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**In the spirit of inquiry: Milton Meltzer, whole language and  
critical theory**

Schwartz, Elaine Gail, M.A.

The University of Arizona, 1992

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IN THE SPIRIT OF INQUIRY:  
MILTON MELTZER, WHOLE LANGUAGE AND CRITICAL THEORY

by

Elaine Gail Schwartz

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the  
DIVISION OF LANGUAGE, READING AND CULTURE  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION  
WITH A MAJOR IN READING

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1992

## STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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## APPROVAL BY THESIS DIRECTOR

This thesis has been approved on the date shown below:

Yetta M. Goodman June 17, 1992  
Date

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**ABSTRACT**

This is an analysis of the relationship between whole language, critical theory, and Milton Meltzer's documentary social histories, biographies, and one historical novel written for adolescent readers. Exemplified in my analysis are Meltzer's works on Christopher Columbus, the African-American experience, American history from the Colonial Era to the present, and the root causes of poverty, crime and social inequity.

My premise is that Meltzer's works, as part of the oppositional tradition in children's literature, foster a counterhegemonic social analysis of history. The synergistic effect of Meltzer's works, critical theory, and whole language has the potential to create a new radical transformative educational paradigm. This paradigm will lead to the actualization of critical democracy in classrooms, schools, and society.

CHAPTER 1  
CONNECTIONS

Truth, Democracy and Human Agency

The truth could come only from being a satyagrahi, which meant being an experimentalist with future truth and a visionary who struggles against current falsehood.

(Gandhi, 1989, p. 277)

Democracy is a site of struggle and as a social practice is informed by competing ideological conceptions of power, politics and community.

(Giroux, 1988b, p. 29)

The words of Giroux and Gandhi reflect two concerns I have had as student, parent, educator and citizen-activist. It is the search for truth, a truth that can only be achieved through non-violent democratic action, that has served to inform my praxis and writing. It is with these two concepts in mind that I undertake this thesis.

Weaving the Web: Whole Language, Critical Theory,  
Liberatory Praxis, and the Works of Milton Meltzer

Knowledge of the past is the key  
to understanding the present.

(Dewey, 1916, p. 214)

The primary purpose of this thesis is to weave together the theoretical concepts found in the writings of prominent whole language theorists, and critical theorists

with the themes found in Milton Meltzer's documentary social histories and biographies for adolescent readers. In the process of this task I hope to set forth the foundation for a brief glimpse of the Inquiry Process; a form of liberatory pedagogical praxis which incorporates the whole language perspective and the ideals of critical theory. My graduate studies have allowed me to investigate separately these three topics (whole language, critical theory, and the works of Milton Meltzer). I hope to bring them together in the context of a meaningful, coherent, and socially relevant thesis.

#### Whole Language

The specific stimulus for this work grew out of a concern addressed by Joel Taxel (1991c):

The issue is that within the context of current whole language instruction our focus has been on process. Of course, many have discussed the importance of making issues of race, gender and other equity issues part of our conversation and dialogue about books. However, we have not succeeded in fully weaving our concern for these issues into the fabric of whole language discourse. (p. vi)

Taxel brings our attention to the issue of whole language at a crossroads. The past focus on process has brought many educators into the whole language fold. At the same time, a true understanding of the potential political nature of whole language has not been widely appreciated. Henry Giroux (1991) also echoes this belief:

The time has come to extend its (whole language) possibilities by linking the pedagogical practices of literacy to a sense of purpose and meaning that explicitly address how reading, writing and literacy can contribute to a creation of critical citizens, democratic schools and a more just society. (p. 417)

It is my belief that if we neglect the political, we may somehow devalue the potential liberatory and transformative power of whole language.

### Significance

Whole language is a perspective, a set of beliefs, a "theory in practice" (Edelsky, 1991, p. 97). It is a new educational paradigm (Cambourne, 1987). Essential to this set of beliefs is the idea that "systemic social inequality is undesirable and that education must work to end rather than to perpetuate a stratified society" (Edelsky, 1991, p. 97). Whole language posits a transactional view of language and learning which owes its theoretical underpinnings to the psycholinguistic work of Ken Goodman (1982) and Frank Smith (1971, 1973). Language provides the tools with which to represent the symbols of our social reality. Within this context language learning is purposeful and meaningful. The process occurs within a holistic, natural social context. Thus language is a direct reflection of the social construction of knowledge.

Whole language praxis leans towards the actualization of democratic values within the classroom (school) context.

It returns power to children and teachers, democratizes classrooms and schools, supports children's linguistic diversity and culture, enables children to join the Literacy Club (Smith, 1987), and assumes that all are capable of learning and becoming experts (Altwerger & Flores, 1991).

However, whole language classrooms or schools alone will not bring about a radical change in the social and political structure of society (Shannon, 1991). For this to occur we need to understand the social construction of knowledge, power, and reality and the manifestation of this, through the process of socialization, upon students, parents, teachers, administrators and the society at large. It is through the social construction of knowledge and power that the values inherent in the dominant social paradigm are expressed and actualized. The values inherent in the dominant social paradigm include: corporate capitalism, competition, social Darwinism, individualism, militarism, racism, sexism, ageism, and consumerism. These values are directly reflected in the social construction of reality. It is the social construction of reality and the subsequent socio/politico inequities formed by our value system that are addressed by critical theorists. They specifically address the issues of culture, power, democracy, hegemony, human agency, and resistance.

### Extend the Reading Revolution

In the Manifesto for a Reading Revolution, Ken Goodman (1976) speaks to the powerful meaning of the radical shift brought to literacy pedagogy by the whole language perspective; the shift from the mechanistic, reductionist approach to literacy to the viewing of literacy as a natural, meaningful extension of language learning in social context. K. Goodman's "Reading Revolution" (1976) has positively affected the classrooms of America and beyond. The attraction of the whole language perspective is evident in the voluminous whole language publications, the formation of the international Whole Language Umbrella Organization, the success of Whole Language Conferences, all amidst a rapidly growing grass roots whole language movement.

I believe that this brings us back to Taxel's concern; for the theory that has been at the intellectual heart of the whole language movement does not explicitly address the inequitable distribution of power and resources in our society. Although I believe it does provide us with both the vision and the praxis for radical social and political change (K. Goodman, 1982). We must call for an extension of the "Reading Revolution" (1976) to a social and political revolution if the vision is to be realized. I believe that the inclusion of the explicit social analysis

presented by the critical theorists can serve to foster debate on the possibility of such a revolution.

### The Revolution Begins

I am not alone with these thoughts. In the past few years a growing number of whole language educators who understand this potential have begun to address this issue in their praxis, at conferences and in the written literature. Most encouraging is the inclusion of their voices in The Whole Language Catalog (1991) which attests to the vibrancy and importance of discourse on the connections between whole language and critical theory.

Patrick Shannon (1990) is one of the most well known educators who seeks to promote the liberatory aspects of literacy through establishing values common to both whole language theorists and critical theorists. Shannon refers to this as critical literacy (1991).

Carole Edelsky, Bess Altwerger, and Barbara Flores (1991) in an exploration of whole language, in both monolingual and bilingual settings, believe that whole language does subvert the dominant paradigm by fostering forms of literacy learning that run counter to the positivistic, mechanistic rationality of mainstream literacy instruction.

Ira Shor (1987), working toward the development of student voice, implemented a critical whole language perspective in his community college classes.

Andrew Gitlin (1990), working with graduate level education students, developed an educative research process (combining critical theory and whole language) which fosters the development of student voice as a form of protest and transformation. These are just a few examples of educators who are making the connections between whole language and critical theory.

#### Children's Literature and the Selective Tradition

Joel Taxel and others have also made the connection in relation to the development of literature based classrooms. The actualization of democratic values within classrooms has supported the development of literature based whole language classrooms: classrooms in which the students democratically collaborate in developing curriculum. The basis for much of their learning lies in the use of trade books. However, these books, by and large, represent the dominant values of the society (Christian-Smith, 1989; Gilbert, 1991; Luke, 1988; Saul, 1986a, 1986b; Taxel, 1981). Critical theorists refer to these dominant values as the selective tradition, i.e., "an intentionally selective version of a shaping and a pre-shaped present,

which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification" (Williams, 1977, p. 113).

Taxel's (1989) concern surfaces again at this point. Whole language praxis does address the child as learner in a democratic social context. However, it does not address the issue of the selective hegemonic tradition represented by the content of the trade books. It is this issue, amongst others, that is addressed by the neo-Marxist visionary social analysis of the critical theorists.

#### Milton Meltzer: Social Historian

The issue of content and the selective hegemonic tradition has brought me to look at the works of Milton Meltzer. It is my contention that Meltzer's documentary social histories and biographies written for adolescents are part of the oppositional tradition in children's literature; they serve to counter the culture and ideology of the dominant paradigm as represented in the selective tradition. In his role as a social historian, Meltzer has focused upon presidential history, feminism, the Holocaust, the African-American experience, the Civil War, American minorities and other social issues. I believe that through his choice of topics, genres, and stance (Bruner, 1986), he provides us with what I term the ideology of possibility.

The ideology of possibility describes the major theme found throughout Meltzer's works: all humans, as actors on the grand historical stage, have the power to change, to transform the world. The corollary to this is that the human spirit, even when faced with the banality of evil (Arendt, 1964) will struggle in dignity for life and justice, against overwhelming odds, even in the face of certain death.

In order to better understand our history, we must understand the roles of many people, not just those represented by the selective hegemonic tradition. Thus it is through an analysis of Meltzer's works that the significance of children's trade books as vehicles for the social construction of reality is clarified. Meltzer chooses to go beyond the more commonly known heroes of American history; he includes the lives of the ordinary people, the humble actors on the historical stage. He presents the multiple voices of slave and slave holder, soldier and general, from the most well known to the most humble, to provide an historical tableaux that reaches closer to the truth as seen by the many, and not just the elite few. He shows us that as actors in this historical drama we also have the obligation to come to understand our world and to work towards its transformation.

Whole language, critical theory and Milton Meltzer's works are tied together by the themes of democracy and transformation. I believe that out of the gentle merging of whole language theory and the social analysis of the critical theorists a liberatory democratic praxis shall arise. I hope in some small way to contribute to the growth of this praxis.

#### Reflections on Thought Collectives

As this thesis began to take form, I also began to reflect upon the values and beliefs that inform my writing. I have learned through experience in whole language graduate courses that reflection is one avenue towards the discovery of self and truth. It is in this context that I wish to trace the history of my significant thought collectives.

Ludwick Fleck (1984) defines:

. . . Thought collectives as a "community of persons mutually exchanging ideas or maintaining intellectual interaction." . . . The thought collective by implication provides the special carrier for historical development of any field of thought, as well as for the given stock of knowledge and level of culture. (p. 38)

My family provided me with my earliest thought collective. The humanistic Jewish ideals acquired there provided me with a lifelong foundation. Paramount amongst these ideals is the belief that all humans should be

treated equally (cultural pluralism). Violence is not an option. Education, hard work, and honesty are to be highly valued. I not only internalized these values, I began to apply them to an analysis of the world around me. At 13 years of age I was quite concerned with the social and economic inequities of our society.

In my early teens I discovered our local progressive community radio station. At that time the country was in the midst of the Civil Rights movement, citizens were concerned about the bomb, and the folk music revival was alive and well. The radio opened the door to the radical folk culture of the 1960s.

At the same time my high school thought collective consisted of students who were also interested in social issues. Some had parents who had been involved in past political struggles. Others had older siblings who were then involved in the San Francisco protests against the House UnAmerican Activities Committee. Although my family had provided the ideals, my high school thought collective brought me closer to the issue of social action and the vision of transforming society.

In college I majored in Anthropology, reveling in the discovery of cultural diversity. My college thought collective consisted of people interested and/or active in

the Civil Rights movement and the growing anti-Vietnam War movement.

In the ensuing years, beyond college and into graduate school, my most influential thought collective consisted of other social activists like myself; friends who have been involved in lifelong struggles for peace and social justice. We read and discussed the socially significant works of an eclectic group of authors: Mohandas Gandhi, Emma Goldman, Karl Marx, Alexander Berkman, Chairman Mao, Doris Lesing, Robin Morgan, June Jordan, Ivan Illich, Charlene Spraetnek and others--all in the grand search for truth, peace and social justice.

