisational issues during different writing episodes. Whereas David seemed oblivious to organisational issues in the G5 Expert Book and Newspaper episodes he nevertheless showed such concern when writing stories and during the Persuasive Writing and Board Game Instructions/Rules episodes. David's organised set of instructions was shown on p.152. As already noted, he was drawing on his experience with board games to do this writing. During the Persuasive Writing episode he told me that he was drawing on his experience of writing stories in order to organise his letter. His notion of the need to "wrap up" or end his letter was interesting.

"...when I was a couple of years younger I did like a beginning and a middle and an end. At the end had to be sort of wrapping it up. The beginning tells you what the story is about, and the middle is what the whole story is about."

David's use of this simple structural frame for his writing, in conjunction with the one offered by Garrard when he introduced the task, seems to have been a useful strategy. David's letter, in draft form with the changes he made both during and after writing, is shown on the next page.
Dear Mr. Brown,
I understand why we are not having skateboarding anymore. People use to skateboard without supervision and because Mr K is taking table-tennis and hasn't got enough time to take skateboarding and rollerskating. I think we should have it because it's fun and its not as dangerous as riding on the road or on the footpath at home. 1. Cars could back out from the driveways and knock us over but at school there's no dangers. 1) 2. The lunch shed surface is smoother than the road or footpath and 3) cars could knock you over on the road.

If we do have it which I we hope, 1 plus We We have it rollerskating on Tuesday at 1.00 p.m.—1.20 p.m. and re skateboarding on Wednesday from 1.00 p.m. — 1.20 p.m. in the primary yard lunch shed.

Yours sincerely David

Further insights into this aspect of the children's thinking while writing is provided in the section which looks at how the children revised their drafts.

Thinking about their purposes and readers
As reported in chapter 6 the children said that they tried harder when their writing was for purposes they saw as worthwhile and for readers they perceived as genuinely interested in what they had to say. But, apart from Dorothy, the children were generally unable to say exactly how they adjusted their writing for their perceived purposes and readers. Nevertheless these issues clearly had an ongoing influence as the children were writing. They were not issues they thought about before writing and then put to one side once they started writing.
A clear illustration of how the children's writing behaviours could be influenced by their perception of purpose, and reader needs, came from the transcript of the three boys working on their Board Game Instructions/Rules. While they were embroiled in their efforts to explain their complicated forward moving rule, Ronald questioned the relevance of the entire task.

BEN: No, aren't we going to have two dices? And when you get a six, two sixes it leaves nothing and... Yeah, so if you get a six you have another shot so it'll make the game more exciting.

RON: But, people might just go round and play it without looking at the rules.

BEN: If they don't look at the rules they don't know how to play.

RON: Yeah. Anyone would just do it like a normal thing. Wouldn't they? (Looking at Nik.)

NIK: Yeah.

RON: They wouldn't look at the rules.

And a little later:

BEN: What's next? I can't think of anything...

NIK: How to set up the game.

BEN: Who's not going to know how to set up this game?

In these brief exchanges the boys are really discussing and raising doubts about the communicative function of the writing they are engaged in. As described earlier, before this discussion they had spent a lot of time trying to work out how to explain, in writing, a particular procedure for dice throwing and moving which they wanted to include in their text. As scribe for the group, and not himself a very proficient writer, Benito kept asking
the group, "Well how do I write that?" Unfortunately the solution also didn't come easily to either of the other boys. They had confronted a very real writing difficulty and the challenge was to find a solution. It was at this point that the boys began to doubt the communicative reasons for their writing. In effect, Ronald's message to Benito, above, was that it just wasn't worth worrying about, and that they should leave it out since, "no-one's going to read the rules anyway." Similarly, Benito later considered that, despite the list of suggestions on the blackboard, for what to include in their instructions, writing down how their game should be set up was also a waste of time. As he explained to me when I asked them why they had not included it:

| BEN: It was simple anyone would know how to do it. |
| RON: Yeah, you don't even have to do anything. |

The group relented a little in view of Garrard's advice to consult the blackboarded ideas. The discussion continued as follows:

| RON: Put start at the start. |
| BEN: Where else do you start!! [Then looking at blackboard again] How game finishes?? The game finishes at the finish! Oh, the game finished, um,[writing] The first one to the finish, the first one to the finish wins. |

The significant issue here is that the boys were unwilling to spend more time and effort on trying to resolve their problems, or indeed, to seek the help of the teacher. They seriously doubted the real need to do so. Instead, they quickly completed the requirements Garrard had put on the board and went back to decorating their game.
The group's doubts about the genuine need for a set of instructions for their board game, in order that it be played by other children turned out to be quite justified. Later, on several occasions, I checked whether or not the children in the class actually read them before playing. In particular, I asked Ronald who told me:

"The kids just played it their way and they got mixed up. They ended up just like a normal game. They got through but they didn't play it properly. ...We should have just left it like a normal board game. No-one played it the way we wrote anyway."

Benito backed up his view:

"No, I don't think they did [read them]. They just played it as a normal board game, how they thought it should be played."

A number of other children also confirmed the view that the Instructions/Rules were ultimately redundant to the children's playing of the games. For example, Dorothy told me:

"...Some read the instructions but some just saw the game and said, "This is how you play it" and they played it. Some got it right and some played it wrong. But that didn't really matter, they just played. The instructions weren't really that important, oh maybe just a bit to tell you what to do when you came to a little flap and things like that."[Final]

What is interesting here is how different children responded, in different ways, to their perception of purpose, and readers, for their Instructions/Rules. Dorothy, and indeed a group of girls whom I observed writing, did not seem to raise any doubts about the purpose of the writing as they were doing it. But they did not confront difficulties. On the other hand, the children who found the task difficult seemed most likely to be the ones who would search for the reason that would make further effort on their part worthwhile. If they doubted the reason for doing the writing they were
likely to put less effort into it or, indeed, to abandon it altogether as another pair, Lee and Matthew, did. The snippets of conversation above indicate that children's sense of communicative purpose can have a strong impact on whether or not they are prepared to struggle with the mental work needed to solve the difficulties posed by a particular writing task.

This principle was again illustrated in the G5 Expert Book task. Both David and Dorothy wrote about sports they played. Both considered including the rules of the game in their writing but only Dorothy actually did so. As mentioned earlier, David's decision was clearly influenced by the difficulty he saw in explaining the rules. However, he also said that he thought his readers would find it "boring". Which explanation was his predominant concern is impossible to know but his comments do suggest that his sense of readership and, indeed, his sense of purpose for the writing were influencing his decisions as he wrote. Indeed, when I asked David why he thought he was doing this writing task he said:

"...we have to sort of put down on paper what we know most about. ...I think because we have to do everything out of our own heads every term or something."

Despite Garrard's clear introduction to the task, and his efforts to set up an engaging context for the writing episode, David's response does not suggest that he interpreted the task in this way. Nor does it reflect a clear rhetorical purpose for writing — that of writing to inform his peers about a topic on which he has particular expertise. Rather, David appears to have perceived the task quite vaguely as something Garrard directed him to do as a part of "doing school". Given this situation, it is probably not surprising that David did not engage enthusiastically with his writing.
However, lack of clarity about their purpose for writing did not necessarily interfere with other children's writing efforts during this episode. Although all the focal children were clear about who they were writing for — their peers — in response to my question, "Why were you writing this?" all but one offered explanations similar to David's.

"It's just for an export book and it's what you know about the topic. Expert book. It's what, how much you know about a certain topic..." [Joanne:G5]

"We had to write about a thing we knew a lot about. [Why?] I don't know why. I don't think he's really told us. ...I don't know, I think we're just making up a big book." [Later however, Anna indicated that she wanted to publish her writing] "cos I want other people to know, learn more about Netball." [Anna:G5]

"So other people get to learn [what he knows about]. [Benito:G5]

"It was about the thing we knew most about and we were doing it to see how much we could pull out of our brains I think ...write about without using books and all that, by ourselves..." [Dorothy:G5]

"To see what we know; it's time to write another book; ... to see how we set it out and that..." [Lee:G5]

Only Benito clearly interpreted the purpose of the task as Garrard intended. Despite this other children, unlike David, displayed a strong sense of purpose and reader needs which shaped their decisions while they wrote. Dorothy, for example, revealed this when she described why writing her rules section was difficult.

"...because you had to explain every single bit in detail... 'Cos if people haven't played softball before you can't just say. "You hit the ball and run home!" You have to explain everything."

Similarly, Joanne said:

"...I had to write it more grown up. ...it's something which lots of people are going to read. ...it has to be like someone getting an encyclopedia and getting information on it."
There was other evidence that the children's perceptions of their reasons for writing influenced more than the general effort they were prepared to put into a task. During the Newspaper episode all the children identified parents of children in the class as their main readership. In keeping with this, Garrard instructed the children to write generally about the class rather than only about themselves and what they did during the activity they were to report on. He therefore focused his introduction to the task on:

"...it not being such a personal thing and to make it a bit more considerate of the audience they're writing for — to make it interesting and informative. That's what we talked about. ...I didn't really want a personal view I just wanted a general report about what the whole class did, not what individuals did."

All the focal children, except David and Joanne, managed to do this in their first draft. As three explained:

"It's not based on you, it's based on the whole class. ...the journal that I wrote, that was all my own thing, this was a report on what the class had done." [Anna:NP]

"We weren't allowed to use what we did or something... cos then you're only sharing what you did, not what the class did." [Lee:NP]

"I didn't write anything about me, I just wrote about the disco." [Dorothy:NP]

Joanne modified her text after a discussion with Garrard. Her original draft and her modified version appear on the next page.
Joanne's original draft

Technology Projects
We have just finished our technology projects. I did mine on television other people did theirs on aeroplanes, cars and the telephone. Most people did theirs on television. We had to write away and get pamphlets. We did them on a backdrop which we paper mached then we painted it different colours. Mr garrard is giving the projects something out of 50.

Joanne's version after discussion with Garrard.

Technology projects
We have just finished our technology projects. People did theirs on aeroplanes, cars and the telephone. Most people did theirs on television. We had to write away and get pamphlets. We did them on a backdrop which we papier mached then we painted it different colours. Mr garrard is giving the projects something out of 50.

Joanne explained what she understood about her "writing conference" [Graves:1983] with Garrard in the following way.

"... It's not just about mine ... it's about the class' Technology Projects. ...When you're giving information to somebody you don't really put your own experiences in there ... I put what I did mine on because this wasn't for publishing a book." [Why did Mr Garrard cross out your original sentence?]
"Well he crossed out my example, cos I had "I did mine on ...." and he put "People did theirs on ..." [Why?]
"I suppose cos when you're giving information to other people they don't even probably know who you are so they don't want to know what you did, they just want to know about the topic. [What he put] is saying all the kinds of things whereas this is just my own experience, sounds selfish I suppose, "I did..."

Joanne later transferred what she had learned from Garrard about reader needs, and personal/impersonal style and content, to the G5 Expert Book
episode. She told me she considered the needs of her readers when thinking about what she was writing during this episode.