My experiences as a public school reading specialist and classroom teacher provided me with a new thought collective. This one consisted primarily of the students with whom I spent a good part of each day. Their enthusiasm for learning, tempered by past classroom experiences, affirmed my belief that humans learn in a natural, holistic social context. This led me to discover holistic education, psycholinguistics, and the whole language movement. The presence of Ken and Yetta Goodman at the University of Arizona brought me back to graduate school.

The thought collective I discovered in graduate school has further helped me to affirm and develop my beliefs

about the nature of society, literacy, and pedagogy. I have discovered whole language theorists and practitioners whose pedagogy carries within it the seeds of social transformation. They combine theory with demonstrable praxis in whole language classrooms. I have experienced the development of democratic power relationships within this context (J. Goodman, 1989). Democratic power relationships are learning experiences which promote democratic sensibilities amongst the participants (J. Goodman, 1992). The Inquiry Cycle (Harste, Short, & Burke, 1988; Short & Burke, 1991), to be discussed in the last chapter of this thesis, is an example of such whole language praxis.

#### Content and Praxis

Reflection upon past and current thought collectives has brought me to address Taxel's concern: to fully understand that whole language practitioners need to look not only at process but also at content. We must take into consideration the social construction of curricular knowledge in whole language classrooms. What types of literature are children reading? What values are represented in the literature? Does classroom praxis stimulate a diversity of ideas? How diverse are these ideas if the "tools of praxis," in this case children's

literature, represent only the dominant cultural paradigm? Do their history books, fiction or non-fiction, present history only from the viewpoint of the conquerors? This is what is meant by looking at content.

We must simultaneously look at praxis and the "tools of praxis," specifically in this case, the documentary social histories and biographies for adolescents by Milton Meltzer, if we are to extend the "Reading Revolution" (K. Goodman, 1976) to a radical social and political revolution. It is these ideals, as articulated in the works of the critical theorists, and, I believe, exemplified in the works of Milton Meltzer, that I will address in this thesis.

## CHAPTER 2

## MILTON MELTZER: TO CAPTURE THE TRUTH

The struggle of man against power  
is the struggle of memory against  
forgetting.

(Kundera, 1987, p. 89)

Milton Meltzer's genesis as a writer of documentary social histories and biographies for adolescent readers can be attributed to his own particular social history. The beginnings can be traced to his experiences as a first generation Jewish American coming of age in the 1920s in Worcester, Massachusetts. Subsequent Depression Era experiences, both in Massachusetts and New York City, further contributed to his growing social awareness and radicalization. However, the most elusive factor in his development is that unknown conflation of personal and political experiences that fostered his lifelong search for historical truth and social justice; others, living through similar experiences, appeared to remain blind and impassive in the face of social injustice. Meltzer himself reflects upon this genesis that appeared to develop "without any conscious plan. I'm sure it came out of some human necessity that I'm sure was shaped by my growing up during the depression" (DeLuca & Natov, 1980, p. 95).

### A Writer's Beginnings

Meltzer (1988c) relates the story of his formative early years in his autobiography, Starting from Home: A Writer's Beginnings (1988c). He is clear to point out that "Sometimes in this book I've given up fact and taken to fiction--not to avoid the truth, but to capture it" (p. 145). As in his other works, Meltzer, writing in narrative form, places his history in social context. He was born May 8, 1915, as the middle son of Mary and Benjamin Meltzer, working class Jewish immigrants from the area of Eastern Europe known at one point in time as Austro-Hungary. His parents had little schooling in Europe. Meltzer's father had no desire to spend his life in the sweatshops of New York City; with only a small investment, he was able to earn a modest living as a self-employed window washer. Meltzer's mother remained at home and managed an efficient household.

Meltzer grew up in a multiethnic neighborhood. Many of his childhood playmates were, like him, first generation Americans whose parents had immigrated to America from Eastern and Western Europe; all representatives of the mythical American melting pot. Meltzer notes that they "played on the streets together, yet less often entered one another's homes and rarely if ever did they intermarry" (Commire, 1986, p. 205).

In Meltzer's home, being Jewish was simply taken for granted (Commire, 1986). His parents were culturally Jewish or what we might call secular Jews. Yiddish, the language of Eastern European Jews was left behind as his "greenhorn" parents strove to assimilate and become 100% Americans. No books about Jewish history were to be found in their home. Although his father was not a believer and the family rarely went to temple, Milton, the middle son, did have a bar mitzvah. However, his younger brother Marshall, born when Milton was five, did not.

Meltzer loved school and reading. The discovery of the public library helped him to feed his insatiable appetite for the printed word (Meltzer, 1988c). With money from his part-time jobs he began his own library of the pulp novels of the times. He loved reading adventure stories that took him "out of his skin" (p. 20) and voraciously devoured Horatio Alger, Nick Carter, Frank Merriwell and Deadwood Dick. For Meltzer, reading had much to do with the shaping of his picture of the world (Commire, 1986).

His childhood experiences also aided in the development of his sense of history. He relates (1988c) that while

. . . rambling up our dirt street, past the great open Worcester meadows, I found a big rock planted deep in the earth. Carved on its face was the thrilling news that Jonas Rice, the first permanent settler of

Worcester, had built his log cabin right here on my street! That had been 1713. (p. 22)

That was how he first became aware of the history of his town. He still remembers the "echoes of Indian voices . . . all around me." Voices that were evident in the place names he had taken for granted: "Quinsigamond, Tatnuck, Packachoag . . . the beautiful names Indians gave to the lakes, streams, and hills they loved so much" (p. 23).

Some of his earliest memories of school were of his first Thanksgiving play in the third grade. From that he became aware that without the knowledge shared freely by the Indians, the Pilgrims would have probably perished. This conveyed the implicit sense that white men were not all omnipotent and all knowledgeable.

While in junior high school, like his older brother Allan before him, Meltzer took on odd jobs to help out with the family's finances. He worked first as a newspaper boy and later as an assistant to a milkman. As a milkman's assistant he had to leave for work at three in the morning. It was during this period that he realized his father also rose and left during the wee hours of the morning on the way to his 12 to 14 hour day as a window cleaner. I believe this is one of the early signs of Meltzer's growing awareness of the plight of the working class.

None of Meltzer's relations had ever attended college (1988c), yet Milton knew that he wanted to obtain a college degree in order to become a teacher. Therefore he chose to attend Classical High School in Worcester where he hoped to meet real Americans, "unhyphenated Americans" (p. 78). This seemed to be a conscious attempt on his part to escape the multiethnic world of Italian-Americans, Polish-Americans and Jewish-Americans and to move closer to assimilation into mainstream American society. His parents had in a sense left him without the deep religious roots of many of his ancestors. In adolescence he began to search for his identity and place in the world.

At Classical High School Meltzer met Anna Shaughnessey, the teacher who was to have a tremendous, lifelong impact upon him. Anna Shaughnessey was an Irish-Catholic graduate of Radcliff. Meltzer notes that, "English was her field, but her mind roamed free over all the world of knowledge" (1988c, p. 80).

Meltzer studied literature in social and historical context during his two years in Anna Shaughnessey's classes; he studied the authors' lives and worlds and the ideas of their times. Thus he began to understand the social forces that shaped them and their works. Shaughnessey encouraged her students to enter into free and open discourse about the full contextual meaning of

literature. She explained the anti-Semitic portrayal of Shakespeare's Shylock in historical context. Meltzer, along with his classmates, could thus read Shakespeare within a broad historical and social context.

In addition to his classes with Shaughnessey, Meltzer attended the meetings of The Club, an after school literary discussion group that met in her home. There the students ranged far and wide into historical and contemporary works. She introduced the works of Henry David Thoreau to Meltzer by noting that "When you read him, you'll find his ideas, his way of looking at life, will mean as much to you as if he were born yesterday" (1988c, p. 81).

Meltzer began to study Thoreau in depth. Thoreau's principled stand and belief in social justice made a lasting impression on the young Meltzer, for he read his works at that vulnerable age when adolescents actively seek out values and truths by which to live their lives. Perhaps the following quote epitomizes Thoreau's influence on Meltzer, "How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book" (1988, p. 81).

Meltzer found that Thoreau was not alone in his abolitionist, principled beliefs in nonviolence. He began to read the anti-slavery poetry of John Greenleaf Whittier and Walt Whitman. He delved into "novels of disillusionment with war" (p. 82). He also began to

research the history of Worcester; finding that in 1852 his hometown had been the heart of anti-slavery sentiment in Massachusetts. It had actually been an abolitionist stronghold since 1767. Local Quakers and abolitionists had spread the ideas of nonviolent resistance to evil. The first National Women's Rights Conference had been held there in 1850. Abolitionists in his hometown had fought the fugitive slave laws and were directly involved in the Underground Railroad. He found that his city had a very rich, progressive history. He began to realize, through his own research, that history, as learned in school, is fraught with distortions and omissions. Through the lives of Thoreau and other progressive, principled people, he saw the effects of both individual and group struggle aimed at the transformation of society. He realized that "social transformation was possible with the people's hard work" (1988c, p. 105).

By his senior year in high school, Meltzer became a "word man" (1988c, p. 131). He wrote and edited the school literary magazine and was also elected class prophet (Commire, 1988). His interests in social history and writing began to coalesce at this time. During this period he had begun to read The Nation and The New Republic. He began to read reports that went beyond cold statistics and touched upon the anguish and desperation of those

struggling in the third year of the Depression. He realized that writers could help people in trouble, could use the power of their words for social good.

It was during this time that Shaughnessey told him about the New College, a new progressive experimental teacher's college at Columbia University. Meltzer applied and was accepted as a scholarship student. Thus, with the Depression well under way, he set out for New York City.

#### The Depression Era

We didn't go broke in the Depression.  
Ma and Pa had started broke.  
(Meltzer, 1988c, p. 68)

The Depression vividly demonstrated to Meltzer the failure of the American dream. Family and friends became part of the human toll of the era. The Horatio Alger books had presented a grand mythology, whose fulfillment of gold and riches, was to be reserved for the few, while in reality millions suffered. Meltzer experienced this on a wider scale the summer before he began his studies at Columbia. He moved to New York City and spent the summer living with relatives and working in his uncle's garment factory. Daily, on the way to work, he passed the makeshift hovels of the Hoovervilles (Commire, 1986).

Columbia University's New College was truly experimental; education, coupled with experience, would

lead to a degree. As part of his experience, Meltzer returned to Worcester and spent one year in a factory spray painting women's shoes. His evenings were spent reading voraciously and keeping detailed notes. His daily working class existence was coupled with his insatiable need to read, analyze, and understand the world.

While at the New College, Meltzer became part of the radical student movement. He joined the American Student Union, a progressive student organization working to pressure the New Deal administration to create a National Youth Administration (Personal communication, November, 1991). He also became involved in the efforts to organize service and maintenance workers at Columbia (Commire, 1986).

During this period he attended the radical plays of Clifford Odets, read novels of working class life, and attended lectures by John Dewey. He took Anthropology courses with Ruth Benedict and was also privileged to hear the guest lectures of Franz Boaz (Personal communication, November, 1991). It was also during this period that he had his first publication--an essay on the case of Sacco and Vanzetti. Sacco and Vanzetti, two Italian anarchists, were victims of the anti-sindicalist fever of the late nineteenth century; they were framed and ultimately

executed for a murder and robbery they did not commit (Meltzer, 1967a).

Meltzer, in his fifth year at the New School, knew many people who had graduated and could not find work. He saw many of the best brains disappear from the universities into the New Deal agencies (Commire, 1988). He began to feel that there had to be something better to do in life than to strive for riches. In 1935 he dropped out of college.

#### The Federal Theater Project

In 1935 Meltzer was living in poverty on the west side of New York City. He had applied for and received city relief. His elder brother Allan, who was working for the Works Progress Administration (WPA), helped him with survival tips such as how best to utilize corrugated egg cartons as shoe leather. When Meltzer applied for relief, he had listed himself as an unemployed writer. This fact, coupled with a few good words from his brother, may have helped him to find work. As it was he was soon employed as a writer in the Public Relations Department of the WPA Federal Theater Project (Personal communication, February 18, 1992). For the next three years he prepared background materials for teachers who brought their students in to see the Federal Theater Projects productions. The Federal

Theater Project was designed with the idea in mind that culture should be democratized, made available to the ordinary people. All Americans, regardless of income, were entitled to participate in cultural activities. While Meltzer worked for the Federal Theater Project, he was also involved with the Workers Alliance Union's struggles against Federal Theater Project layoffs. During this period he learned that "militant struggle could make a difference" (Commire, 1986).

During the 1930s Meltzer also became involved in the growing anti-war movement that swept across the college campuses. He was "one of many who signed the Oxford Pledge of absolute refusal to serve in the armed forces" (Commire, 1986, p. 212). Through his readings and experiences he had learned the value of organized struggle and non-violent resistance. However, his belief in pacifism was tested by the Spanish Civil War (Edgar, 1992); a war in which many young Americans, as part of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, participated in the fight against Franco and the growing tide of European fascism.

In 1941, Meltzer met Hilda Belinky on a blind date. They were married in June of that year. In 1942, with America's entry into World War II, Meltzer was drafted into the army. He spent his 42 months in the military as a control tower operator in the United States. While in the

army, he "volunteered to write for service newspapers and gave lectures on democracy and fascism and why we were in the war" (Commire, 1986, p. 214). His first daughter, Jane, was born during his military service.

During the post World War II period, he worked as a publicist for Henry Wallace's 1948 presidential campaign. Meltzer and others hoped that Wallace's Progressive Party would serve to push the country toward a much "more liberal domestic program and a less belligerent foreign policy" (Commire, 1986, p. 214).

From 1948 to 1956 he was employed as a writer for a public relations agency that worked with the pharmaceutical industry. Writing had become his way of making a living (DeLuca & Natov, 1980). During this period of his life he found the "eternal conflict between profit and use, between real needs and induced needs, was abundantly clear. . . . The jockeying for power and position . . . was just as plain and painful" (Commire, 1986, p. 215).

It was during this period that he realized he wanted to write a history of African-Americans. He left his well paid position in the pharmaceutical industry for another which allowed him more control of his time. He began work on his first book; it was an enormous piece of work and he had some trepidation about working alone. With luck he was able to find that Langston Hughes, unofficial African-

American poet laureate and writer, was willing to become his collaborator (Commire, 1986). This was the beginning of a friendship that was to endure until Hughes' death in 1967. This collaboration and the subsequent publication of A Pictorial History of the Negro in America (1956) marked a focal point in a career that has spanned almost four decades.

Since that time Meltzer has gone on to publish over 70 volumes of works that include his autobiography, one piece of historical fiction, documentary social histories, and biographies for adults and adolescents. His personal history, as a first generation Jewish American whose life was indelibly imprinted by the Depression, is reflected in his works on the history of the Jewish people, Jewish immigration, the Holocaust, and the Depression Era. World War II and the social events and upheavals of the next 40 years are also directly mirrored in his choice of topics, genre, and stance. These topics are reflected in his documentary social histories and biographies for adolescent readers. He traverses a broad panorama: from slavery to the Civil War, Reconstruction to the Civil Rights movement, women's rights to refugee rights, and the world history of slavery to the Holocaust. His biographies of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Langston Hughes, Margaret Sanger, Betty Friedan, and Winnie Mandela represent a

sample of his works. All of his works attest to his meticulously researched narrative and documentary sources, which together provide a rich literary and visual presentation of his topics.

Meltzer's writings reflect his concern for the underside of history; the stories of the ordinary people who actively participate in the making of history, the poor and oppressed as well as those whose public careers are well known in mainstream historical writing. Foremost in all of his work is his belief in the power of human agency in the transformation of self and society.

Meltzer has been the recipient of many awards, including, just to mention a few, the Jane Adams Peace Association Children's Book Award for Ain't Gonna Study War No More: The Story of America's Peace Seekers (1985a) and the 1987 Golden Kite Award for Nonfiction, Society of Children's Book Writers for Poverty in America (1986c) (Edgar, 1992, p. 3). Many of his books have also been selected as Library of Congress Best Children's Books of the Year, Notable Children's Trade Books in Social Studies, and as the New York Times Outstanding Children's Books of the Year.

In many ways it is as if the narrative themes of Meltzer's life are themselves mirrored in the grand

narrative of his written works. It is in that context that I wish to speak to the issue of Milton Meltzer as author.

#### On Writing History:

##### Bound in the Oneness of Humanity

What the concerned historian chooses to investigate in the past is determined by an interest in the life of the present, past facts must answer to present interest.  
(Meltzer, 1974d, p. 106)

#### Why Does He Write?

In examining Meltzer's work I posed the question, why does he write? For Meltzer truly loves to write and does so for six to seven hours a day, six to seven days a week. The issue of social justice is the central theme that runs throughout his writing. He portrays men and woman who are "committed to the struggle for freedom and equality" (Meltzer, 1978). It is perhaps best to let him answer in his own words:

I write . . . about how the world works, about greed and altruism, about good and evil, the innocent and the damned. Yet never in abstract terms. I write about them in their infinite variety. (Meltzer, 1990f, p. 3)

I find great pleasure in trying to reconstruct the past, always learning something new, discovering fresh ways to look at life, seeing people and characters in different perspectives and of course finding that readers enjoy and themselves go through the process of growth. (Carter & Abrahamson, 1990, pp. 57-58)

Meltzer writes to find common bonds, while at the same time trying to understand the differences that may separate

us. His goal is to develop a sense of perspective that will help us to better comprehend our social reality (Meltzer, 1991e). He would like "to bring out new possibilities by emphasizing those times or events in the past that reveal peoples' ability to resist injustice, to join together and even sometimes to win" (Meltzer, 1991e, p. 6). In the process he hopes to "illuminate the connections and contradictions, the parallels and opposition, the lies and truths that make up the living tissue of history" (Meltzer, 1991e, p. 5).

It is the primary obligation of a writer to combat the cynical and defeatist view of human nature that dismisses any attempt to make society more just, more fair, more decent" (Meltzer, 1989c, p. 157). He wants to give his readers "vision, hope and energy" (1989c, p. 157). For "writing about social issues need not depress and dispirit readers, it should provide them with courage . . ." to face the issues and challenges of the present" (1989c, p. 157).

#### To Find a Common Humanity

In this process Meltzer "tried to find some pattern of meaning in the struggle to realize his own humanity" (Meltzer, 1991d, p. 5). He hopes to break "down the barriers of time and mortality so as to extend the limits of human consciousness beyond the span of a single life to

discover . . . history, . . . collective memory" (Meltzer, 1981, p. 90). For "to have a sense of history is to have a sense of one's own humanity" (1981, p. 89). He hopes that a "creative interpretation of the basic truths . . . will help readers to reject stereotypes and myths. . . ." (Meltzer, 1991c, p. 8).

It is through history that we come to see the dual nature of humanity. For Meltzer,

. . . both creation and destruction are inseparable parts of civilization, to see man's nature as neither good nor evil, but as containing both possibilities. . . . We have the freedom to realize one or the other. The power to choose between good and evil is within our reach. (Meltzer, 1981, p. 89)

#### In Search of Truth

He believes that the history he writes is honest, truthful, and dedicated to opening the doorway to the past in order to provide meaning and stimulate human agency in the present; to help us to see that the past survives in the institutions and lives of the present. I believe that this vision will aid in fostering critical inquiry and will hopefully pave the way for transformative personal and social action.

In Meltzer's quest to find truth in his work it is apparent that there is no such entity as objectivity or neutrality. "Those who claim it are not human, they are

dead souls" (Meltzer, 1991c, p. 2). His works are informed by the values he is committed to (Meltzer, 1991d).

No writer is ever disinterested no matter how much he may claim to be. The question is, what interest does he have? Those interests define his point of view, the stance he will take, the choice of subject, the choice of style and genre and will reveal the intent behind his work. (p. 5)

Meltzer writes from a specific point of view with a specific purpose in mind. His choices reflect his interest, curiosity, and the way in which the material touches his emotional being (Meltzer, 1991e). He expresses his profound humility when he states, "Sometimes I think I know the answers before I start work on a book. The act of writing often teaches me better. If I'm lucky, I may find out what the true questions are" (Meltzer, 1974d, p. 104).

### Social Justice

Meltzer's point of view, as portrayed in his autobiography, stems from an awareness of social justice issues, a concern for the "underdog, the downtrodden, the disadvantaged" (1991d, p. 60). To better understand the conditions which create injustices in our society Meltzer constantly reiterates how it is that an "understanding of the past illuminates the present" (Brown, 1987, p. 18).

### To Counter the Selective Tradition

Meltzer writes also to counter the selective tradition. The selective tradition being that "intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a preshaped present" (Williams, 1977, p. 117). Or in other words, the vision of history told from the point of view of those who hold power in society; the point of view of history from the top. It is history as told from the white male Anglo Saxon point of view. Meltzer counters the selective tradition by disclosing the "real cost of the past" (Meltzer, 1968b, p. 109). He strives to present a past that is not distorted, trivialized or liable to lead to a general sense of boredom and disdain for history. He hopes to provide a picture of the real "blood and bones of history" (Meltzer, 1991e, p. 6) through the voices of the ordinary people, those unsung actors on the historical stage.

### For Whom Does He Write?

For whom does Meltzer write? He writes for adolescents for he believes that

. . . books make their greatest mark when they reach readers in their growing years. The young look everywhere for that ground of truth on which they can stand before they commit the power of their body and mind to the world as it is, or as they might wish to remake it. (Meltzer, 1991d, p. 5)

The young have fewer prejudices, and fewer perceptions. The country needs an informed youth, taught to think critically about the difficult issues of our time. (Meltzer, 1991c, p. 12)

Meltzer hopes that his works will "teach the art and necessity of asking questions" (1991d, p. 6). "If we do not learn to ask probing questions of the past, how will we meet the challenge of the present?" (Meltzer, 1991g, p. 4). Meltzer is not aiming for consensus in his works, but hopes that the important questions will be asked, and that young "readers will understand that facts alone do not resolve issues. There remains the ultimate question of value and meaning" (Meltzer, 1980c, p. 93).

The voices from the past encourage young readers to question and to come to understand that "we need not accept the world as it is" (Meltzer, 1991f, p. 5). "History is not only what happens to us. History is also what we make happen" (Commire, 1986, p. 218).

#### Historical Narrative: The Living Expression of an Era

We start by telling stories, but we  
must end by telling the truth.

(Rosen, 1987, p. 6)

Barbara Hardy (1977) states that "narrative is . . . a primary act of mind" (p. 31). As "the central function or instance of the human mind" (Jameson, 1981, p. 13), "narrative is the means by which humans represent and structure their world" (Mitchell, 1980, p. viii). Hayden

White (1981) points out that narrative imposes the form of story on our reality. It is through our stories that we are able to make human connections to the past and thus to focus on our common humanity (Coles, 1989). Through this human connection to the past, it becomes apparent that "we are to an astonishing degree a product of the stories we have taken in" (Booth, 1980, p. 2). These stories become embedded in the social construction of self. And as Barbara Tuchman (1979) points out, "Narrative is the spine of history and the key to causation" (p. 144). Diane Levstik (1989) notes that narrative calls forth our basic humanness and in doing so elicits a subjective response to history.

Meltzer is a master of narrative. He approaches the study of history from a holistic point of view; his topics must be viewed in the full social and political context of the grand narrative as embedded in the totality of human history and social experience (Personal communication, February 18, 1992). The personal, social, and historical must all be explicated or the work will lack totality, wholeness, the sense of human story. This is how we make sense of our world.

Meltzer's documentary social histories uphold the view of social history as "history which restores the main narrative of that history that has been repressed or

denied" (Jameson, 1981, p. 83). It is the uniqueness of his finely crafted narrative style that aids in the revelation of those aspects of history that have been previously distorted, omitted, or simply denied. Meltzer uses personal documents and historical records to bring to life the voices of the ordinary people from the past. For Meltzer, "it is this kind of historic material--immediate and concrete, which provides an insight into humanity itself" (Meltzer, 1968c, p. 109). "My purpose is to meld eyewitness accounts with my narrative to create a dramatic history that will illuminate fundamental issues and bring to life the people who shaped them" (Meltzer, 1991, p. 1).