"Well, I thought if someone else was reading it they wouldn't really want to know what you did cos when you look in an encyclopedia you don't know about who's written in it. ...[My readers will] find out about the towns, islands and wildlife and activities and things to do there [Queensland] — not just what I thought was good. ...I think it's really good actually cos then people can get a lot more information from it, whereas if you had "I went ...", it wouldn't be very useful ...because you're only putting in things that you liked and what you did and not the rest of it."

In this way Joanne's awareness of reader needs was shaping her decisions about what counted as content in this writing episode.

Finally, as it was for most students in the Newspaper episode, during the Persuasive Writing episode the children's sense of reader and purpose was particularly strong — they were writing to convince the "strict" deputy principal to change a school rule. In this episode all children were clear about their purpose for writing. For example, they said things such as:

"We're writing to change the rules we want... to convince him that we could have those rules." [David:PW]

One of the biggest writing challenges for the children in this episode was, therefore, identifying convincing reasons for changing the rule. This helps to explain further why the children found generating content for this episode particularly difficult. They reported thinking about, and making decisions, as they wrote according to their reasons for writing. For example, Matthew was aware that he had repeated himself in his letter but he was reluctant to delete the repetition.

"If I change that then it's only going to be half a page and I want to convince him even more than what I should. ...so we do, so it's definite that we could have it."
[So if you change it you’re worried it will be shorter?]
"Yeah, and then there's less chance that we will get it changed."

Dorothy was definite that she would not have written as well if she were pretending to write to the government about changing a law.

"Yeah, it would be different because you wouldn't think of all the tiny little points that you need and just put down as many as you can ...instead of thinking right through it."

Alison, like Matthew was worried about the length of her letter because she only had two points which she thought would not be convincing for her reader.

"I didn't have much. I didn't think he'd take any notice of me. There wasn't much there." [Alison L.]

To sum up the children reported that their sense of both reader and purpose — their reasons — for writing had varying effects on how they actually went about doing it. Where these were not felt strongly some children, particularly those who found the task difficult, seemed less likely to take up the challenges presented by some writing episodes. On the other hand, it must also be remembered that Lee said he felt the demands of writing for some readers too threatening (see chapter 6). As a result he tried to avoid writing for them. Overall, the children's different interpretations of, and responses to, the 'purposeful' contexts Garrard tried to set up for his students' writing tasks are significant when trying to explain an individual child's performance during a particular writing episode. Such issues can shape the ways in which children represent the task to themselves and influence the strategies they use when writing. This finding is supported by Kroll [1984] who analysed nine-year-olds' persuasive letters. He noted that, contrary to the findings of earlier research, they were able to adapt the letters to their readers' needs. He attributes the children's success to the:
"...appealing" nature of the task — "well defined readers, a clear purpose, and with a plausible reason for composing ...created conditions under which these young writers could display their competence in audience-adapted writing".

8.4 THE REVISING PHASE

A routine expectation in Garrard's classroom was that the children would draft and revise written work done for publication purposes, (such as making books), or for readers outside of the classroom, (such as the newspaper and persuasive letter). However, the children did not necessarily perceive this as an opportunity to review, and change, what they had written in any significant way. Rather, as a result of their writing efforts described above the children expected the text to "arrive" on paper in near final form. Their first drafts were almost always very similar to their last. Revisions were limited to minor structural changes, insertions and deletions, (most often made during writing), and proofreading for errors in spelling and other conventions. In the writing episodes documented in this study there was little evidence of children making, of their own accord, significant content, language or organisational revisions to their written texts between draft and final copy stages. Rather, this was the time that they set aside for thinking about the mechanics of their writing — whether such things as the spelling and punctuation were correct.

I asked the children what purpose they saw for the process of drafting and revising their written work. Some perceived it as somewhat tedious way of ensuring that the conventions were correct in their final products. Even when they were aware of the possibility of making significant changes to the content they reported rarely if ever doing this. In the main, revisions were limited to changes they made during the process of writing the first draft.
"A rough draft is just to get all your spelling and that right, ah, so that you don't get anything wrong. ...[You do drafts] to make the writing look better ... so that in the final thing you won't have so many spelling mistakes, so much crossing out and liquid paper everywhere. If I think of something and write it down and I don't like it then I'll have to cross it out and use liquid paper and it looks messy." [Anna]

"I think draft copies are a waste of time if you know what you're going to write already. ...it doesn't really help 'cos you're doing the good copy the same as the draft." [Joanne]

"Sometimes I change my draft around, I might have spelt a word wrong and maybe punctuation. I might change the order around in non—fiction but I've only done that a couple of times." [Lee]

"When you're writing up a draft copy you read through it and you mightn't like it and you might want to change a lot, so you can just rewrite it, fix it up in the draft. ...I don't ever change mine much really. I just leave it the way it is. It's alright." [Dorothy]

The children's narrow perceptions of the purposes for revision were probably the major influence on the way they went about it. Nevertheless, the children did make some revisions to their drafts which offered insight into the issues, other than accurate mechanics, which they considered important in their writing.

Given the data reported in chapter 7, it is also relevant to consider whether the children had sufficient explicit knowledge of the features of different kinds of writing, to review and revise them significantly on any other basis. In particular, if they construed the writing task in hand as involving, for example, "putting down what you know" it seems unlikely that they would later consider revising their writing on some other basis. To illustrate this, consider the final copy of the Board Game Instructions/Rules written by the group of boys mentioned earlier. Before completing this writing episode, the children were expected, by Garrard, to revise their drafts to ensure that they were sufficiently detailed and, made sense. As can be seen from the draft and
The children's writing strategies 216

final version of the boys' Instructions/Rules below no substantial revisions were made. The "good copy" of the rules was neater, and had more accurate spelling, but that was all. However, given the boys' lack of familiarity with the genre, their doubts about their readership, and the sheer effort of thinking they had already expended on generating appropriate content, the lack of revision is probably not surprising.

Boys' original first draft

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nik Ronald Benito</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Rules</em> 26-5-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) 9 to 20 adult players</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) The idea of the game is not to land on the green triangles and to get from start to finish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) equipment 2dices board counter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) whoever thought the highest number starts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) if you land on a six and a 5 you have to take 5 from 6 which leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) i you get a six you get another shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0) green bad and yellow good are normal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0) the first one to get to the finish wins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0) if your on 53 and you role a two or higher you go forward as many as you can and then go back as many</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When the boys finished their draft I asked them, "Is that the order you are going to write them in your final version?" Their final copy, above, suggests that they did not perceive any need to change what they had written in response to my question. To explore this further, I asked two of the boys in the group why they had not worked anymore on their Instructions/Rules. They said,

"That was the best we could do, we ran out of time ...it was hard."
[Benito]

Even though the boys had time to revise during a later lesson they still did not make changes. Ronald's explanation was interesting, suggesting that readership and purpose concerns continued to influence their behaviours at this stage of writing.
Ronald and Nik, in fact, left the revision and final copy task to Benito who, as well as having already expended a great deal of personal effort on the piece, also, it seemed, had no strategies for improving the piece further.

In contrast to the boys a group of girls decided easily how to revise their draft shown below:

```
Rules 4 Wilbur & Miss Piglet

Brief Idea of The Game
The idea of the game is to get to the big orange rectangle by throwing the dice and moving.

Equipment
5 counters
1 dice
1 board

How to set up the game
Put your counters on the start rectangle. In turn each person rolls the dice and see who gets the lowest number and they start.

How the game finishes
The game finishes when someone gets to orange rectangle to win and then someone for 2nd and 3rd places. To finish you can throw any number but you can go to the orange rectangle and then go backwards to finish going the number you threw.

How many people can play
2—5 people can play because there are 5 counters.

Age group
3—14 years

Direction
Follow the numbers

Special Number
If you throw no. 2 you get to throw the dice again.
```
At first the group seemed content with their draft, and returned to making their game. Consequently, I asked the girls what they were going to do next and prompted them into revision.

"If you people look over your rules are you going to change them at all? The order they're in, or the way you've got them...."

Before I finished speaking, Tara immediately initiated a review of their draft by drawing arrows on it. With no further input from me the three girls discussed the ordering of parts of their text, numbering them on the draft as they made decisions. They also created a new sub-heading ("How to start the game"). As a result of their efforts they produced the final copy shown on the next page. (Changes to the draft text are shown using italics for insertions and strike through for deletions.)
Rules for Wilbur and Miss Piglet

Brief Idea of the game
The idea of the game is to get to the big orange rectangle first by throwing the dice and moving.

Directions
Follow the numbers.

How to set up the game
Put your counters on the start rectangle

How to start the game
In turn each person rolls the dice and see who gets the lowest number and they start.

How the game finishes
The game finishes when someone gets to the orange rectangle to win and then someone for 2nd and 3rd places. To finish you can throw any number but you can go to the orange rectangle and then go backwards to finish going the number you threw but you have to get the exact number to get home.

Special number
If you throw number 2 you get to throw the dice again.

How many people can play
2—5 people can play because there are 5 counters

Equipment
5 counters
1 dice
1 board

Age Group
3-14 years
The organisational changes these girls so readily made to their text suggests that they were drawing on knowledge of how instructions should be set out and organised. Unlike the boys, they needed no further input from me to make appropriate changes to their text. It is impossible to know what these girls would have done without my small intervention. However, it is significant to note that, only one other set of instructions produced in the class during this episode was clearly and logically ordered with the insertion of sub-headings. (This was David's, shown on p.152.)

During the Persuasive Writing episode David showed that as well as revising his writing on the basis of its organisation, as he had done in the Instructions/Rules episode, he also considered language issues while revising. His draft persuasive letter was shown on p.204. His revised version, shown on the next page, shows how he decided to signal his intentions to his reader. (Changes other than to spelling and punctuation have been underlined.) Suggesting that his revisions drew on his general language experience, rather than any explicit knowledge about this use of language, David told me that he made these changes because:

"...they sort of sound better, they make more sense that way."
Dear Mr. Brown,

I understand why we are not having skateboarding and rollerskating anymore. People used to skateboard without supervision and [deleted because] Mr K is taking table-tennis and hasn't got enough time to take skateboarding and rollerskating. I think we should have it because it's fun and it's not as dangerous as riding on the road or on the footpath at home.

The dangers at home are as follows: 1. Cars could back out from the driveways and knock us over but at school there's no dangers. 2. The lunch shed's surface is smoother than the road or footpath and finally 3. Cars could knock us over on the road.

If we do have rollerskating and skateboarding which we hope we do, we could have rollerskating on Tuesday from 1.00 p.m.—1.20 p.m. and skateboarding on Wednesdays from 1.00 p.m. — 1.20 p.m. in the Primary yard Lunch Shed.

Yours sincerely
David

A quite different focus for revision was shown by Joanne in the Persuasive Writing episode. When I talked with her soon after she completed her draft Joanne told me that she was not happy with what she had written because, as described earlier on p.189-90, she did not think her final argument made sense. She also thought her reader, the deputy principal, would think it "stupid". In between writing her draft and final copy, therefore, she made significant changes to the content of her letter in order to accommodate concern for her reader. Consider both versions shown on the next page.
Joanne's first draft

Dear Mr B,
I am writing regarding the school rule which is no eating on the oval. I think we should be able to eat on the oval and if the food has no wrappers or peel. I think we should have a few bins on the oval if we are going to have food on the oval with peels or wrappers.

I feel very strongly that its not fair if your eating you food at the gate while your friends are on the equipment especially if you have a lot of recess.

can we please discuss this rule or do something better about the situation on the oval. away to stop people littering with the bins on the oval is to have two teachers taking notes on who has what if they say we get a punishment of picking up papers

Joanne

Joanne's final draft

Dear Mr B,
I am writing regarding the school rule which is no eating on the oval.

I think we should be able to eat on the oval. Because sometimes your friends are on the equipment and your left still eating at the oval gate.

I feel very strongly about this rule being changed.

We could have a few bins on the oval one near the equipment and one by the cricket pitch.

yours
sincerley
Joanne G5
Not only did Joanne delete her suggestion that teachers record who took what food onto the oval, she also deleted her suggestion that food without peel or wrappers should be permitted. Joanne said she couldn't remember why she had left this point out and, on reflection, suggested that perhaps she should have left it in. However, she did express concern that her revisions not only made her letter "more sensible" but also, very short. She feared that, as a consequence, the deputy principal would not find it very convincing.

Another insight into Joanne's notion of revision and what it was for came during the G5 Expert Book episode. As described earlier, in the section about text organisation, she recognised a problem in her writing — that to do with writing introductions and endings for some sections of her text. She told me that she was unable to "think" of a solution and so left the problem unsolved. I asked her why she did not seek help, either from her peers or Garrard. She replied,

"Cos then it wouldn't be my own ideas. ...because it was MY expert book and if I had other people's ideas in it then it would be theirs as well."

This response reflected a similar comment Joanne had made about not adjusting her writing for different readers. (Chapter 6, p.147.) This time the data indicates that Joanne was not clear about the purposes of revision strategies, and the kind of help it was legitimate for writers to obtain.

The data relating to Joanne's understandings about, and her use of, revision strategies is revealing. It shows, that given a strong rhetorical purpose, (as in the Persuasive Writing episode), and some support in looking at particular features of her text, (as during her discussion with Garrard about including personal versus general information in the Newspaper episode), she would willingly review her draft. She could also consider the changes she made
other than "a waste of time" as she had described the value of drafting and revising strategies. These principles also seem applicable to other students. For example, the group of girls responded to a specific prompt from me to revise their Board Game Instructions/Rules. Both during and after writing, David used revising strategies to improve the quality of his writing, (rather than only correct mechanics). This occurred during episodes where he seemed to feel strongly a sense of communicative purpose (the Board Game Instructions/ Rules and Persuasive Letter episodes). Where his sense of communicative purpose seemed to be lacking, (in the G5 Expert Book and Newspaper episodes), he did not revise in this way.

Overall, the data reported in this section supports the findings of other researchers, reviewed by Fitzgerald [1988], that children of this age:

- do little revision without peer or teacher support
- mainly make surface revisions
- sometimes reveal a view of revision as editing or proofreading.

Fitzgerald [1988] also notes that there is little research on the reasons that children do not revise much. In this study, the children's revising behaviours seemed to depend on a number of factors:

- the way in which they perceived the purposes for revising
- whether they intuited a problem in their writing and had options for solving it
- whether someone else made them aware of specific issues which they could review their writing for
- their way they first construed what the writing task involved (an issue which Flower [1987] discusses at length in relation to the academic writing of college students)
- their sense of purpose and readership — their reasons — for their writing and, accordingly, their level of engagement with it.
These issues applied both to the children's during and after writing revision behaviours. They support the "six plausible reasons" for children's lack of revision which Fitzgerald [1988,p.125] lists from her review of the research literature. These are:

1. Children may have trouble establishing clear goals for their own texts.
2. Juggling of presentation and content related goals can be especially hard for children.
3. Identification of problems in a text requires writers to write and read from a reader's perspective.
4. Even children who are aware of problems in their texts may have difficulty pinpointing what or where changes need to be made.
5. Children often don't know how to make changes they want to make.
6. Some children may have all or most of the separate knowledge and abilities to carry out revision, but may have trouble managing the entire process.

The children in this study, however, suggest another important explanation not included in Fitzgerald's list. That is, that in some writing situations, particularly those which occur in classrooms, children may not believe the writing task is worth the effort which revision clearly involves. As other researchers, such as Graves [1983] and Edelsky[1989] also suggest, the thorny issue of children's engagement in, and commitment to, their writing tasks needs to be addressed by writing researchers.
9.1 INTRODUCTION
During the writing episodes documented in this study, Garrard offered the children various kinds of instructional support and advice. Much of this helped the children deal with the challenges which non-narrative writing can present — making it easier for them. This chapter examines the impact of some of that instruction on the children's writing efforts. It considers how they interpreted and used Garrard's advice. My purpose here is not to scrutinise the teacher's teaching but to identify teaching approaches which my analyses of the data suggest have potential to influence positively children's performance as writers of non-narrative. The sections which follow draw on both new data and that already reported in previous chapters.

9.2 SETTING UP A RANGE OF WRITING TASKS
As described in chapter 7, the children were well aware that their lack of familiarity with some kinds of writing, particularly non-narrative varieties, made certain writing tasks more difficult to do. The fact that Garrard set up his classroom writing program to ensure his students had experience with a range of writing situations and text types was therefore important for their writing development. By doing this he showed his students:
• that non-narrative writing can perform legitimate and useful functions in their lives
• that different purposes for writing require different uses of language
• that different readers have different needs which writers need to address.

In short, Garrard gave his students new writing experiences which challenged them to deal with unfamiliar writing problems. These were experiences which they could draw on in similar writing situations in the future. Such writing experience was clearly acknowledged as valuable by the children in this study. If they had continued to write only on self-selected topics and tasks during Language Arts time they would have been denied these writing experiences. As Christie [1987(a)] and Cambourne and Brown [1987] argue, children in classrooms will learn the types of writing their teachers provide. The work of these researchers, and the present study support Lee's [1987] proposition that classroom writing programs need a balance between self-selected and teacher assigned writing tasks. Further, this study provides evidence that teacher assigned writing tasks do not preclude children's "ownership" [Graves:1983] of such tasks. The children in the present study, as did the children of Hudson [1986] and Edelsky [1989] decided to adopt some teacher assigned writing tasks "as their own". This issue is explored more fully in the following section.

9.3 HELPING CHILDREN TO ENGAGE WITH THEIR WRITING TASKS
Garrard deliberately tried to avoid setting up writing tasks in what Britton [1970] calls "dummy run" situations. For all the writing episodes documented during this study, he was conscious of how the children's interest in their topic, and their sense of purpose and audience, for writing might affect their engagement with their writing. Therefore, he put
considerable planning effort into devising genuine reasons for the children to use the non-narrative kinds of writing he wanted them to experience. He was alert to, or devised, situations that involved the children in writing on topics they would find interesting, for real readers and purposes. The children's comments revealed that this effort was worthwhile, even if not always completely successful.

Firstly, Garrard acknowledged the role of the children's interest in their topics for writing. He knew, as the children had themselves told me, that the children found "writing boring" when they had to write on "boring topics". Whenever possible, he offered the children choice within the topics he set. Thus, for example, in the Persuasive Writing episode the children were able to choose to write about the rule they most wanted to see changed; in the Instructions/rules episode they were writing about their own board games; in the G5 Expert Book episode they were writing on a completely self-selected topic. In this way Garrard's strategy allowed the children scope to select the topic in which they had most personal interest and which they felt most confident about finding content for. As described in chapter 6, the children identified these two issues as important influences on their writing performance, affecting not only their engagement with the task but also the topic knowledge they had to draw on in order to write. However, choice of topic did not, on its own, necessarily guarantee that the children engaged with their writing tasks. In the project episodes described in chapter 5, it was clear that such an assumption did not hold true.

As well as the topics they were writing about, the children's engagement with their writing tasks was also influenced by the ways in which they interpreted the communicative context for writing — their purposes and readers. The children in this study were quick to identify any writing task
that they thought was "just an exercise" or for "no real reason" (that is, only to be read and, perhaps marked by the teacher). As already described in chapter 6 they said tried less in such situations and, as a result, performed less well than they might have. On the other hand, tasks the children perceived as being for "real reasons" engaged their best efforts. The children did not elaborate greatly on how their writing efforts were affected. They did, however, suggest that when they believed that they were writing for interested readers they actually tried to take account of them as they wrote. The interesting thing was, that this made the writing task both harder and easier for them. Thinking about what and how they should write for a particular reader was hard. But on the other hand, making decisions about what information to include in their writing, from all that was possible, was made easier by their knowing exactly who their reader was. Real readers and purposes for their writing worked to promote attention to this central writing constraint. (A finding also demonstrated by many classroom researchers such as Graves:1983; Calkins:1983; Turbill:1987 and Weis:1987.)

The persuasive writing and newspaper episodes illustrate how children's engagement with their writing could influence the effort they expended, and the extent to which they took account of their readers while writing. Generally, these were engaging tasks for the children because they involved topics close to the children's experience and readers beyond the classroom (the deputy principal and parents). Their self-reported writing strategies indicated that most were trying to take these readers into account as they wrote. In particular, having a genuine readership helped the children make decisions about appropriate content for their pieces. Hence, in the letter they tried to find reasons that would convince the "strict" deputy principal. Similarly, as already reported in chapter 8, in their newspaper reports all but
one child, David, understood and acted upon Garrard's advice to write about the class in general rather than about themselves in particular.

Although the principle above is generally true, it is important to note that Garrard's efforts to establish engaging contexts for writing were not completely successful on all occasions or for all children. The reasons for this highlight yet other issues which need to be taken into account when considering children's performance in a writing task. Individual children appeared to interpret their "communicative contexts" for writing differently. Garrard's intentions did not always match with the children's perceptions of what was "going on" during a particular episode. Thus, for example, in the project episodes there was a mismatch between Garrard's purposes for the tasks and the children's perceptions about why they were doing them. (See chapter 5.) Similarly, in the Board Game Instructions/Rules episode a number of children doubted the genuine necessity for producing a written set of rules for their games. In the G5 Expert Book episode the children also had some doubts that others in the class would want to read their pieces. They suggested to me that Garrard had other purposes in mind for the writing, such as testing them to see how much they knew. As discussed in chapter 8 the children's writing performance was likely to be affected by these mismatches between Garrard's intentions for and the children's interpretations of their communicative contexts for writing.