Working with the living expression of an era . . . you get close to reliving those experiences yourself . . . and the challenge of discovering a pattern in them and the meaning they held for millions who lived the lives is endlessly exciting. Let the mill hand, the black abolitionist, the man on the thirties breadline, speak in his own words to our children to help make this a freer more peaceful world. (Meltzer, 1979b, p. 111)

Meltzer is able to "catch the attention of readers and to induce in them the leap of imagination that breaks with present mindedness--that only this moment of life matters" (Meltzer, 1991f, p. 7).

#### Better Than Fiction

The juxtaposition of Meltzer's prose alongside his meticulously researched documentary sources elevates the totality of his work to the realm of art. His fine craft

as a writer further enhances the reader's experience of other times and places. He "personalizes history through the lives and voices of the people of the past and his own narrative voice" (Brown, 1987, p. 20).

Meltzer understands, in the words of C. Vann Woodward, that good history should read better than fiction.

. . . To catch and convey in words the color and texture and tone and meaning of an infinite variety of events, their interrelationships and their participants, demands no less of the historian than of the novelist and may well demand more. (Meltzer, 1991e, p. 7)

Meltzer demands no less of himself. This is reflected in his finely crafted documentary social histories and autobiographies, his "way of writing that is the ultimate lure" (Carr, 1987, p. 711).

#### The Biographer's Craft:

##### Through Sunshine and in Shadow

Telling the complete story often means dismantling the one that already exists.  
(Zinsser, 1987, p. 19)

When you write history, it is people you try to place in the real world, people who love and hate, work and play. . . .

When you write a biography, you present history through the prism of a single life.  
(Meltzer, 1991d, p. 11)

Biography is another way to create the past. "It is history from inside, from the mind and heart of an individual struggling to reshape his own time" (Meltzer,

1968b, p. 109). The heart of biography is "always how one person sees another. It is an image created by the biographer's art. This image is the distillation of the whole life. It is a rendering of that truth, an arrangement of it, an interpretation of it" (Meltzer, 1991d, p. 15). This image is a representation of the reality, "the ceaseless flux of life, the raw material" (Meltzer, 1991d, p. 15).

Biography is never neutral, but rather represents the world view of the biographer, the reasons behind the work. The subjects of the majority of Meltzer's biographies have many things in common: "They share a deep respect for the rights, dignity and the value of every human being. They stand out against exorbitant wealth and power for the few and poverty and powerlessness for the many" (Meltzer, 1991f, p. 5).

Meltzer, knowing that you cannot separate biography from history, places his subjects in historical context; for "the true subject of history is man" (Bloch, 1991d, p. 17). He tries to write biographies that "light up the corners of their lives and show the play of personality in history . . . to balance sympathy with reality in the interest of truth and experience" (Meltzer, 1991c, p. 6).

Meltzer attempts to show his subjects with all their complexities and contradictions, their strengths and

foibles, or as he says in both "sunshine and in shadow" (Meltzer, 1991d, p. 6).

It is Meltzer's ability to place his subjects in context, and to reveal their lives in both "sunshine and in shadow" (1991d, p. 6), that has aided him in writing one of his most recent timely and possibly controversial biographies, Columbus and the World Around Him (1990a). In this book the myth of Columbus is dismantled by placing the encounter in full historical context. The strength of this work lies in his "search for the truth in a life, . . . and his own response to the truth" (Pachter, 1979, p. 7). In this sense the book is truly a finely crafted work of revelation, as well as a source of information.

Meltzer's approach to biography mirrors his approach to history (Brown, 1987). Biography comes alive through the voices of people from each historical period. We hear their voices in the diaries, letters, articles, songs, broadsides, oral histories, historical documents, and the multitude of other cultural artifacts which serve to bring the past to life. Meltzer utilizes these cultural artifacts along with pictures, drawings, lithographs, photos, and other forms of pictorial representation to bring the images of the past to our vision.

### Historical Fiction: Solidly Rooted in Fact

Meltzer's one venture into historical fiction, Underground Man (1972c) is based upon the autobiography of the Rev. Calvin Fairbank. Meltzer clearly points out that his "venture into fiction was not at the expense of history. Almost everything in the novel is solidly rooted in fact" (Meltzer, 1991b, p. 249).

Calvin Fairbank was a white abolitionist who risked life and liberty to cross into the south to rescue slaves. Meltzer draws a parallel between Fairbank's deeds and those he writes about in his documentary history, Rescue: The Story of the Gentiles Who Saved Jews During the Holocaust (1988b). Calvin Fairbank, whose name is changed to Josh Bowen in the novel, represents another individual whose life is a testimony to "the truth that an alternative is possible to the passive acceptance of evil" (Meltzer, 1991b, p. 249).

Meltzer's skill as a master of the narrative craft is evident in this novel. Josh's dilemma as an adolescent, his search for direction, and his dedication to truth and justice are easy to identify with. Josh's work on the Underground Railroad and his imprisonment strongly testify to the depth of his beliefs, strength of conscience and willingness to act when faced with the banality of evil (Arendt, 1964). Meltzer hopes that this novel, as well as

his histories and biographies will stimulate questions for "if questions aren't raised, if the spirit of inquiry is missing, why read history" (Meltzer, 1968b, p. 108).

Meltzer's purpose has been to raise consciousness, to help us to learn lessons from the past, lessons that may in some way inform our present and future existence--all with the hope for a world that will someday be free of injustice and war, a world that will provide a safe, democratic, sustainable future for all the diverse peoples of the earth.

Meltzer's work speaks directly to issues that are raised in the writings of critical theorists and whole language theorists. With regards to critical theory, in very general terms, his works speak to issues of human agency, social justice, and social and personal transformation. In terms of form and content, they provide us with a holistic narrative history; a history that is a direct representation of the social construction of reality. Thus they help us to make sense of the past, the present, and to prepare for the future.

In the next chapter I hope to provide a fairly concise explanation of the origins of critical theory, its basic concepts, and relationship to the social transformation of our world.

## CHAPTER 3

## CRITICAL THEORY: A PRIMER

The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.

(Marx, 1845, p. 245)

My interest in critical theory is a natural outgrowth of my belief in the power of human agency, i.e., "the constitutive role played by individuals in the creation of culture" (Fox, 1989, p. 25). Human agency makes it possible to reproduce, transform or create culture. The actualization of human agency reflects a constant tension between the individual and culture; between an uncommonly "revolutionary personhood" (Fox, 1989, p. 19) and the hegemony of the dominant culture. This belief in the power of humans to change their world, an understanding of the forces at work in the world, and the creation of culture are directly related to critical theory and the development of a critical pedagogy.

I have also been heavily influenced by the analytical utility of certain Marxist precepts (historical and dialectical materialism), the concept of culture and, most noticeably, by Mahatma Gandhi's (1957) concepts of ahimsa (non-violence) and satyagraha (civil disobedience through non-violence).

Critical theory addresses issues that arose during my multifaceted tenure as a public school teacher: the relationship of power and knowledge to the dominant hegemonic tradition. I observed students whose voices were effectively silenced because of class, ethnicity, or ability; they had lost the power of voice and thus been disenfranchised (O'Connor, 1989). I began to relate my experience in the public schools to ideas gleaned from Gandhi and the writings of Marxist sociologists.

My experiences with women's consciousness raising groups in the early 1970s brought me to believe in education as a form of consciousness raising. Through the processes of dialogue and self-reflection, we began to comprehend our subjectivity and the meaning of female oppression in twentieth century America. We gave voice to our righteous women's anger as we broke down social myths and searched for avenues of expression leading toward personal and social transformation. In the process of consciousness raising and self-actualization, we were undergoing what Paolo Freire (1985) terms conscientizacao. This process "implies the critical insertion of the conscientized person into a demythologized reality" (Freire, 1985, p. 85). Conscientization is a necessary step toward reclaiming one's voice and self-empowerment. In this process the multilayered and multifaceted

interrelationships of power, knowledge, hegemony, ethnicity, gender, and class are explored.

#### The Language of Critical Theory

The rhetoric of critical theory perpetuates the inequalities it proposes to change.  
(Clark, 1990, p. 390)

It is one thing to preach democracy, it is quite another to preach democratically.  
(Wexler, 1991, p. 136)

One of the major critiques of critical theory has been the incomprehensibility and exclusivity of its language. Due to this stratification of language, discourse on critical theory is reserved to a fairly small circle of academic theoreticians (McCarty, personal communication, April, 1992). To be fair, a number of graduate students and interested educators have successfully crossed the linguistic barriers. However, I am concerned that this linguistic elitism may further remove critical theory from the larger realm of discourse; it may simply become a new form of scholasticism.

Critical theorists, with a few exceptions (Gitlin, 1990; Shor, 1987) tend to work in the area of theory, yet neglect the reality of praxis. This does not diminish the analytical utility of their concepts. It does signify that they are missing the point that philosophy and theories of social change develop out of the lived experiences of the

people who struggle to make change on a daily basis. Thus critical theorists, in engaging themselves in the philosophy of the mind, are forgetting the body and the humans whose lives are embedded in social reality. If critical theory is to be actualized it will have to be popularized, i.e., made comprehensible and readily accessible to people beyond the limited audience of its creators, critics, and others willing to struggle with its jargon. It is too important to be consigned solely to the halls of the academy.

In this chapter I intend to present a brief history of critical theory and some of the concepts central to a general understanding of this perspective. In the process I hope to "unmask the secret language" (Bell, 1985) of critical theory.

#### History of Critical Theory

. . . Critical theory contains the best of what remains in the shambles of the Marxist and neo-Marxist theoretical positions, the best of what is left of the Left.

(Poster, 1991, p. 27)

Poster makes it quite clear that the early roots of critical theory are to be found in a critique of classical Marxism. This critique arose in the context of the rise of fascism in 1930s Germany. Max Horkheimer, Theodore Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse, political philosophers of the

Frankfurt School, attempted to assess, from a Marxist perspective, the newly emerging forms of capitalism and the accompanying forms of domination (Giroux, 1983). In the process they developed a theory of cultural production.

While developing the theory of cultural production, they rejected the notion of a scientific Marxism, a Marxism which had uncritically accepted the belief in the supremacy of positivist science and the domination of man over nature. Positivism, according to Horkheimer, presented a view of knowledge and science that stripped both of their critical possibilities (Giroux, 1983). The Frankfurt School moved beyond the two class theory of society (workers and capitalists), the reification of the working class, and reductionist economic and historical determinism. They no longer believed that the mode of production was the single force in the structuring of human society; production relations no longer were considered as the defining factors in the nature and limits of domination and contestation in society. They came to understand that power was more than the outgrowth of commodity production and history. They came to recognize the power of culture (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985).

The Frankfurt School saw the role of culture as part of the dominant society's attempt at administration of human beings (Giroux, 1985). Modern culture was permeated

by a technocratic rationality which was represented in what C. Wright Mills called the culture industry (Giroux, 1988b). This culture industry includes the electronic media of television, film, and radio, as well as the newspaper and magazine trade (Mills, 1988b, p. 12). This growing centralization of power in the media industry marked a narrowing of the range of ideas in public discourse in modern society. It has become a powerful weapon in reproducing the dominant ideological interests of the modern state (Giroux, 1988b).

According to Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux (1985) the Frankfurt School realized that "the failings of Marxism did not signal the need to abandon Marxism as much as the theoretical imperative to revise it" (p. 116).

Within the context of the theory of cultural reproduction domination is seen as a reflection of all of the cultural relations existing within technocratic rationalistic capitalist states. Thus, "the class culture of dominant social groups is transmitted in schools as universal, legitimate knowledge, stratifying both knowledge and students in order to reproduce the class society" (Wexler, 1987, p. 40).