There appeared to be two reasons for mismatches such as these. Firstly, some children simply did not get the purpose clear early in the writing episode. For example, in the Newspaper episode David seemed unaware of the needs of his readers when writing — he construed the task quite narrowly and wrote in ways which reflected this. (See chapter 8.) This suggested that children need opportunities to clarify why and to whom they are writing.
A second reason for the children's different interpretations of their reasons for writing related to their individual concerns and preferences. Dorothy, for example, said she just didn't find the persuasive letter task very interesting and that she would never choose to do it unless "she really wanted something changed". On the other hand, Lee, found some tasks interesting but too difficult. He was acutely aware of his inexperience with some kinds of writing and said he didn't feel comfortable about producing them for a reader who might be critical (such as the deputy principal). On such occasions writing for real readers "made his stomach churn". (A clear indication that a sense of genuine readership did indeed influence the children as they wrote.) Lee said he would have preferred to practise first by writing for the teacher. In this way, Lee's response to the persuasive letter episode signalled a warning that real readers and reasons for writing do not necessarily engender all children's best efforts. Spaulding's work [1989] is particularly relevant to this finding. She found that students' confidence in their ability to complete writing tasks successfully played a role in their responses to a chance to make their own decisions about writing. Some students in her study, in fact, performed more poorly than previously in such situations. She notes that,

"recommendations for providing students with ownership opportunities do not usually come with qualifying statements about when it is, or isn't, an appropriate thing to do."

The key message seems to be that teachers need to examine their instructional assumptions about "what works" in the light of children's responses to tasks.

Overall, however, Garrard's efforts to establish clear and relevant topics, purposes and readers for the children's writing tasks meant that they had an opportunity to learn that forms of writing other than story could be useful
and even, at times, fun. This was significant for these children. Furthermore, having interesting topics and, clear purposes and readers for their writing seemed most likely to engage children's commitment to their writing and release their tacit writing knowledge and strategies.

Finally, it is clear how difficult it can be to establish writing contexts that will always engage fully all children. Despite Garrard's efforts to do so there remained considerable individual variation in the way children interpreted and acted upon these in particular writing episodes. It became clear that children needed opportunities to clarify their reasons for writing so that the teacher could consider why mismatches were happening.

9.4 HELPING STUDENTS GENERATE CONTENT FOR WRITING

Garrard was sensitive to the children's concern for finding content to write about. As well as setting up tasks dealing with familiar topics, and providing choice within these, he also offered the children other kinds of support that would help them to identify appropriate content for their non-narrative writing. Three approaches he used are discussed briefly below. All served as effective pre-writing activities which helped the children explore the topics about which they were writing. Studies by Langer [1984] and Newell and MacAdam [1987] also indicate this is a significant dimension of writing demands. Scardamalia and Bereiter [1985], however, suggest that during content generation children will tend to engage in "knowledge telling" if they do not have sufficient cues for identifying information relevant to the topic.
Class discussion

During the persuasive writing episode Garrard led a class discussion which helped the children to consider and confront viewpoints different from their own. For each of the five rules under review he initiated a brief discussion based on the following questions.

- Why do you think the rule was made in the first place?
- What do you think of the existing rule? How do you see it operating?
- What reasons do you see for changing it?
- What new problems might the change create? How might they be solved?

At various points during the discussion Garrard pulled the children's comments together for them and summarised what had been said. There were no right and wrong answers but rather he challenged the children to consider seriously the problem from several perspectives. Where impractical suggestions were made, such as the use of video cameras to monitor children's behaviour in remote areas of the playground, Garrard simply turned it back to the rest of the class for evaluation by asking, "What's the problem with that?" At other times Garrard gave the children new information, raised a new argument or sharpened their sense of audience. For example, he told the children how much teachers disliked yard duty and that they were therefore unlikely to respond positively to solutions involving more of it for them.

The overall effect of this kind of discussion was twofold. Firstly, it expanded and elaborated the children's awareness and understanding of the problems the existing school rule addressed. Secondly, it modelled the thinking and reasoning required for effective persuasion. Simply put, it gave the children more ideas about what, why and how they might write their letters.
When talking with me about their writing the children consistently mentioned the class discussion as a source of ideas for their writing. This was corroborated by my analysis of the ideas and arguments raised during the discussion and those which the children actually used in their letters. However, the points raised in the class discussion were not the only ones to appear in the children's letters. Rather, they seemed to use these as springboards to generate further ideas and arguments. The discussion therefore seemed to function as a resource for their writing.

**A content guide**

Garrard used a somewhat different approach to helping the children generate content for the Board Game Instructions/Rules episode. Firstly, he read aloud to them from the instructions for the game "Monopoly" and asked the children to identify ideas that might be useful for their own game's instructions. As a result of this process, the following ideas were listed on the blackboard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOARD GAME RULES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brief idea of the game — how you win</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— how you play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— how you play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= summary or overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— counters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— dice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— the board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— any others eg. cards or money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to set up the game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to start game — who starts first</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At this point, Garrard left off reading aloud from the rules and drew ideas more generally from the children. They added the following ideas to their list of features:

- How game finishes
- How many people can play
- Directions on the board - colours, shapes (key)
- Age group
- Special number eg. get another shot

The list of blackboarded ideas created in this way was available to the children as a content guide for their own writing. This was a resource which many, but notably not all, of the children reported making use of as they worked in groups to compose the instructions/rules for their games. Those children who followed the guide closely reported that it made the writing easier to do. For example, David, who worked alone on the task said,

"I just mainly used all the ideas we got from the class. I used them, the main ones."

Also, Jennifer who wrote the initial draft for her group followed the blackboarded ideas by using each as a sub-heading. (Her draft text is shown on p.218.) I asked her why she decided to do this and she simply replied, "It's easier!" As a result of this approach Jennifer was able to quickly finish a first draft of the rules only pausing to consult briefly with the other two girls in her group.

Two other groups also told me that they used the blackboarded ideas to guide their writing. Other groups said they used the guide as a reference but that they did not work through it item by item. I was unable to observe how such groups operated.
At the other extreme were students who made no obvious reference to the blackboarded guide. As a result, these students, Matthew who worked largely on his own and Benito, Ronald and Nik working together, spent a lot of their time thinking about what to write in their rules when, as the others had done, they might have saved themselves considerable time by using the blackboarded guide as an ideas checklist. When directed explicitly by Garrard to refer to the guide Benito, Nik and Ronald readily added further items to their instructions/rules. However, when I suggested a similar course of action to Matthew he indicated that he couldn't be bothered doing so and persisted in pulling what he could from his memory. (It is significant to note here that Matthew's engagement with and commitment to the writing task appeared very low.)

Overall the children who used the content guide created by Garrard and the class had less difficulty in generating content items for their writing than did those who overlooked it. The children who referred to the guide seemed, as a result, released to put more effort into the organisation and/or language of their texts. Most notably, the group of girls and David reorganised their first drafts. On the other hand, the group of boys and Matthew dealt concurrently with the problems of what to write and how to write it. They, in fact, overlooked completely the issue of how to organise their writing logically. (This may, however, have been more to do with these students' lack of knowledge of the genre than writing attention overload.)

Brainstorming

A final example of how Garrard supported the children to generate content for their writing comes from the G5 Expert Book episode. After choosing their topics he instructed the children to brainstorm as many ideas as possible, at least 50, about that topic. This strategy was the precursor to a
larger planning task for writing which is reported more fully in a following section of this chapter. Of interest here is the fact that all the focal children reported finding this simple pre-writing strategy helpful while they were writing. (This finding is corroborated by Bereiter and Scardamalia [1981,p.20]. They note, however, that the children in their studies found the strategy laborious, perhaps indicating a lack of commitment on the children's part to the writing task in hand.)

These data offer an interesting contrast to the children's normal approach to writing. By structuring pre-writing activities into these episodes Garrard initiated strategies which had a positive effect on the children's problem of "thinking of what to write". However, such strategies were not automatically considered by the children when they were engaged in writing without teacher direction. This suggests that they needed continued support and encouragement to use these approaches.

9.5 STRUCTURING FOR STUDENT COLLABORATION
In the Persuasive Letters and Board Game Instructions/Rules episodes Garrard engaged the children in valuable collaborative pre-writing activities. This collaboration allowed the children to share ideas for their writing and as such, offered them a rich resource to draw on while writing. During the interviews the children also reported on benefits they found in other forms of peer collaboration. They sometimes sought and received help from each other while writing. They mentioned clarifying the task and what needed to be done with others, and discussing and sharing informally ideas for writing. However, despite Garrard encouraging and allowing the children to discuss their writing with each other at any time, they did not make as much use as they might have of this opportunity. In contrast, the occasions when
Garrard set up the writing situation so that the children had to work together illustrated the potential benefits of collaboration to the students. (O'Donnell et al [1985] reports that college students who worked cooperatively also benefitted from their experience. Harris and Wilkinson [1986] also suggest this as an approach for helping students sustain their effort through the stages of text production. Daiute: 1986 draws similar conclusions.)

The persuasive writing episode was a pair effort at the prewriting phase. Following the class discussion, Garrard directed the children to work with a partner to generate reasons for changing the school rule they were arguing against. They were then to write individually a letter to the deputy principal. The children reported different degrees of involvement with their partners but an examination of the texts they produced revealed that often the collaboration had been intense. Indeed, Benito and Nik reported that they did not think they would have been able to complete the task without each other's help. The similarities in the content of their finished letters illustrated how closely they worked together. Similarly, Matthew and David worked together during the episode and their finished letters reflected this. In fact, the deputy principal expressed doubt about the authenticity of Matthew's work. Compare Matthew's final draft with David's, both shown on the next page.
Matthew's persuasive letter

To Mr B,

I understand why we're not having rollerskating and skate-boarding any more. I know it's because Mr. K is supervising Table Tennis and hasn't got any time for supervising rollerskating and skateboarding. Maybe the Deputy Principal could supervise us while we rollerskate and skateboard. We haven't got enough time during school nights because we usually have a lot of homework and by the time we've finished our homework it's getting dark. It's also dangerous to rollerskate and skateboard on the road and foot-path because there is a very big chance we can get hit on the road by cars speeding down and up the street, and cars pulling out of driveways and you getting hit of your skateboard and falling down and spraining your ankle on rollerskates. It's also smoother in the lunchshed than on the road or footpath, and cars can knock you over on the road with one hit of the body. If we do have rollerskating and skateboarding we hope we could have rollerskating and skate-boarding on Tuesdays at 12:40 until 1:00pm in the primary yard lunch shed because, if we we have rollerskating and skate-boarding at 12:40 pm until 1:00 pm Tuesday after we have finished rollerskating and skateboarding we can also go to Table Tennis at 1:00 pm.

Yours sincerely
Matthew

David's persuasive letter

6-5-87

Dear Mr. Brown,

I understand why we are not having skateboarding anymore. People use to skateboard without supervision and because Mr K is taking table-tennis and hasn't got enough time to take skate-boarding and rollerskating. I think we should have it because it's fun and its not as dangerous as riding on the road or on the footpath at home. 1. Cars could back out from the driveways and knock us over but at school there's no dangers. 2. The lunch shed surface is smoother than the road or footpath and 3). cars could knock you over on the road.

If we do have rollerskating and skateboarding which we hope, we could have rollerskating on Tuesday at 1.00 p.m.—1.20 p.m. and skateboarding on Wednesday from 1.00 p.m. — 1.20 p.m. in the primary yard lunch shed.

Yours sincerely David
The benefits of peer collaboration in writing tasks were not, however, an automatic outcome of putting children in groups or pairs to work together. For example, in the Board Game Instructions/Rules episode there were a range of approaches. Lee, for example, left Matthew to complete the task on his own and thereby avoided doing, what he described to me later as, a difficult task. A group of three girls together discussed briefly what needed to be done but left one to do the writing on her own. This child only occasionally sought advice from the other two. When she had finished the draft the group met together again to review and revise it. Different again were the groups of boys who worked together, but were unable between them to solve some of their writing problems. (Refer to chapter 8.) Clearly, there are certain organisational and group interaction issues that need to be addressed before collaborative writing tasks can fulfil their potential.

9.6 PLANNING ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

As already reported in chapter 6 all the focal children remarked on their lack of familiarity with several types of writing set for them by Garrard during the study. In particular, their remarks indicated that most were tentative about undertaking persuasive and instructional writing. As described in chapter 7, the children also had limited explicit knowledge of the text organisation and language features of different kinds of writing.

Garrard anticipated the children's likely difficulty in effectively organising and structuring their persuasive letters. To help them in this he offered them a simple organisational framework for their writing. He suggested that they:
1. show that they understand the reasons for the present rule, and
2. give their reasons for changing it.
These two points were displayed on an overhead projector transparency and discussed briefly by Garrard.

Half the children in the class attempted to use this framework for organising their writing. For example, David introduced his letter in the following way.

I understand why we are not having skateboarding and rollerskating anymore. People used to skateboard without supervision and Mr K is taking table-tennis and hasn't got enough time to take skateboarding and rollerskating.

Not all were successful in providing an explicit explanation of the rule they wanted changed. For example Alison L. began her letter as follows:

I do understand the rule about the roster for the playground equipment but I think we should change it.

Not all children were completely successful in applying the organisational framework Garrard offered. Nevertheless, their efforts did work to make their completed letters more effective than if they had merely listed reasons for changing the rule without concern for an organisational strategy that would meet the needs of their reader and their purposes for writing.

A second example of the possible benefits of providing students with organisational frameworks for their writing comes from the G5 Expert Book episode. In setting up the children for writing Garrard first demonstrated and then told them to organise their brainstormed ideas into categories. In
The teacher's strategies

this way the children created for themselves an organisational outline to
guide their writing. Lee's outline is shown on the next page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sleepy lizards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What they eat</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- sweet fruits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- raw meat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- boil eggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- snails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How they protect themselves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The babies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How they eat</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- open their mouth about 5cm and hiss like a snake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- and when they bite they don't let go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where they live</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Their colours</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- all over Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- in some suburban gardens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The teacher's strategies

strategy. Instead they reported that they considered categories of information prior to writing and that this helped them complete the task.

"...that's it all set out nice and neatly now. So therefore I can just look at that and when I write my true section I can just write about the bird sanctuary, Seaworld, Marineland and all that. ...these are the main points really."

"I could go back and, say the towns, then I could write about how many towns there were and then I could list them by going back and looking at them. [Normally I do it straight from my head.]

[Why do it?] "Um, so we wouldn't just be making it up as we went along I suppose." [Joanne]

"If we didn't have those ideas, I'd think of things after I'd done the categories and then I would have to put it in somewhere else and change the whole paragraph around ...it's better. ...but it takes a fair while to do it — it takes nearly as long as to write it." [David]

"...because I've got all my ideas down on paper and I could just look at them and think of sentences in my head. It was pretty good." [Anna]

"[Without doing that] I wouldn't have known what I was writing. But here I thought up the places and things I can write down separately what they are instead of just putting a whole lot of information in. Like change from one subject to [another.] So I did Interesting Places under one sub-heading and Wildlife under the other." [How does that help your reader?] "He'd know what they're talking about." [Benito]

"You do it to organise it a bit easier so that when you write about it you can write in different parts. ...I usually write it like that anyway otherwise it wouldn't make sense but it makes it a bit easier not doing it all straight from your head." [Dorothy]

"You do it in case you forget one of the main points or something - a way of checking up on it in case I forget to do one, then I can just look back here and see, mark them off as I do it." [Lee]

The children's pre-planned frameworks or outlines helped them identify what they would write about before they began their drafts. Their outlines also helped the children think about how they needed to organise their writing. In this way they were able to deal separately with two major writing problems which they had identified during the interviews. These were:
1. identifying and generating the content they would write about
2. working out how they would organise their writing

A particularly interesting outcome of this approach was some children's greater involvement in thinking about other kinds of writing "problems" as they wrote these pieces. Joanne, for example, spent a considerable amount of her time thinking about how she would introduce and conclude each section of her writing. (Reported in chapter 8.) She also seemed more directly concerned with the needs of her readership, (in this case for logically organised language), than in previous writing tasks. In effect, the outline helped to relieve her of the burden of thinking about the content of her piece as she wrote. While she did make further adjustments to the information and ideas she dealt with in her piece, Joanne's concern about content was less pressing than in earlier episodes.

These data support Kellog's [1987] finding with college students that:

"preparing a written outline during prewriting and composing a rough draft ...may lessen a writer's workload. ...a good deal of the planning is already completed before the first draft is started. This may permit the writer to focus primarily on collecting, translating, and reviewing while composing the first draft."

However, as Kellog also notes, the strategy of outlining led to less efficiency of writing — the draft took longer to produce. This was an observation made which was made by David during the present study:

"It takes a fair while to do it [the outline] — it takes nearly as long as to write it [the draft]."

Children's willingness to invest such time and effort into their writing will no doubt be influenced significantly by their engagement in their writing tasks and their teacher's support in providing time for it to happen.
The benefits of providing students with paragraph frames and sentence starters is also described by Cudd and Roberts [1989]. It needs to be borne in mind, however, that other researchers [Durst:1984; Giacobbe:1986] have observed how over-reliance on outlines, particularly those provided by the teacher, can lead to constrained writing. While organisational frameworks may at first provide students with an effective scaffold for accomplishing new and unfamiliar writing tasks, they can easily become rigid and formulaic routines which limit, rather than promote, further writing development.

9.7 PROVIDING MODELS OF WRITTEN PRODUCTS

During the final interview I asked the focal children to tell me which kind help from their teacher they found most useful. I was surprised at how few of Garrard's strategies they mentioned explicitly at this time and wished that I had asked them directly about this during the episodic interviews. Nevertheless the children's responses were insightful. All the children told me that by giving them an example of, and explaining, the type of writing they were to attempt, Garrard made the task easier and clearer for them. Other issues they raised included giving ideas to write about, giving specific wording, and starting them off.

"Yeah, if he explains, like do this do that it would be hard. But because he gives an example, it makes it easier. Like say, with the argumentative writing, he would say, he would put up an argument and then he'd put what to say about it. He'd give us ideas about what to do." [Joanne]

"Well he usually does an example which helps a lot. It helps me with how to set it out, it just helps what you gotta do, you can see what the final product is meant to look like. ...He just explains it. ...If we need to ask a question he answers it, he helps." [Anna]

"Sometimes he gives examples on how to do it and he shows you how to do it. We read some similar writing and he describes it to you, how you should do it and some ways you can go about doing
it. Sometimes it's helpful. For example for the instructions he did a quick one on the board." [Dorothy]

"He helps us:
... think of ideas that we're gonna write;
... put it into words so you can write it down;
... by giving us examples of the writing - you can get the idea of what to do" [Benito]

"He explains it. When he writes an example out for you that makes it easiest. Then I know what he wants. He did that for the instructions, argument about the school rules and the newspaper. ...If I ask Mr G he helps me set it out and gives me a start and tells me what to write down.[Lee]

From the comments above it is clear that the children greatly appreciated being shown examples, or models, of the kind of writing they were expected to do, particularly when the task involved a kind of writing unfamiliar to them. This corroborates the data presented in chapters 6 and 7 which indicated that the children drew on their reading experience when writing but, were unfamiliar with non-narrative kinds of writing, unsure about what these kinds of writing were meant to be like and, lacking in explicit knowledge of the linguistic features of different kinds of writing. Providing them with models addressed some of these concerns. It is reasonable, therefore, to interpret that this strategy can have a strong, positive influence on children's writing performance. Examining models and discussing the features which distinguish them can offer children insights into the linguistic demands of the writing task. For example, if David had considered the Newspaper task as involving more than "putting down what you know" he may have drawn more effectively on his knowledge of text organisation.

9.8 TALKING WITH STUDENTS ABOUT THEIR WRITING
During this study Garrard could often be seen talking with students about their writing — responding to their requests for help or inquiring about
their progress on the task. Unfortunately, it was beyond the resources of this study to collect and analyse significant amounts of data relating to these interactions. Nevertheless, they appeared to play an important role in the social context of this classroom. It was a strategy which seemed to perform three major functions. These were:

- enhancing the classroom learning-to-write context. Garrard's role was clearly one of a supportive helper during the process of writing
- providing children with individual help with their writing, and
- allowing Garrard to monitor the children's progress and development as writers.

By talking with students about their writing at various stages of their tasks Garrard offered the children specific help and support with a range of different writing problems. For example, Benito recalled Garrard's help with finding the right language to express his ideas. He said,

"He helps us put it into words so that you can write it down."

On the other hand, Joanne's recollection of her "conference" [Graves:1983] with Garrard during the Newspaper episode, (reported in chapter 8), showed how he clarified the purpose of the task and her readers in order to explain why personal experiences were not appropriate content. Likewise, Lee reported the value of discussion with Garrard in the pre-writing phase when he was trying to devise categories for his G5 Expert Book piece.

"He helped me work out how to do it without saying the same things over and over again." [Lee:G5]

The children therefore knew that at any stage in the process of their writing Garrard was willing to participate in helpful discussions with them about their writing problems. Their perception of him as a person who wanted to help them be successful rather than as only an assessor of their finished
work was no doubt an important element in the context for learning in this classroom.

During our data sharing and discussion sessions throughout the study Garrard often expressed concern about having insufficient classroom time to talk with all students on a one-to-one basis about their writing. In particular he was concerned:

- that he was not able to "get below the surface aspects of the children's writing" and that he lacked sufficient information about the children's "in-process" strategies — how they actually went about writing
- that there were too many children in the class for him to provide them with all the one-to-one attention they needed in order to develop fully their writing in each episode.

Garrard often raised these concerns during our weekly debriefing and data sharing sessions. Fortunately the study was able to offer some insights into the nature of the focal children's writing strategies.

"I found the sharing times and exchange of information valuable ...it is interesting to hear [the children's] comments about some of the activities I gave them and their responses. Because being the classroom teacher with 29 individuals it's pretty difficult to find out, you know, those nitty gritty type things. You always seem to know just on the surface how things have gone and what the kids are actually doing. Yeah, those chats were valuable..."