In the process of the critique and the development of a theory of cultural production the philosophers of the Frankfurt School also began work on an emancipatory social

theory. They acknowledged the direct relationship between the dominant culture and human consciousness as exemplified in domination that extended into the human psyche as well as into daily experience. However, they still viewed this relationship as deterministic. Humans were thus characterized as one dimensional; passive in the face of the dominant culture (Marcuse, 1964). This negated or deemphasized the idea of human agency in the transformation of culture. The development of a critical emancipatory social theory was rendered problematic (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985).

The Frankfurt School moved to the United States just prior to World War II. Their critique of classical Marxism and development of a theory of cultural production influenced post war social movements in the United States. This was particularly relevant to those who would become the theoreticians of the New Left and the seminal theoreticians of critical theory.

#### The Growth of Critical Theory

The task of radical theory is to see Marxism, not as a doctrine, but as a critical way of seeing.

(Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985, p. 116)

The human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.

(Marx, 1845, p. 244)

In this section I shall draw upon the works of some of the early critical theorists, in addition to more recent contributors to the field. Many of the theorists were caught in the throes of the early anti-war protests, the Civil Rights movement, the beginnings of the counter culture movement, and the early women's movement. According to Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux (1985) the development of the counterhegemonic oppositional culture stemming from the issues of feminism, ecology, race, and gender impacted heavily on the development of the new radical social theory. The new radical social theorists focused on demonstrating the link between the domination of nature and humanity and the manner in which this is worked out in everyday life. Thus they began to develop an emancipatory transformative radical social theory that would take into consideration all forms of social domination (class, ethnicity, gender, race, ability). They began to articulate new forms of democratic participation; forms which would change the nature of those sites in society where the dominant hegemonic culture is both maintained, reproduced, and, most notably, contested. Schools are sites of both cultural reproduction and resistance. Thus out of the developing radical theory, which we now call critical theory, grew a critical theory of society and schooling. It was the beginning of an

attempt to formulate a critical pedagogy committed to the imperatives of empowering students and transforming the larger social order in the interest of a more just and equitable democracy (Freire, 1988). As such, it provided the opportunity for study of the wide reaching effects of the dominant hegemonic culture on students and teachers alike.

Early attempts at this are reflected in the reproduction theories of schooling articulated by political economists Sam Bowles and Howard Gintis. Bowles and Gintis set forth what they termed the correspondence principle, i.e., that schooling meets the needs of capital by mirroring within schools the class differentiated, alienated social relations of the workplace (Wexler, 1987, p. 40). Thus they provide an example of the application of a deterministic classical Marxism to the concept of schooling. Other radical reproduction theories focused on an analysis of the relationship between schooling and the workplace, class specific educational experiences and job opportunities, the culture of the school, class defined cultures, and the relationship among the economic, ideological and repressive functions of the state, and its effect on school policies and practices (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985). This simple economic determinism and the language of political economy did not suffice as it did not

take into account the role of human agency. To meet this need we must turn to the works of other critical theorists, to the works of Henry Giroux.

Henry Giroux is considered one of the major figures in the development of a critical theory of education (McClaren, 1988). According to Peter McClaren, Giroux's contribution "was an inventive and successful attempt to forge a conceptual link among Antonio Gramsci's formulations of ideology and domination; Freire's concepts of culture and literacy; the Frankfurt School's critique of technocratic rationality, classical Marxism, depth psychology and the sociology of education" (McClaren, 1988). Most important perhaps is his politicization of the concept of culture which is central to an understanding of critical theory.

#### Culture and Power

Culture is constantly in process of being recreated as it is interpreted and renegotiated by its members. In this view, culture is as much a forum for negotiating and renegotiating meaning and for explicating actions as it is a set of rules. . . .

(Bruner, 1986, p. 67)

Culture has political, that is ideological, effects, and one effect is to reinforce the political power.

(Mura, 1988, p. 145)

Giroux expanded upon the dominant concept of culture by removing it from the realm of art and literature.

Giroux, through his comprehension of the dialectical relationship between social structure and human agency, views humans as active participants in the transmission, recreation, and creation of culture. For Giroux (1988b), culture is perceived of as "a field of struggle and social differentiation in which the production, legitimation, and articulation of particular forms of meaning central to the struggle are to be found" (p. 194). Humans are not passive actors on the historical stage, but active in the reproduction and creation of their world. This dialectical relationship between social structure and human agency is reflected in a tension between the individual and society. Or, as Louise Rosenblatt (1978) noted much earlier, the individual exists in a Deweyan anti-dualism, in an active, reciprocal relationship with the environment.

#### Culture as a Form of Protest

Critical theorists have also gone beyond earlier neo-Marxist critiques to a post modern reconstruction of theories of culture and power (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Giroux & McClaren, 1989; McClaren, 1988). They view gender, racial, ethnic, and social relations as "forms of dominance that exist alongside supporting cultural forms" (Giroux, 1988b). Some have begun to look at culture as a form of protest that involves asymmetrical power relations

that provide sites of constant struggle (Giroux, 1988b; Postman, 1979).

Within this concept of culture as a form of protest are two major issues which reflect directly upon the classroom experience: (a) the emphasis on power linked to culture through social and class formations, and (b) meaning as derived from language, narrative and other sign systems that position subjects within webs of possibility (Giroux, 1988a). The way in which we come to know the world is tied directly to these forms of language, narrative and other sign systems.

Michel Foucault (1972) discussed how systems of ideas emerge historically as systems of power and ultimately become discourse, that is discourse which constructs and influences human beings within societal settings and thus becomes the socially constructed truth. Joan Cocks (1989), writing from a feminist perspective, views power as originating in society and exhibiting itself in the form of "spontaneous consent" during normal times (p. 41). This is very much a reflection of Foucault's socially constructed truth.

#### The Many Dimensions of Power

Aronowitz and Giroux (Giroux, 1988b) look to the positive and negative side of power. It is not merely

prohibitive and repressive, but also productive, positive, and educative. Giroux (1985) speaks to the dialectical nature of power. Cracks, tensions, and contradictions exist in various social spheres, such as schools. There power may be exercised as a positive, enabling force in the name of resistance. Its negative force is manifested in the constraints of cultural hegemony (Giroux, 1988b).

Thus power as a form of domination is not simply imposed, but is expressed in the cultural manifestation of the interconnections of power, technology, and ideology; interconnections which produce culture specific forms of knowledge, social relations, and material conditions. Through culture, the negative force of power serves to silence certain segments of a population. As culture, and thus forms of power, are internalized in the complex process of socialization, those who have been oppressed may also participate in their own oppression; as Freire says "former objects of oppression may themselves become subject oppressors" (1970, p. 30).

Giroux (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985), posits the notion of cultural politics: how, through an understanding of the nature of culture and the complex dynamics of ideology we can see the manner in which culture both organizes and mediates the various experiences and dimensions of social life.

Patti Lather (1991), speaking from a feminist perspective, seeks to "produce knowledge from which to act . . . and diffuse power as a means to take advantage of the range of mobile transitory points of resistance inherent in the networks of power relations" (p. 76). Thus even within the discussions of culture and power, the role of human agency and transformation is everpresent.

#### Hegemony and the Selective Tradition

. . . Hegemony goes beyond culture. . . .  
Hegemony goes beyond ideology. What is decisive is not only the conscious system of ideas and beliefs, but the whole lived social process as practically organized by specific and dominant meanings and values.  
(Williams, 1977, p. 113)

The complex interlocking of political, social and cultural forces constitute Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Through the processes of hegemony, power is delegated to some and denied to others. Hegemony regulates the whole social process of the specific distribution of power and influence (Williams, 1977). The notion that humans define and shape their own lives is thus somewhat belied by the concept of hegemony.

Raymond Williams (1977) is known for his expansion of Gramsci's concept of hegemony. He sees the importance of the decisiveness of the "whole lived social process" (p. 133). Hegemony is composed of the whole body of our

practices, expectations, senses, energy, perceptions of selves and the world. It is achieved through systems of meanings and values, what Williams says, in the strongest sense, constitutes culture. It also contains within it the patterns of dominance and subordination of specific social classes.

Hegemony is always a process. The reality of hegemony is evidenced in its political and cultural sense, and it is always dominant, though it is never total or exclusive (1977).

Hegemonic processes must be alert to oppositional and alternative resistance that exist alongside them (Gramsci, 1977).

Henry Giroux and Peter McClaren (1988) clarify the point that resistance is quite different from counterhegemonic forces. Resistance refers to a type of gap between the forces of domination and the dominated subject(s). It is defined as part of an atheoretical, apolitical personal contestation of domination. Whereas counterhegemony implies a political, theoretical and critical understanding of the forces of domination and it contains within it the seeds of alternative or counter social practices.

Michael Apple (1990) furthers the understanding of hegemony. He defines hegemony as the structuring of

knowledge and symbols in our educational institutions. It is intimately related to the principle of social and cultural control. Apple provides an analysis of hegemony that addresses the manner in which institutions of cultural preservation and distribution, such as schools, create and recreate forms of consciousness that facilitate the maintenance of social control without having to resort to overt forms of domination. It is just this maintenance of social control which describes the manner in which hegemonic forces contribute to the manufacture of consent (Chomsky, 1985).

Antonio Gramsci (1988b) addresses the issue of hegemony in relation to literacy. Literacy becomes both a "referent and a mode of critique for developing counterhegemonic forms of education" (p. 10). Linda Christian-Smith (1989), noted for her feminist writings on gender and literacy, sees that much of the authority of texts comes from the practice of hegemony. Other critical theorists currently working in the area of critical theory and literacy see validity in oppositional forms of texts which provide the venue for counterhegemonic processes (Christian-Smith, 1989; Harris, 1986; Shannon, 1989; Taxel, 1981, 1989, 1991).

The active process of hegemony is evidenced in what Williams (1977) terms the selective tradition: ". . . the

intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a pre-shaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification" (p. 117).

Within the hegemonic tradition the selective tradition is simply passed off as the tradition or significant past. What is to be said about any selective tradition is that it represents the interests and dominance of a particular social class.

#### Language and Voice

Language represents the culture, the world, and the means for transmission of culture, history, and all social relationships. Through language we express our own hegemonic and counterhegemonic notions. Bahktin (1981), who views language as a social and political act, sees our definition of the social self as part of a dialogic process. In his dialogic process the capacity to have consciousness is based on otherness, i.e., "the consideration of the self in relation to others in society" (Holquist, 1990, p. 18). Vygotsky (1978, 1989) who well understands the social nature of language, views language as the means by which reflection and elaboration of experience takes place. It is both a highly personal and social human process. Vygotsky, echoing Marx and Engels,

sees the relationship between the individual and society as a dialectical process. It is both in Bahktin's dialogics and Vygotsky's dialectics that we see language as the representation of the historical context of lived experiences. As such, when any group's language, or voice, is silenced, the validity of such lived experience has been effectively nullified. This may occur in verbal discourse or in texts. However, the effect is essentially the same: those whose voices have been silenced become disempowered, disenfranchised, and marginalized (Cummins, 1986).

Bahktin (1981) states that discourse is intimately concerned with those ideological and material forces out of which individuals and groups fashion a voice. He refers to two types of discourse: (a) authoritative, which is constituted by privileged language that comes to us from without, and that has power over us, and (b) internally persuasive discourse, which is the personal retelling of the world in one's own words (accents, personalized style). For Bahktin, "Humans coming to consciousness" is the tension between these two kinds of discourse (p. 424). We attempt to assimilate more into our own system while simultaneously attempting to free our own discourse from the authoritative form.

I believe that it is the selective hegemonic tradition which drives forms of discourse, silences certain

discourses, while supporting others in society at large and within the sites of social and cultural reproduction: the schools. Within the schools we can now look at the politics of representation. The politics of representation signifies that the voices of some students are valued over others. It is a direct reflection of power; some student voices are endowed with cultural capital, while others are dismissed in cultures of silence (O'Connor, 1989).

#### Empowerment

The heart of the idea of empowerment involves people coming into a sense of their own power, a new relationship with their own contexts.

(Fox, 1991, p. 4)

Critical theorists view the concept of empowerment as an essential natural outgrowth of emancipatory social theory and praxis. Freire (1987) sees empowerment as the process of becoming self critical about the historically constructed nature of one's own experience. This ability to name the subjectivities of one's own experience is what Freire terms the ability to read the world. This ability to read the world signifies that the oppressed (peasants, students, teachers) are able to understand the political nature of their social reality and the limits and possibilities of social transformation. Essentially, empowerment leads to the development of critical, active citizens.

Patti Lather (1991) speaks to this issue as a feminist teacher and researcher. She defines empowerment "as an analysis of ideas about the causes of powerlessness, the recognition of systemic oppressive forces, and both individual and collective action to change the conditions of one's life" (p. 4).

Women's consciousness raising groups of the early 1970s offer an excellent example of the process of empowerment. Through collaborative democratic processes women's anger surfaced in a constructive manner, leading to an understanding of the true nature of their oppression, and the development of goals and strategies directed toward both personal and social transformation.

Freire (1987) clearly states that the ultimate goal is the transformation of self and society by means of the reinvention of the "social imagination in the service of human freedom" (p. 152). When applied to our education system, empowerment becomes the enabling process that aids students in "interrogating and selectively appropriating those aspects of the dominant culture that will provide them with the basis for defining and transforming, rather than merely serving the wider social order" (p. 152).

Languages of Critique, Possibility,  
and Democratic Imagery

It (democracy) is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity.

(Dewey, 1916, p. 87)

Giroux (1988a) has given us two terms with which to analyze the subjective conditions of our reality: the language of critique and the language of possibility. The language of critique incorporates one's own subjective position vis-a-vis the larger society, an understanding of hegemony and the selective tradition, an understanding of the interrelationships of power and knowledge, and the ideological forces behind the dominant tradition. Critique alone does not lead to an emancipatory social theory. It must be coupled with the language of possibility.

Giroux's language of possibility provides a language of hope, vision, empowerment, and transformation, both on the individual and social level. According to Jesse Goodman (1992), the language of possibility calls for the creation of discourse that is accessible and provides others with the vision of hope and promise grounded in principles of empowerment, equality, and democracy. These

principles promise the enhancement of human possibility and the transformation of human capacities and social forms which require an education rooted in a view of human freedom as the understanding of the necessity of social transformation in the interest of social justice and equality. This is critical democracy (J. Goodman, 1992).

Out of this language of possibility has emerged the vision of schools as democratic public spheres and teachers as transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1988b). For schools to serve as democratic public spheres they must be constructed around forms of critical inquiry that provide opportunities for democratic dialogic processes and the realization of human agency. In these schools students will learn the discourse of public association and social responsibility. The ultimate goal is to recapture the idea of critical democracy as a social movement that fosters individual freedom and social justice. These schools will provide both the ideological and material conditions necessary to educate citizens in "the dynamics of critical literacy and civic courage" (p. xxxii).

Teachers have the potential to become transformative intellectuals. Ideally, in the process, they will develop a discourse and set of assumptions that will guide their actions. They "will combine reflection and action in the interest of empowering students with the skills and

knowledge needed to address injustices and become critical actors committed to developing a world free of oppression and exploitation" (Giroux, 1988a, p. xxxiv). Their students will become empowered to read the world critically and act to transform it (Giroux, 1988a).

Jesse Goodman (1992) further develops the concept of a language of possibility by calling for an educational language of democratic imagery, i.e., "a theoretical language informed by and rooted in images of real (or hypothesized) people involved in tangible actions that take place in actual settings" (p. 173). This requires the development of a language that is visual, as well as verbal. An educational language of democratic imagery would situate theoretical discourse within a given phenomenon. It implies the importance of an historical and cultural context rooted in praxis, or observation of praxis, and thus prevents critical discourse from becoming lost in theory. I believe J. Goodman intends, through the educational language of critical democratic imagery, to give life to critical theory.

This concept of critical democracy truly exemplifies the goals of critical theorists. For J. Goodman, critical democracy implies a moral commitment to promote the public good over any individual rights to accumulate power and privilege. Critical democracy should go hand in hand with

radical school reform, a reform that demonstrates the "need for educating children in a manner that will develop their compassion, altruism, civic responsibility and commitment to work for the general welfare of the planet" (Goodman, 1991, p. 17). Critical democracy contains the vision of an ideal society and praxis.

Giroux (1988b) views democracy as "a site of struggle and social practices informed by competing ideological conceptions of power, politics, and community" (p. 29). It is tied to the notion of critical citizenship. As such, it becomes part of a significant restructuring of economic and social power enabling power to grow out of cooperative efforts among groups who share a common concern for social good, and who are opposed to hierarchy and control. Democracy must be both understood and internalized by teachers as part of the broader goal of helping students to become critical and active citizens. Both the political and pedagogical aspects of democracy must be linked to the languages of critique, possibility, and critical democracy.

### The Sociology of School Knowledge

This new sociology of school knowledge and curriculum demonstrates that social power is culturally represented, and that knowledge and culture are essential moments in the process of domination. . . . The selective transmission of class culture as common culture silences the

cultures of the oppressed and legitimates the present order as natural and eternal.

(Wexler, 1987, p. 279)

Taxel (1989a) states that the sociology of school knowledge investigates the manner in which "formal and informal knowledge as presented in schools contributes to the formation of values, world views and beliefs supportive of an inequitable social system" (p. 33). Through a close analysis of schooling, Taxel proposes that we look at the manner in which the selective tradition functions. We must ask how power and knowledge are socially constructed. How do schools function as sites of counter hegemonic activities? What is the role played by human agency in such activities?

Taxel proposes to foster this inquiry through a study of the production and consumption of children's literature. He seeks to combine inquiries into reader response and textual analysis with a full study of the authors' histories, creation of texts, the production and publishing process, the distribution process and the manner in which the texts are used in the classroom. In the process, questions need to be asked. How is it that some texts serve to foster the selective tradition, while other texts offer a counterhegemonic perspective, a perspective that is known as the oppositional tradition in children's literature? Thus he proposes to create a panoramic vision

of the process by which children's literature affects the making of meaning, and the recreation and creation of culture in the classroom. Authors, texts, and children, situated in their socio/historical context, are all to be examined through a critical lens. In the following chapter I will apply this critical lens to the works of Milton Meltzer.

## CHAPTER 4

THE WORKS OF MILTON MELTZER:  
THROUGH THE LENS OF CRITICAL THEORY

The one great rule of composition  
is to speak the truth.  
(Thoreau, 1969, p. 278)

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the connections between Meltzer's works and some of the main concepts of critical theory. I will not explicitly address each and every one of his documentary social histories and biographies, the content of which is well noted in the Annotated Bibliography (Appendix B). However, I do want to look at the relationship between a specific selection of his works and critical theory.

The analysis of Meltzer's works through the lens of critical theory falls fully within the perspective of the sociology of school knowledge. The sociology of school knowledge speaks directly to the issue of the social construction of power and knowledge in society. It is with this in mind that I would like to begin by addressing the concept of the oppositional tradition in children's literature.

### The Oppositional Tradition in Children's Literature

To awaken consciousness, to reveal reality,  
can literature claim a better function. . . .  
The culture of the system, the culture of  
reality, substitutes, disguises reality and  
anesthetizes consciousness.

(Galeano, 1988, p. 119)

Meltzer's works, as part of the oppositional tradition in children's literature, clarify the historical dimension of oppression and resistance and aid us in understanding that the past is not dead and buried, but continues to be reflected in the present social reality (Brown, 1987). His works present "a vision of an equitable, genuinely democratic society" (Taxel, 1983, p. vi). As such, they aid us in comprehending the "origins of our democracy" (Taxel, 1984, p. vi). They also foster a belief that "all institutions have been made and can be altered by us, the people" (Taxel, 1984, p. vi). This human ability to act, to make moral choices, is a central theme of Meltzer's works (Weedman, 1985). The fight for social justice and the portrayal of those men and women committed to the struggle for freedom and equality constitutes a continuous thread, or tone woven through his works (Meltzer, 1978).

Meltzer's documentary social histories and biographies for adolescent readers provide a perspective and world view counter to the cultural and ideological hegemony found in the selective tradition in children's literature. His works parallel others in the oppositional tradition, such

as The Brownies' Book. The Brownies' Book was the first children's periodical created by African-Americans for African-American children (Harris, 1986). The short life of this popular periodical (1920-21) was tied to the declining American economy. W. E. B. Dubois and Jessie Fauset, the editors, were both focal figures of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s. DuBois, a Harvard-educated historian and sociologist, believed in equality for his people and was willing to fight for it. He was also the editor of The Crisis, the literary arm of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Fauset was a poet, editor, and protege of DuBois (Lewis, 1979). According to Violet Harris (1986), the editors sought to inform readers of their heritage, teach them models of behaviors that would shape personal and public actions, and provide readers with knowledge that would enable them to function in a society that placed racial barriers before them. They fostered racial pride and an awareness of the struggles needed to obtain full equality and justice for all Americans.

Meltzer's works, following in the tradition of Dubois, Fauset, and others, have the potential to contribute to the development of a counterhegemonic oppositional culture: a culture which struggles against the current dominant

tradition, while simultaneously providing concrete expressions of positive alternatives.

In the next section I will introduce the concept of the grand narrative (Goodman, 1989). This grand narrative will facilitate the analysis of Meltzer's works from a holistic historical perspective.

#### The Grand Narrative

Grand narratives facilitate the scholar's efforts to tell a Big Story, such as the rise of capital, patriarchy or the colonial subject.

(J. Goodman, 1989, p. 43)

It is my contention that the sum total of Meltzer's works constitute a grand narrative which provides us with a social semiotic view of history. The grand narrative serves to dispel myths, that is, myths being "the code that informs an entire structure of belief" (Solomon, 1988, p. 16). Culture "often conceals its own ideological interests behind the veil of nature; naturalizing beliefs that are, in fact, only social and conventional" (Solomon, 1988, p. 12).

Meltzer, in this search for historical truth, exposes intentional distortions or repressions of memory that aid in the maintenance of these myths; myths that are also termed the selective tradition. By means of this selective tradition, children come to acquire a history that is, in

reality, fraught with omissions, distortions, and falsifications (Meltzer, 1987c). Meltzer's works, as part of the oppositional tradition in children's literature, help us to find a more truthful understanding of the historical antecedents of the social construction of reality.

#### The Columbian Encounter

I wonder if this is the white man's madness.  
(Rich, 1991, p. 19)

Meltzer's grand narrative spans many centuries of human history. His works celebrate the many examples of human agency in which the oppressed in some manner struggle to create a peaceful and just world. In order to fully understand the connection of his works to critical theory, it is important to look at this grand narrative in historical context. I will begin by looking at one of Meltzer's most recent and timely works: Columbus and the World Around Him (1990a).

The Columbian encounter laid the foundation for the next 500 years of New World history. Meltzer, by situating Columbus in the historical and social context of late Medieval and early Renaissance Europe, is trying to demonstrate how larger social forces shaped the thinking of Christopher Columbus. Columbus was not unique. Like many of his day he saw the people of the Americas as ripe for

enslavement; "their lands were open for seizure and exploitation" (Meltzer, 1991d, p. 15). It was the beginning of the violent clash of the European and the indigenous cultures; the European culture was to emerge victorious and dominant.

Europeans valued individualism, competition, domination over other cultures and nature, and a belief in private property. In contrast, the indigenous peoples of the New World had a much more equitable, democratic life style. Indigenous peoples, having no concept of private ownership of land, lived on and shared the bounties of the earth (Bodley, 1982). "Reverence for earth and its web of life" are central to their world view (Meltzer, 1990a, p. 90).

The clash of cultures was manifested in the manner by which Columbus and his men treated the Indians. "The tendency of the whites was to treat the Indians as animals," while "Indians treated the whites like gods" (Meltzer, 1990a, p. 91). "It was the beginning of genocide for the native population. It was the first page of European settlement of the Americas; a beginning marked by conquest, slavery, death. A page written in blood" by the hand of Christopher Columbus (Meltzer, 1990a, p. 144).

Columbus, a self educated man living in an expansionist age of intellectual discovery and seafaring

exploration, was obsessed with the idea of finding the Indies. His enterprise was the norm for this period of capitalist expansion as manifested in Spanish colonialism. The rationale for Columbus' enterprise was fairly straight forward: (a) to gain great wealth for his Spanish sovereigns, and (b) thus gain wealth and fame for himself. and (c) to convert the pagan peoples of the Indies to Christianity (Meltzer, 1990a).