As a result of sharing and discussing this data, together, Garrard and I planned the G5 Expert Book task. Our goal was to initiate in the children more effective prewriting, planning and organisational strategies for writing. Furthermore, we hoped that by doing these things we would set up the children for success in their writing so that they needed less one-to-one assistance from Garrard during the process of writing. We also hoped that
with such shared input about how to go about their writing the children would be in a better position to help one another when sharing and discussing their drafts. As indicated in the above sections, my analysis of the data relating to this episode suggested that instructional approaches such as these had a positive impact on the children's performance as writers. It did not, however, appear to reduce the amount of time Garrard needed to spend talking with individual children about their writing. This was because the children shifted their attention to other writing problems they might deal with — being new, they wanted his help.

9.9 OTHER STRATEGIES SUGGESTED BY THE DATA ANALYSES

Because the question which this study sought to explore was broad in scope, many instructional issues arose which it was not possible to explore in any depth, for example, the ways in which Garrard sometimes helped the children find the language to express their ideas in writing — an issue which chapter 8 showed was of concern to the children as they wrote. Furthermore, as a result of examining the data described in this and previous chapters Garrard developed new directions for supporting the children during non-narrative writing episodes. Because of the special nature of the project episodes, described in chapter 5, I have outlined these at the end of that chapter. Here, it is enough to say that the sections above are not intended to be a catalogue of all that is possible or desirable in designing teaching approaches to support students in writing of this kind. Indeed, all of the strategies described above warrant further exploration and analysis. Further implications are discussed in the following, and concluding, chapter.
CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSIONS

10.1 INTRODUCTION

My concern in this study has been to understand what affects children's production of non-narrative writing in a year 6/7 classroom. It has drawn together data relating to:

- the children's knowledge about, past experience with and, attitudes to different kinds of writing
- the contexts in which the children wrote
- the writing processes and strategies the children applied
- the written texts they produced
- the children's and the teacher's interpretations of what was 'going on' during the non-narrative writing episodes.

The study has placed particular emphasis on what the child informants had to say about these things. Along with other researchers [Nolan:1979; Carlin:1986; Langer:1986] I have found the children's own voices offer a rich source of data.

The previous chapters have described the many different but interconnecting trails on which my data analyses have taken me. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to say something of where they have led. Firstly,
the key findings of the study are summarised. Then implications for teachers, inherent within these findings, are considered. Thirdly, the benefits and limitations of the present study will be examined. Lastly, useful directions for future research are proposed.

10.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In analysing the data collected in this study, two important trends have emerged. On the one hand, there are issues about which the children were unanimous. For example, all had little experience with non-narrative writing; all believed they performed better on writing tasks that were for "real reasons"; all were greatly preoccupied with the problem of generating content while writing. On the other hand, individual children offered diverse and different perspectives on the way their performance was influenced by these things. On occasions, what was true for one student was not true for another. In the summary of findings which follows I have tried to take account of these two trends in the data.

Overall, the children who were the focus of this study revealed that, in their efforts to produce non-narrative varieties of writing, they were influenced by many things. Those influences identified in this study are:

1. Children's literacy histories
2. Children's interpretations of the communicative context for writing
3. Children's knowledge of the topics about which they were writing
4. Children's knowledge about different kinds of writing
5. Children's ability to think and write logically
6. Children's writing strategies
7. Children's interpretations of the "culture" of their classroom
As described in chapter 9, the teacher's strategies for managing non-narrative writing episodes in the classroom also had a strong influence on the children's non-narrative writing performance. However, these worked to counter or enhance the influences listed above. Therefore, I will consider them in relation to the later section of this chapter, "Implications for teachers".

Although each of the seven "influences" is considered separately below, it will become clear that each "influence" is related in some way to the others.

1. Children's literacy histories
The children's past experience with non-narrative writing had a clear affect on their attitudes towards, and their performance in, such writing. Firstly, the children's previous exposure to non-narrative varieties of writing played a significant role in determining these things. In order to write, some children drew on models of non-narrative writing they had "in their heads". These came from their reading of non-fiction texts and other everyday examples of non-narrative writing. Such models served them well in their writing, (consider Lee's "Lizard" report). Furthermore, all children said that seeing examples of the kind of writing they were trying to produce themselves helped them most when writing. Thus, whenever possible during the non-narrative writing episodes, they turned for help to available examples or the writing done by peers.

All the children in this study reported very little experience in producing non-narrative varieties of writing. All believed they would be better at it if they had done more of it. Their lack of opportunity, through exposure, instruction and practice, to learn the features appropriate to different kinds of writing remains a powerful explanation for the children's:
• general preference for narrative
• greater sense of competence and confidence with narrative and straightforward descriptive writing.

Unfamiliarity with some kinds of writing also led to lack of confidence while trying to produce them. This created yet another source of difficulty for the children — the tentativeness with which they sometimes approached their non-narrative writing tasks could interfere with their writing strategies. Lack of confidence could also complicate the ways in which the children interpreted their communicative context for writing. In particular, Lee was not inspired by writing for readers beyond the classroom when he felt unsure about how to do the kind of writing involved. On these occasions, writing for a potentially critical readership made his "stomach churn". As a result, he reported a form of "writer's block".

As well as exposure to non-narrative writing, what the children had learned from years of experience working and writing in classrooms was an important component of the their literacy histories. From this experience they had built up understandings about how to best proceed in certain kinds of tasks. "Doing projects" was a clear example of this. The data described in chapter 5 indicated that, in the past, the children had consistently used and been rewarded for their "by the book" strategies. This influenced clearly how they went about "doing projects" in the current school year. It also influenced how the children interpreted and understood Garrard's efforts to teach them alternative ways of operating. They found it difficult to change.

Similarly, the children also brought to Garrard's class various experiences and notions of what "doing writing" involved. As Garrard noted, for most of the children in his class, writing time meant writing stories time. This
was an interpretation he actively tried to discourage, yet near the end of this study, two of the children indicated that they continued to believe they were only allowed to write stories. At another level, the children revealed that although they knew about such things as planning, drafting and revising, they tended to interpret their role in writing quite narrowly. They did not actively incorporate such processes into their strategies for writing. Thus, explicit planning was considered unnecessary, while revisions of their drafts focused primarily on proofreading issues.

These two examples serve to illustrate a larger point. This is that, in classrooms, the children and the teacher can interpret things differently. Children's behaviours as writers can completely miss the mark if they have not had an opportunity to make explicit the understandings and experiences they are working from. Children need to make connections between their existing ways of operating as writers and new approaches and strategies to which they are being introduced. (As Garrard commented in relation to note-making in the project episodes, "I assumed too much.")

2. Children's interpretations of the context for writing
In each non-narrative writing episode, the children's interpretations of why and for whom they were writing had a continuing influence on their attitudes towards particular writing tasks, and on what and how they wrote. So too, did their actual interest in the topics they were writing about. From the children's point of view, "boring" topics made writing "boring" and could generate a general desire to get it over and done with as soon as possible. Nevertheless, if the children could see that their writing was important in some way, (for example, a chapter of a class book; or an article in a class newspaper), they seemed prepared to put this concern to one side in order to complete the writing as best they could.
All children reported that they tried less hard on tasks which they perceived as an exercise or being for "no real reason". Indeed, their determination to find solutions to the problems which some of the non-narrative writing episodes presented largely depended on their commitment to the "reasons" they perceived for doing the writing in the first place. When the children were not clear about their purpose and reader, or when they doubted the genuine nature of those the teacher had set up, their writing strategies, and their texts, revealed little concern for the problems associated with writing in ways appropriate to such issues.

It is important to note that getting "good marks" or winning teacher approval could, from the children's perspective, constitute "real reasons" for writing. They did want to be successful in the tasks Garrard set for them. However, as was demonstrated in chapter 5, "reasons for writing" of this kind led the children to have a very different orientation to their work than when they were writing for genuinely communicative purposes. During the project episodes the children's prime goal was to produce a good product for its own sake — an artifact. When they wrote to persuade the deputy principal to change a rule the children's goal was clearly to produce a product that would have an effect on someone. Such goals influenced the ways in which they interpreted and used Garrard's instructional advice.

Having a strong sense of their purpose and reader, however, made writing harder. The children knew they needed to take account of those readers' needs and expectations as they wrote. On such occasions there was evidence in their writing strategies that decisions, involving such things as selecting content, organising their texts and writing clearly, were being shaped by their purpose for writing and the reader needs they perceived. Reflecting on this process, a number of children said the writing was, in some respects, easier.
Knowing why and for whom they were writing helped them to focus their writing decisions.

For many reasons, a writing context which inspired or excited one child did not necessarily do the same for all others. Teacher assigned writing tasks are problematic in this respect. Nevertheless, the children's commitment to their writing did not necessarily depend on their having control over all features of their writing context. They demonstrated that, on occasions, Garrard's sensitivity to their writing preferences when establishing contexts for assigned tasks could lead to writing which undoubtedly engaged the children's best efforts.

3. Children's knowledge of the topics about which they are writing
Being able to "think of what to write" was a universal concern among the children. As was seen in chapters 5-8, this concern dominated their explanations for:

• difficulties they found in project work
• their writing preferences
• what made writing easy and difficult for them
• their classification of different kinds of writing.

Concern for generating content also dominated the children's descriptions of their writing strategies.

For one child, Benito, the problem was almost crippling. When given the choice, he almost always opted to write about his own experiences. Unlike the other children he disliked story writing because of the demands it made on him to think up "a plot, characters, scene and background". For Benito other concerns when writing were clearly secondary to that of "thinking what to write".
For the other children too, the immediate problem of what to write often pushed other concerns into the background. When, however, purpose and readership needs were strongly felt, the children were more likely to deal simultaneously with other writing problems, such as how to organise their writing. Writing from personal experience also lessened the load of "thinking of what to write". Helping the children to generate information before they commenced their drafts also made a difference. When they did this they again devoted more attention to other writing problems.

4. Children's knowledge about different kinds of writing
The children made clear functional distinctions between different kinds of writing. They were aware of demands different kinds of writing put on them. As a consequence, any sense of competence they felt in one kind of writing did not necessarily transfer to another.

All children applied some kind of implicit linguistic knowledge as they wrote. If they had not their texts would have been incoherent and would have borne no resemblance to the functions they were serving. However, some children consciously applied knowledge about different kinds of writing as a tool in the production of their texts. The children who were able to think about such things as "beginnings, middles and ends", introductions, conclusions, "wrapping up", personal and impersonal information, general statements, and the like, as they wrote were likely to produce more effective texts.

However, as chapter 7 showed, the children had little explicit knowledge of the linguistic features of different kinds of writing. They were therefore limited in the extent to which they could use such knowledge and integrate it into their writing strategies for the purposes of working out:
Conclusions

• what a particular writing task required,
• how they should write it
• on what basis their writing should be reviewed and revised.

This issue, at least in part, accounted for the children's lack of confidence in producing some kinds of non-narrative writing. They were aware that they didn't know enough about "what the writing should be like" to do it well. In part, this accounts for the children's preference for other kinds of writing when choosing what to do during classroom free writing time. (Note, however, that during the study, Lee and Joanne reported that their confidence in writing non-fiction had grown to the point where they would now choose to write it.)