Meltzer relied upon many early primary sources, amongst them the journals of the historians Benaldez and Fray Bartolme de las Casas, and Columbus' Log (Meltzer, 1990a, p. 174). Meltzer presents us with a sketch of Columbus as an obsessed, arrogant man; a man so obsessed with fame that he denied the honor of the first sighting of the New World to anyone but himself. His obsession continued; at one point he threatened death to any seaman who contested his claim to the discovery of the Indies (Meltzer, 1990a).

Columbus' cruelty to indigenous peoples is thoroughly documented. Indigenous peoples lost their lives if they could not fulfill the Spanish gold quotas. At times, the brutality of the Spanish explorers knew no bounds; they skewered men, women, and children alike (Koning, 1976; Sale, 1991).

Columbus noted that his mission was to bring the pagans under authority of God and Spain. For the indigenous peoples, it was to be conversion to Christianity at the point of a sword. He also noted that "they would make fine servants. All could be taken away to Castile, or made slaves" (Meltzer, 1990a, p. 92).

Meltzer makes it clear that Columbus was not celebrated in Spain. In Europe it was the gold and the prospect of mass conversion of the "Indians" that were deemed to be the important results of his voyages (Meltzer, 1990a).

Meltzer is trying to aid readers in gaining a better understanding of the reasons behind the voyages and subsequent behavior of Columbus and his crew. It is clear that Columbus did have a choice as to the manner in which he treated the indigenous peoples of the New World. Fray Bartolome de las Casas, witness and protestant to much of Columbus' excesses, has left a written record of the voyages and treatment of the indigenous peoples. In contrast to Columbus, Fray Bartolome de las Casas appears as a man of conscience.

Meltzer poses questions about Columbus: Why are we celebrating his "discovery of the Indies?" Why, if he thought he was in the Indies, the land of the sovereign

Khan, did he claim the land in the name of the Spanish sovereigns?

Meltzer has set the stage for us by placing Columbus in historical context. In posing questions, he is actually emphasizing the reality behind the European policy of expansionism and colonialism. It is clear to me that it was within the normative social system of the times to conquer and convert people to Christianity by force of arms and to commit cultural and biological genocide if necessary.

Concepts from critical theory are woven throughout this history of Columbus for this is a history in opposition to the selective tradition. The domination of the European culture over the indigenous cultures is a perfect example of hegemony. It is also an example of power at its most abusive level. Fray Bartolome de las Casas' crys against the inhumane actions of Columbus and his crew provide examples of human agency, opposition and the positive use of power (his clerical position). The struggles of indigenous peoples for cultural and biological survival are examples of active human agency, resistance, opposition and empowerment. Theirs are the voices of opposition to the overwhelming force of European domination.

The legacy of Columbus is steeped in blood, cultural and biological genocide, the expansion of western capitalism, and the enslavement of the indigenous peoples of the New World. This policy of domination, this denial of the right of self-determination has continued through the years through our many Indian Wars and wars of expansion (Drinnon, 1980; Meltzer, 1972, 1986b). Meltzer says that "this is part of our tradition, this violence to individuals, to races, to classes, to other nations" (Meltzer, 1969d, p. 286). This legacy is to be found in our dominant cultural paradigm which has informed the social, economic, and political history of our American democracy. It is this dominant cultural paradigm and its relation to the African-American experience that I now wish to address.

#### Culture, Power and History:

##### The African-American Experience

History which keeps alive the memory of people's resistance suggests new definitions of power.

(Zinn, 1980, p. 574)

It is important that we do the work of cultural excavation, of uncovering the positive and negative moments of power, and restoring to our collective memories what differential cultural power has meant to society.

(Apple, 1990, p. xv)

I am going to focus on the African-American experience in order to further elucidate the connection between Meltzer's work and critical theory. I will utilize those works whose major focus is the African-American experience, as well as those which deal with the experience in a more tangential manner. Throughout this thesis I will use the current term African-American, rather than Black or Negro, except where another term is used in quotation.

Meltzer provides his young readers with a powerful, critical perspective of the African-American experience; the languages of critique, possibility and critical democracy (J. Goodman, 1992) are woven throughout his works. Central to this critical perspective, as well as to a complete understanding of the African-American experience, is the concept of power relations. Aronowitz and Giroux look at culture as a form of protest that involves asymmetrical power relations that provide sites of constant struggle (Giroux, 1988b). It is these asymmetrical power relations, as expressed in social and class formations that speak directly to the African-American experience. These asymmetrical power relations are fully transmitted through the selective tradition.

The selective tradition and the oppositional tradition reflect the positive and negative sides of power (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1988b), the dialectical nature of power (Giroux,

1985). The selective tradition represents the negative side through the imposition of cultural hegemony (Giroux, 1988b). Whereas the oppositional tradition exemplifies the positive, enabling and transformative side of power.

Meltzer understands well the power relations implicit in our society. He notes that

A book about one ethnic group in America is necessarily also about other ethnic groups in America, because Black life is profoundly affected by white life and vice versa. No ethnic group in this country stands alone. Indeed, each draws its definition from observed contrast with others outside this group. (Ellis, 1976, p. 5).

"As a white writer concerned with racism, I think one's main job is to combat racism in the white community" (Meltzer, 1974e, pp. 106-107).

Meltzer's numerous works on African-Americans constitute a grand narrative of the African-American experience. Concepts from critical theory are woven throughout. The most evident is that of the power of human agency; we come to know people, who were "witness to the truth that an alternative is possible to the passive acceptance of evil" (Meltzer, 1991b, p. 249). These were people who came to understand, as did Frederick Douglass, African-American author and spokesperson, that "It was not color, but crime, not god, but man, that afforded the true explanation of slavery. . . ." and that "what man can make, man can unmake" (Meltzer, 1984b, p. 43).

This grand narrative of the African-American experience begins with the publication of the collaborative work by Meltzer and Langston Hughes, The Pictorial History of the Negro in America (1956). This was followed by the first volume of Meltzer's documentary social history, In Their Own Words: The History of the American Negro (1964b). The other two volumes were published respectively in 1966 and 1967. This three-volume documentary history begins with the arrival of the first African-American by ship in 1619 and continues to 1966. A History in Their Own Words: The Black Americans (1984b), the updated and revised edition, brings the history up to the 1980s.

Meltzer's purpose is "to make the reader understand what Blacks thought, felt, and did and to make whites see themselves in the light that Blacks had seen them" (Brown, 1987, p. 107). To facilitate this vision Meltzer, "in the tradition of the best scholarship, places ordinary people at the center stage of history" (Brown, 1987, p. 11). Meltzer's meticulously researched documentary sources bring us the voices of slaves, the Freedmen, of abolitionists, soldiers in the Civil War, the hopeful voices of Reconstruction, northern immigrants, the excitement of the Harlem Renaissance, the struggles of the Depression, the New Deal, the Civil Rights movement and much more. This grand narrative is not meant to be "a panacea for racism,

but a kind of truth serum" (Brown, 1987, p. 107); a testimony from the past that perhaps will aid readers in finding solutions for the present and the future of America.

### Slavery

In good old colonial times.  
(Lomax, 1960, p. 11)

Race as a basis for slavery is a new world production. Meltzer explains, in All Times, All Peoples: A World History of Slavery (1980a), that until about 300 years ago race was not the compelling basis for slavery. Over time, the belief in the natural inferiority of African-Americans, coupled with the greed generated by capitalism, made it easy to justify the institution of slavery (Meltzer, 1980a).

The enslavement of African peoples is thus directly related to the needs of colonial America. By the 1700s slavery was firmly fixed in the colonial economy.

It shaped rapidly into the form it held until the Civil War. It was wrapped in a system of beliefs and practices, rooted in racism. Blackness to the white English had had a negative image for centuries. It meant dirt, disease, disaster, death. People took a black skin to be a sign of punishment for terrible sin. And were not the African Blacks heathens, not Christians? The explorers and traders who came to the coast of Africa saw the native people simply as naked slaves with no culture or civilization. . . .  
(Meltzer, 1987b, p. 30)

Not everyone accepted this distorted view of Africa and the Africans. "The Blacks never did" (Meltzer, 1987b, p. 31). They spoke out as early as 1661 against the institution of slavery. Meltzer (1984b) begins his documentary social history with an excerpt from the autobiography of Gustavus Vassa, an ex-slave. Vassa, who later bought his freedom, explains his perception of white people aboard the slave ship:

But I still feared I should be put to death, the white people looked and acted, as I thought, in so savage a manner; for I had never seen among any people such instances of brutal cruelty; and this not only shewn towards us blacks, but also to some of the whites themselves. (Meltzer, 1984b, p. 6)

During the Colonial period men such as Benjamin Franklin openly encouraged Blacks to seek the abolition of slavery through the political arena. Others, however, began to act. The Quaker John Woolman roused the Society of Friends to the anti-slavery cause. Woolman, a tailor by trade, felt sorely troubled after his employer had him draw up a bill of sale for a slave. He urged other Friends to join in, to follow their consciences and give up their slaves. For in following his conscience, he refused to obey man-made laws which he considered unjust. His journal, published in 1774, two years after his death, is considered the first American classic. Woolman was convinced that the "human greed for property was at the root of slavery, of war and all social evils" (Meltzer, 1987b, p. 31).

### The Revolutionary Period

In the Days of '76  
(Lomax, 1960, p. 46)

"Blacks who had never been slaves did fight in the first American ranks and gained recognition for their exploits in war" (Meltzer, 1987b, p. 130). However, the situation was different in regards to the slaves. The British enticed slaves into their ranks with the promise of freedom. Yet the Southern delegates to the Continental Congress opposed African-Americans in uniform; fearing that if many enlisted, other slaves might simply be encouraged to revolt. George Washington, in desperate need to fill the ranks of the Continental army, ignored Congress and allowed African-Americans to enlist. Other colonies soon followed suit and offered them freedom in return for service under arms. However, the successful outcome of the Revolutionary War was no guarantee of complete social, economic and political freedom.

### The New Nation

Birthered on the back of slavery.  
(Meltzer, 1980a, p. 29)

The founding fathers of our country met for four long hot summer months in 1787 to draft a constitution for the new United States. Meltzer emphasizes that the founding fathers were well to do, propertied white men. Their

economic position provided them the luxury to spend four months debating the future of the new country. It was in their direct social, economic and political interest to create a constitution that would protect property, maintain order and the status quo (Meltzer, 1988a).

The "principles and forms of the constitution grew out of the 200 years experience with colonial charters and constitutions" (Meltzer, 1988a, p. 262). The founding fathers also had experience with the concept of a bill of rights; this concept dated as far back as the Magna Carta (Meltzer, 1990d). However, the issue of slavery and the rights of slaves fell to the needs of expediency and compromise.

Ben Franklin, as president of the Pennsylvania State Society for the Promotion of the Abolition of Slavery, was asked to bring up the issue of the suppression of the slave trade at the Constitutional Convention. However, the issue was not brought to discussion. Franklin knew that, as one half of the convention were slave holding, any discussion of this issue would most likely break up a consensus on the more timely issue of the founding of the nation. Thus a compromise was made on the issue of slavery. This compromise continued the legal legacy of human slavery until the end of the Civil War.

The true history of this compromise on slavery was not made public until 1840 when James Madison's notes on the convention debates were published. Only then did the world learn about the bargains made to placate South Carolina and Georgia (Meltzer, 1988a). The delegates to the convention essentially protected slavery where it existed and remained mute about the legality of slavery in the territories. Slavery was to remain legal in the south as it was an integral part of the southern economy. The south could count each of its slaves as 3/5 of a person as a basis for representation in Congress. The African slave trade was not to be interfered with for 20 years. All states were required to return fugitive slaves to their masters. Slavery was prohibited North of the Ohio River. Considering this outcome, it is no wonder that Meltzer believes our American democracy was "birthed upon the back of slavery" (Meltzer, 1980a, p. 29).