5. Children's ability to think and write logically

Another universal observation made by the children concerned the challenge of writing "logically". Over and over again they reported that thinking of, and recording in writing, explanations, reasons and arguments were the most difficult kind of writing they had to do. In part, this was related to their concern in all writing tasks for "thinking of what to write".

Whether the children's difficulty with "logical writing" was an outcome of their lack of experience with such writing, cognitive immaturity, or their thinking and writing ability is not clear. The important point to note here is that, whatever its cause, this was a problem with which most needed support and help to be successful.

6. Children's writing strategies

The methods used in this study for collecting data about the children's writing strategies were not without limitations. (These are discussed more
fully in a later section of this chapter.) Nevertheless, the children's self reports, and my observations and analyses of their written texts suggested that their performance as writers was greatly affected by the nature of the writing strategies they employed.

In chapter 8 I described the children's basic approach to writing as one of writing from 'head-to paper'. This was intended to capture the fact that they rarely, if ever, made explicit plans before starting to write. Nor, when they confronted a problem, did they try various options in writing in order to select the one that was best. They rarely revised during draft writing and there were few significant post writing revisions. The children's 'head-to paper' approach seemed to work best when they knew a lot about the topic, and were clear about their purpose and reader for writing. On these occasions their tacit knowledge of language and text features seemed to come to the fore and they described the writing as "easy".

On occasions when the children's information base was not so strong, (such as when they had to generate explanations and reasons), their 'head-to-paper' approach to writing tended to outmanoeuvre them. It forced them to deal with several writing problems at once. Simultaneously, they needed to generate content and, if they could manage to also think about such things, to take account of the needs of their reader, and find ways of writing and organising their texts. Often they could not manage such a feat. Generating content, predictably, took priority. After that, whatever issue happened to be salient or which caused them most trouble while writing was that which received most of their attention.

The children's writing strategies were not, however, set in concrete. Although they preferred their 'head-to-paper' approach, because it was
easier, they did, on occasions, vary from it while writing. Indeed, the fact that some revisions did appear in their texts demonstrated that they were not incapable of this kind of behaviour. When the children did something other than approach writing in 'head-to-paper' fashion their behaviour appeared to be driven by a number of things:

- their clarity about their purpose and audience for writing
- their awareness of reader needs
- their knowledge of the genre
- their explicit awareness of why writers use certain strategies and processes
- reminders to attend to specific issues in their writing.

7. Children's interpretations of the "culture" of their classroom

The patterns of classroom interaction which characterised their classroom also influenced the children's performance in non-narrative writing. This influence is related to, but of broader concern than, issues relating to the children's interpretations of the communicative context for particular writing episodes. As already mentioned above, the children brought to their current learning situations frameworks for operating within classrooms built up from previous years at school. These had a continuing influence on how they interpreted new writing tasks and situations.

More than this, however, the people in each classroom develop ways of operating and interacting together influencing how they think and behave. For example, nominating peers as readers, was no guarantee of a genuine communicative context for writing if the reality in the classroom was that peers didn't read and respond to that writing. Thus, in Garrard's classroom, the children told me, "no-one reads projects, they're too boring". Similarly, as a number of the children predicted during this non-narrative writing
episode, the children's instructions for their board games were rarely read and followed. In ways such as these, the children's expectations about how their peers would behave influenced the degree to which they took seriously the needs of their peers as readers when writing.

Established patterns of classroom interaction also revealed themselves in collaborative writing situations. During the study I observed several occasions when the children took advantage of the opportunity to support and learn from each other, such as the pair discussions about content prior to writing the persuasive letter. However, on other occasions, 'working together' did not always turn out to be a cooperative venture. Lee, for example, left Matthew on his own to complete their Board game instructions/rules. His behaviour was acceptable to Matthew who offered no complaint.

Other illustrations of how the interaction patterns of the classroom influenced the children's writing efforts were scattered throughout the data, for example, there were confusions, such as Joanne's and Lee's, about when it was appropriate to seek and use the help of others. The children's interpretation of Garrard as a person whose role it was to help them improve their writing, not merely to assess their written products also influenced how they interacted with him and responded to his help in non-narrative writing episodes.

Evidence such as this suggested that the children's writing could be influenced positively if more explicit groundrules for interacting with each other in different situations were established. The children may then have been better placed to operate effectively with each other and to get the help with their writing which they needed.
10.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

The above summary of findings suggests a number of implications for teachers who are concerned to understand their students' performance, and foster their development, in non-narrative writing. These relate to three areas:

1. Instructional strategies
2. Teaching challenges
3. Writing assessment

Instructional strategies

Chapter 9 has already described a number of instructional strategies which Garrard used to support his students in their non-narrative writing. These strategies were effective because they addressed the influences described in the previous section. To recap, the strategies Garrard used were:

- setting up a range of writing tasks for students
- helping students to engage with their writing tasks
- helping students generate content for writing
- structuring for student collaboration
- planning organisational frameworks
- providing models of written products
- talking with students about their writing

Some of these strategies were 'natural' teaching approaches Garrard used prior to the study, some were devised and implemented during the study as a result of insights emerging from our ongoing data analyses.

In addition to the strategies listed above, Garrard explored many others after the major data collection period was over. (For example, small scale project work along the lines suggested in the conclusions to chapter 5.) Other
possibilities have only become apparent as a result of my final phase analyses — when 'all the information was in' and there was time and opportunity to reflect on the inter-relationships between all sources of data. All are summarised below.

From the findings reported in section 10.2 teachers could do well to consider instructional strategies which support children to:

- have frequent and purposeful opportunities to write non-narrative texts themselves
- engage with and be committed to their writing tasks by setting up purposeful classroom contexts in which to write
- develop their intentions to become better writers because it serves useful functions in their own lives
- clarify their interpretations of a writing task and what it involves
- have a strong information base from which to write. For example:
  - generating content guides
  - brainstorming
  - discussion
  - writing about topics which are familiar
- gain knowledge about different kinds of writing the purposes they serve. For example by:
  - purposeful exposure to relevant models of these kinds of writing
  - opportunities to examine the distinguishing features of these models and how they work to meet a writer's purposes
  - creating with students linguistic guides or structural frames for their writing
- gain insight into the strategies that expert writers use in different writing situations and try using them in contexts they see as purposeful. For example:
Conclusions

- helping students identify goals for their writing
- explaining and demonstrating strategies for making plans, drafting, revising
- thinking aloud while writing in front of students in order to show them how writers might use their knowledge about writing and writing strategies
- providing writing process and strategy guides that help children think about several 'problems' while they are planning, writing or revising.

• collaborate with each other on their writing tasks
• obtain feedback and reflect on their performance as writers, for example:
  - how effectively their writing meets its intended purpose, the needs of their readers, and how closely it approximates the models provided
  - the efficiency of their strategies for writing
• clarify the groundrules for interaction with others in the in the classroom.

(Working with my colleagues in the LLIMY (Literacy and Learning in the Middle Years) project has contributed greatly to identifying these instructional implications in the findings of this study. This work is documented in Campagna et al:1989.)

Challenges for teachers

The lists above highlight the complexity of the teacher's role in managing effectively non-narrative writing instruction in the classroom. How teachers handle tasks in the classroom influences children's performance as writers. The study, however, also revealed a number of instructional challenges that can face teachers.

Firstly, assigned writing tasks appear to be a necessary part of ensuring that children have a wide range of writing experiences. However, assigning classroom tasks that meet all children's topic interests, sense of purpose, and
reader preferences may well be an impossible task. There needs, therefore, to be diversity, overall, in the kinds of writing contexts teachers set up for such tasks. Furthermore, children need opportunities to state their writing preferences so that teachers can use this information when designing or negotiating new writing tasks with children. This constraint also has assessment implications which are discussed further in the following subsection.

A second challenge for teachers concerns mismatches between teachers' instructional intentions and children's interpretations of them. Problems can arise if the advice a teacher offers does not fit comfortably with children's existing experience, understandings and ways of operating. In these situations children are unlikely to use the help they get in the way it was intended.

The third challenge involves teachers being aware that their instructional assumptions don't always apply. What 'works' for many students may not for all — the individual variations between the children in this study have demonstrated this. Further, this suggests that no one teaching approach or strategy is likely to meet the varying needs of different children in a class. Teachers need to be alert to and probe children's existing understandings about non-narrative writing, and use this information to guide their teaching.

**Writing assessment**

This study has provided insights into how and why the children produced their non-narrative texts. These insights have demonstrated that assessing children's performance as writers, in non-narrative or narrative writing, requires much more than looking only at their written products.
Understanding children's performance as writers also requires insights into:

- children's knowledge of what writing is for and the kinds of texts writers can produce to fulfil their purposes
- children's knowledge of the features which distinguish different kinds of writing
- children's attitudes towards writing of different kinds and themselves as writers
- children's sensitivity and response to particular features of their contexts for writing
- children's understandings about the process of writing
- children's repertoire of strategies for writing
- children's past experience with the kind of writing and the writing situation they are engaged in.

Furthermore, the study suggests that it is inappropriate to assess a child's performance as a writer on the basis of evidence relating to only one writing episode.

Information such as the above has been critical to the concerns of this study. Such information also suggests for teachers ways in which they might usefully intervene to foster each child's development as a writer. (The work of my colleagues in the AWRITE (Assessment of Writing and Reading Inservice Teacher Education) project has thoroughly examined this notion of literacy assessment. It is documented in Badger et al [in preparation].)

10.4 BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As does all research this study has its own set of 'costs and benefits'. These are considered, in turn, below.
Benefits of the research

The educational environment in which this study was conceived was, and remains, one of heated debate over issues relating to the teaching of writing in Australian schools — as some put it, a debate between "process" [Graves:1983] and "genre" [Martin:1984,85; Rothery:1985,86; Macken et al:1989] approaches. (See for example, Reid:1987 and English in Australia Volume 90, December 1989.) Therefore, the question which this study sought to explore was deliberately broad in order to come up with as rich a portrait as possible of what was 'going on' in one classroom in the area of non-narrative writing. Focused studies in Australian classrooms, such as this one, are few. In this sense one benefit of the study has been helping to fill a gap.

The findings of this case study, can make no claims to universal truths about what all children need if they are to develop the non-narrative writing abilities that can offer them power in and over their lives. However, the study provides a useful reference point for other researchers and for teachers. It identifies some of the many issues which warrant our attention in classrooms. By considering these issues in relationship to one another, the study highlights the complexity of learning and teaching writing, whether narrative or non-narrative. It signals the need for teachers to be cautious about the findings of research that has too narrow a focus and, for the sake of addressing particular research questions, (or proving or disproving a point), overlooks other significant issues that may be at work in children's learning and teacher's teaching.

As a researcher, I am glad that the study provided information that was of immediate use to the teacher. I see this as an important benefit of the study. Had I been able to process the data Garrard and I collected more quickly, these benefits may have been even greater. (My original research proposal
included a second phase which was only partially realised. This involved continuing to work collaboratively with Garrard, exploring the impact of teaching strategies which the data analyses suggested would support the children in their non-narrative writing development.

I am also glad that, as a result of this study, the children in Garrard's class benefitted, to some extent during, and certainly after, the data collection period, from instruction which focused on their needs as revealed by the ongoing data analyses.

A spin off benefit of this study was the focal children's increased consciousness of themselves as writers, and perhaps, deeper insight into their own writing strategies. Anna and Dorothy commented along these lines when I asked them whether they had learned anything from our discussions during the study.

"Yeah, I've learned to think about what I'm doing when I'm writing. Like who it's for and that. I sort of did it before but now, I think about it a bit more." [Anna]

"Well, you're always asking me what I do when I write, so now, I kind of know more about what I do too." [Dorothy]

Their comments reminded me of the children in Bereiter and Scardamalia's [1983] studies, who, as coinvestigators of their mental processes while writing, became excited by the possibilities their new awareness opened up for them as writers.

Lastly, as indicated at the beginning of this chapter, the study demonstrated that talking with children about their writing provided a rich source of data for examining the research questions. The children were worth listening to and I noted, as did Carlin [1986], that they put my sometimes abstract
Conclusions

Deliberations about non-narrative writing development into new and concrete perspectives. Thus, the children themselves provided me with the questions that were worth asking of them about influences on their non-narrative writing. Their responses are the meat of this study.

Limitations of the study

The limitations of this study became most painfully obvious as I was analysing the data. The range of issues the study threw up for consideration left me feeling as if I had only skimmed the surface of all there was to know about each of them. Without denying the significant collaboration of Garrard in this study, I remained a 'lone' researcher who had to work within very real time and resource constraints. These prevented me from gathering further data using different collection methods.

In particular, the children's self-reports of their writing processes and strategies proved to be a blunt tool for gaining anything other than a general insight into what they were doing and thinking about as they wrote. The actual thinking the children were doing as they were writing remained largely hidden. It would have been enlightening to examine think aloud protocols of children writing during episodes they said they found engaging and therefore, tried harder at. Comparing these with protocols made as the children worked on tasks they described as for "no real reasons" would have allowed potentially revealing comparisons. For this reason, I remain unable to say much about the relationship between the findings of this study and Bereiter and Scardamalia's [1985 ] model of "knowledge telling" as a description of what children of this age are doing, cognitively, as they write.

Lastly, although a benefit of the study was the breadth of the picture it drew, it is also not a total picture. I did not explore, for example, issues to do with
the children's gender, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, specific abilities, socio-economic situation and, in Lee's case, Aboriginality — issues which yet other research, but not reviewed in chapter 2, also shows to be of influence on children's literacy development.

10.6 FUTURE RESEARCH

In chapter 2, I reviewed the work of researchers from several different fields of enquiry who, using different methodologies consistent with their research questions, have uncovered many valuable insights into children's development of non-narrative writing. This study sought to take account of the findings from these different fields in an integrated way. But, as suggested above, the study's time, size and resource constraints limited what it was possible to achieve in this regard. Nevertheless, this study indicates that the time is ripe for more comprehensive research designs which set out to investigate the complexity of learning to write in a classroom.

Both Scardamalia and Bereiter [1986] and Jacob [1987] pinpoint an area of great promise for future research on writing.

"...researchers will be able to develop new traditions to address new research questions. One of the most exciting areas for future research is adapting qualitative traditions to the study of naturally occurring cognitive behaviour in classrooms." [Jacob:1987,p.41]

"...a real synthesis will require research that combines cognitive and ethnomethodological perspectives." [Scardamalia and Bereiter:1986,p.780]

The models of cognitive processes in writing, developed in clinical situations need to be considered in the real world of the classroom. Likewise, we need to understand more about the thinking which underlies students' behaviours as writers and how, for example, genre knowledge is used by
them. In short, we need more studies that illuminate how and why children operate as they do when undertaking non-narrative writing in classrooms.
APPENDIX 1:

SCHEDULE USED FOR FINAL FOCUSED INTERVIEW WITH FOCAL STUDENTS

After considering the data obtained during the episodic interviews, I designed the following interview schedule and "card game" to enrich and extend the data already collected.

1. How many different kinds of writing can you think of? (These were recorded individually on 15 x 11cm cards.)

2. When have you done these kinds of writing? When? How often? Who for? Why? Which have you done most of in your life? Do you do any out of school time? Why?

3. What's the difference between each kind of writing on the cards?

4. Can any kinds be grouped together as similar? (Move cards around) Why?

5a. Which kinds of writing would you choose to do in free writing time? Why?

5b. Which kinds of writing do you enjoy doing the most? Why?

6. Which kind of writing do you find
   - easiest
   - hardest
   - in between?

Why? (Sort the cards from easiest to most difficult.)
7. What makes writing easier for you? How, in what way?

Possible prompts (suggested by earlier data collection):

- knowing what to write
- choosing the topic, interest in the topic
- experience with the kind of writing
- teacher help
- examples
- peer help
- making plans
- a real purpose and reader
- drafting and revising
- time
- amount of writing required
- time
## APPENDIX 2:

SUMMARY OF FOCAL CHILDREN'S COMMENTS ABOUT THE FEATURES OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF WRITING

### STORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Features identified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Story</td>
<td>Fantasy, not true, exaggerating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imaginative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fiction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>Story</td>
<td>Imaginary, not what happened to you, no fact. You can let your imagination run wild.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>You have to think up what's going to happen next and if it all makes sense and how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>it's going. You have to think of how it's going to end and how am I going to start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the story and how the people involved are going to live - you have to do it all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>together. You have to think what goes into the next part of the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Story</td>
<td>It's fantasy, not fact, characters, a fantasy place/setting; sad parts, good parts,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mood change, ends in happy way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Story</td>
<td>Aren't facts, they're imaginary. Fun to read. Beginning, middle and end. Really</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>what you want to write.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benito</td>
<td>Imaginative</td>
<td>Characters, plot scene/background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unrealistic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Story</td>
<td>You have to make up things unless you're writing about things you already know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They have like a beginning, middle and end.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Features identified</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Newspaper Writing</td>
<td>Telling people what we're doing and what it looked like and that. Describing and explaining. To share what we've done with parents and other classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>Newspaper Article</td>
<td>It's fact, you write what happened around the class or school. You're supposed to say what happened. It goes into a paper. It's a report it's not a story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Report of what we've done</td>
<td>You explain what you did, information, true, not fantasy. You put the main things. It's for parents. We just had to write a paragraph on what we did and how we did it and things like that. It's, um, an article.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Newspaper Article or Report</td>
<td>Fact about what the class has been doing. About G5 not just me. We could write about &quot;we&quot;. It's for parents. You write in the order of what happened. A brief report about what happened, you write up what's happened. Reports are facts sometimes stories can be but this is fact fact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benito</td>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>Telling what the class did. Better in order of what happened (but doesn't have to be). Information we had in our minds about the stuff. [One example of realistic.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Article</td>
<td>We just had to write up about something we had done in term two.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>Facts, making points, giving reasons. You have to write your reason and manners — you have to write to please, you have to be polite. I was trying to change his mind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>Persuasive</td>
<td>What you think, try to persuade, someone to change or do something, you give reasons. You just got to put main points down. You write what you think. You have to think of a good argument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Argumentative</td>
<td>You put up a case and write a reason. It has to be real so that everyone can read and understand it. You have to have reasons and solutions to problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Persuasive</td>
<td>You're trying to change someone's mind, give them ideas on the subject/thing. You have to persuade them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benito</td>
<td>Persuasive</td>
<td>Trying to get someone to change something. Have to include a few arguments, tell them what you want changed and how it should be changed and maybe try it out or something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Persuasive</td>
<td>You have to write a certain thing, like convincing him and that. You have to think of reasons and all that.</td>
</tr>
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## NON-FICTION

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Non-fiction</td>
<td>Facts, information about something, set out in book form not just a little paragraph, a whole lot of different sorts of information, pictures. It has to be serious (no jokes). Just describing and giving information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>Non-fiction</td>
<td>Small and big projects, research, fact, you can copy it from a book if it's reasonable (understandable). Nobody reads them except the teacher — they're boring. We do them just for like ourselves, like just to learn. It's just all information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Topic Writing</td>
<td>Projects, information, research, facts, very important. Explaining what a thing is. Information on a topic, not about what I did.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Project Writing</td>
<td>Fact, true to life; about things that happened and are happening. (So are journals but it's more important) About things you don't know about. Got to be presented well — maybe in a project book and you gotta have pictures and everything. You gotta organise your information under sub-headings and that. Title page, diagrams, pamphlets. It's about things you don't know about. The writing has to be researched — going through and rearranging what's in the book saves a lot of time. You tell someone about something explaining I reckon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benito</td>
<td>Project Writing</td>
<td>It's fact. You research it and write about what you didn't know before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Non-fiction</td>
<td>Information. You're not allowed to put in your own experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>It's your experience, fact. Not for other people to read — just the teacher and maybe me. No pictures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>It's what you've experienced, done or things that have happened to you. We do it to show how we can write what we've done or how far back you can remember. Mr G reads them - it's not for me, I know what I did.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Journal Writing</td>
<td>It's mainly writing about your own experiences. You just keep writing until you run out of things and then you just end it off. We only do it so that we can remember, we mainly do it for ourselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>Fact about what I've done. I think it's just an exercise— you're using your head to remember what you've done. It isn't for yourself or anybody. It's just for the teacher to read. You have to put each fact in the right order (chronological).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benito</td>
<td>Realistic (Journal)</td>
<td>Retelling what I did</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## PERSONAL LETTERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Letter Writing</td>
<td>It's writing about yourself. You ask questions about the penpal similar to what you wrote. Facts, you can lie if you want to but you're not supposed to. Jokes. You tell the other person about yourself. I just write out everything I can think of.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>Penpal Letter</td>
<td>You're writing to a specific person. You tell them anything you want about things that have happened. You have to make yourself clear (they're not here with you and might not understand). The address and all that goes at the top.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Letter Writing</td>
<td>It's really fact, about what you've done and what you're going to do. No beginning, no end — you just write down what you think.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Penpal Letter</td>
<td>This is writing to someone else. You can ask them things about them and get information from them. Asking questions and telling them what you think. You always start with like, &quot;Hello&quot; and then you leave a line and continue on writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benito</td>
<td>Realistic Penpal Letter</td>
<td>I tell what I did on the holidays.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## INSTRUCTIONS

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Instructions</td>
<td>You write out what to do so you can tell people what to do. You have to have the right words so you can understand it. You have to explain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>Instructions</td>
<td>Telling someone how to do something. You have to explain everything — every single little thing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanne</td>
<td>Instructions</td>
<td>You have to make the person that's reading it understand it. You have to explain it. You have to write what to do — make sure you explain it really easily so that the person who's reading it knows what to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Instructions</td>
<td>You have to write down what you do in order too. Nothing else, just number them in order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benito</td>
<td>Instructions</td>
<td>Think of how something's done and write that down. Explain what to do. It has to go in order or someone might get mixed up when they're trying to do it. Board games go from easiest to hardest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Instructions</td>
<td>You have to think of and explain instructions and set them out.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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