Meltzer also provides some insight into the complicated characters of Ben Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. Franklin, who championed a political route in the struggle against slavery, set the issue aside in order to insure the unity of the new United States. On a personal level Franklin was very ethnocentric; he did not welcome non-whites to America. He viewed the western frontiers as open land where the colonial poor could find

prosperity. As a product of his time and culture, he was seemingly oblivious to the fate of the indigenous peoples of the west.

Thomas Jefferson, a slave holder, tried to end slavery in the political arena. Jefferson, in 1779, while governor of Virginia during the fourth year of the Revolutionary War, opposed the enlistment of African-American men into the Continental Army. He "acted on the assumption that neither free blacks nor slaves could be freely trusted with arms" (Meltzer, 1991a, p. 82).

Jefferson, as a member of the Committee for the Temporary Governance of the Western Territories in 1784, proposed a treaty which, though voted down in Congress, would have banned slavery in the western territories. He also held beliefs similar to Franklin's regarding the western territories; he viewed the opening of the west as the opportunity to create a society of self-sufficient farmers, the backbone of his democracy (Meltzer, 1991a).

Jefferson realized he owed the good life at Monticello to the institution of slavery. Though he was personally troubled by the issue of slavery and racial difference, he did not seem able to extricate himself from the effects of western rationalism and positivism. In a private letter to the British Ambassador in 1807 he stated that African-

Americans are "as inferior to the rest of mankind as the mule is to the horse . . ." (Meltzer, 1991a, p. 91).

Meltzer has presented Franklin and Jefferson in "sunshine and in shadow," in light of their strengths and weaknesses (Meltzer, 1991d, p. 6). They struggled personally and publicly with the issue of slavery, yet they still faced the ideological hegemony of the times and the contingencies of the historical period. This is to be seen in the final results of the Constitutional Convention; for the Constitution's main intent was to guarantee order, protect property, and maintain the status quo (Meltzer, 1989).

#### Resistance and Opposition

No more auction block for me. . . .  
(Lomax, 1960, p. 455)

Frederick Douglass, African-American editor of the abolitionist periodical, The North Star, writing in 1827, posed the question:

If ignorance, poverty and degradation have hitherto been our unhappy lot has the Eternal decree gone forth that our race alone are to remain in this state, while knowledge and civilization are shedding their enlivening rays over the rest of the human family . . . ?  
(Meltzer, 1984b, p. 13)

Slavery may have been integral to the economic base of the south, however, that did not deter the growth of opposition and resistance.

Slave revolts, although none were successful, offer a prime example of resistance. Nat Turner's revolt is perhaps one of the most well known. In 1831, Nat Turner, an educated, Virginia slave carpenter, felt called by "god to free his people and slay their oppressors" (Meltzer, 1980a, p. 47). He and his band raided the countryside and killed 58 whites before being captured. Turner, along with 16 of his followers, died on the gallows. Turner became a legend, his name synonymous with the belief in freedom at any cost (Meltzer, 1984b).

Thousands fled the south. Every escaped slave faced the wrath of the patroller, the precursor to the Klan. These armed men, accompanied by bloodhounds, tracked down runaways. Still the slaves fled. In the 50 years before the Civil War ended the institution of slavery, more than 75,000 escaped to freedom (Meltzer, 1980a).

Many slaves reached freedom through the aid of the Underground Railroad. By the mid 19th century about 3000 white men and white women had found service as conductors on the Underground Railroad. Meltzer's one piece of historical fiction, Underground Man (1972) details the story of young Josh Bowen's strong principled belief in the abolition of slavery and his willingness to act upon that belief as a conductor on the Underground Railroad.

The Seminole War:

Broken Treaties, Broken Lives

The story of many free African-Americans and escaped slaves is embedded in the story of the Seminole of southern Florida as related in Meltzer's book, Hunted Like a Wolf: The Story of the Seminole War (1972a). The Seminole, or "the people of the peninsula," were a composite of Creeks, Choctaws, and Native Americans from other tribes who had fled to Florida to escape first the Spanish and then the English explorers.

They settled in southern Florida and developed a prosperous life centered around communal farming and hunting. The enslavement of African-Americans by Indians had developed in the southern colonies by 1750. The Seminole also became slaveholders "just as their white neighbors had, and for the very same reasons" (Meltzer, 1972a, p. 42). However, slavery under the Seminole was qualitatively different than southern slavery. Seminole slaves lived in separate villages, had their own crops and domestic animals. They had to pay an annual tribute or tithe to their Seminole masters. As news of life amongst the Seminole spread, African-Americans fled to southern Florida where they integrated themselves into the Seminole culture. There they became trusted in both war and in council. As there was no racial bias amongst the Seminole,

they were free to intermarry and further solidify their positions in Seminole culture (Meltzer, 1972a).

The seven years of this Seminole War comprise the longest of our Indian wars. The war grew out of white greed for the Seminole land and slaves to work the land. It was a long, bloody, unconstitutional war full of treachery and broken treaties. The full cost was over 40 million dollars. However, the cost to the Seminole is unmeasurable. Over 4000 were driven into western exile. By 1842 all but 12 chiefs and 300 of their followers had been subdued. The long and costly war proved beneficial to the few surviving Seminole. The federal government was not willing to expend any more funds on their conquest; they were left to their own devices in southern Florida. Over 1000 of their descendants constitute the present day Seminole of southern Florida.

#### The Abolitionists

Once to every man and nation  
Comes the moment to decide  
In the strife of truth with falsehood  
For the good or evil side.

--James Russell Lowell, 1844  
(Blood-Patterson, 1988, p. 216)

Meltzer has also written a number of biographies which add to the history of the African-American experience. He believes "something else is possible, that what we do, each

of us, can make a difference. This is where biography is so important" (Meltzer, 1974d, p. 109).

The individuals whose lives are celebrated in these biographies share a number of commonalities: all have a profound belief in the power of human agency; they were not afraid to publicly speak and act on the basis of their beliefs. All worked towards ending unjust social conditions, even at the risk of career, social standing or life. All of them, at some point in their lives, faced censorship or the risk of censorship (Meltzer, 1969c).

Tongue of Flame: The Life of Lydia Maria Child (1965)

Lydia Maria Child was a young New Englander who became an ardent abolitionist, feminist, crusader for justice, and author. Child used the power of her pen to support the abolitionist cause. In 1833 the first anti-slavery book in the United States, An Appeal in Behalf of That Class of Americans Called Africans by Lydia Maria Child, was published. With the publication of this book Child was vilified by the upper crust society of Boston.

Child spent a year as the editor of The National Anti-Slavery Standard. At that time she was the only female newspaper editor in New York. She lived modestly and quietly and by the strength of her convictions. As editor of the Standard, she declared that she would be "refusing

the shadow of fetters on my free expression of opinion from any man or body of men; and equally careful to respect the freedom of others" (Meltzer, 1965, p. 85).

Child well understood the nature of racism in the north. She said that "the form of slavery doesn't exist among us, but the very spirit of the hateful thing is here in all its strength" (Meltzer, 1969c, p. 283). Unlike others, who understood that in the 1830s "even amongst abolitionists social mixing with Negroes was not done," Child did not restrict her social circle (Meltzer, 1965, pp. 110-111). She spent the day of John Brown's hanging in a prayer meeting with the African-American people of Boston. "No one there, she found, questioned the old hero's claims to reverence, or doubted the sanity of his mind. He was the friend of their oppressed race and he proved it by dying for them" (Meltzer, 1965, p. 145).

A Light in the Dark: The Life of Dr. Samuel  
Gridley Howe (1964a)

Meltzer reveals the life of yet another prominent abolitionist in this biography. Howe was one of the secret six who provided the financial backing for John Brown's raid. As president of the Emancipation League, he used political pressure to convince Lincoln to release the Emancipation Proclamation (Meltzer, 1964a). Howe realized

that it would take more than a proclamation to affect change and was able to convince Lincoln to set up the Freedman's Inquiry Commission. This Commission, of which Howe was one of the three members, was set up to investigate the conditions of ex-slaves in the south and to advance proposals for their treatment. Howe, who believed that all humans have the right to realize their full potential, spent the years of his adult life trying to improve the lot of those on the underside of history.

Thaddeus Stevens (1967b)

In this biography Meltzer ameliorates the distorted portrayal of Stevens that is often found in conventional history texts. Stevens was a lawyer, congressman, ardent abolitionist and an outspoken advocate for free public schools. He stuck fast to his integrity and principled stands, even at the cost of gaining many enemies. He rose to the defense of fugitive slaves. Stevens proposed the resolution that eventually became the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, and also played an integral part in laying the groundwork for what was to become the Fifteenth Amendment.

### Bound for the Rio Grande

Dipping their hands still deeper in the  
sin of slavery.

(Zinn, 1980, p. 157)

Slavery was a focal issue behind the struggle over Texas (Meltzer, 1974a). Slavery had been banned in Mexico, and thus in Texas, in 1829. However, 90% of the settlers in Texas were from the southern United States. As these settlers grew to outnumber the resident Mexicans, they were able to force the Mexican government to modify its ruling on slavery; the settlers kept their slaves.

The first law that was published in Texas after the battle of the Alamo and the establishment of the Lone Star Republic "protected and regulated the institution of slavery" (Meltzer, 1974a, p. 40). Texas wanted to be annexed by the United States. However, to those in the North, this annexation would mean another slave state in the Union. This issue of annexation could not be separated from the divisive issue of slavery which was to soon engulf the nation in the Civil War.

### The Civil War

For Lincoln and liberty too.

(Lomax, 1960, p. 97)

In Voices from the Civil War: A Documentary History of the Great American Conflict (1989b) we see that slavery continues as a focal point, and racism continues to be a

growing problem. Close to half a million African-Americans participated in the war effort; 38,000 gave their lives. Yet African-American troops felt the brunt of institutional racism: segregated units, white officers, and lower pay than their white counterparts.

The Civil War brought the first national draft of able bodied men. This draft favored the rich, who could buy their way out. It hit the poor the hardest. In 1863 anti-draft riots broke out. During these riots the anger shifted to African-Americans and abolitionists. In New York City the rioters burned the Colored Orphan Asylum and attacked African-Americans on the street: they were shot, burned, lynched, and their homes were looted. Policemen, draft officers and reporters were beaten up. More than 10,000 people were killed or injured in these riots.

In 1864, in response to the violent reaction against the draft and the rise of conscientious objection to war, the draft board initiated the first alternative service law. At this point the Quakers became actively involved in providing draft counseling for the 1500 men who sought Conscientious Objection (CO) status.

Meltzer's descriptions of the Civil War battles, his documentary sources, diaries, photos, coupled with the photos of the battlefield at Gettysburg (Meltzer & Cole, 1974) provide a powerful statement on the meaningless

horrors of war: the land saturated with the blood of worker against worker, farmer against farmer, brother against brother. These visions cry out for alternatives to violence in human disputes. Meltzer (1985a) addresses this plea in Ain't Gonna Study War No More: The Story of America's Peace Seekers. He shares the stories of the Quakers, members of other Peace Churches, and other principled men and women of conscience who seek peace through alternatives to war.

The Civil War ended slavery, but not racism. Lincoln, the Great Emancipator, believed that color prejudices were too deeply ingrained to allow African-Americans and whites to live peacefully. At one time he supported Henry Clay's plan to solve the race problem by shipping free African-Americans out of the country (Meltzer, 1989b).

However, the Civil War did bring about the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments. In the future the latter two would serve as the constitutional basis of the Civil Rights Movement (Meltzer, 1989b, p. 190-91).

### Reconstruction

Got my hand on the freedom plow.  
(Blood-Patterson, 1988, p.60)

Freedom Comes to Mississippi: The Story of Reconstruction (1970) and To Change the World: A Picture

History of Reconstruction (1971) provide a strong, vital vision of this era. This was an exciting hopeful post war period for the Freedmen and women. The United States government established a Freedmen's Bureau to spread the word of emancipation, give advice regarding rights, and to serve as a conduit for emergency food relief (Meltzer, 1970).

However, the question was asked: How could freedom without land be freedom? For "without land, de ole massa can hire us to starve us as dey please" (Meltzer, 1987b, p. 20).

The solution came in the form of the tracts of confiscated land transferred to the newly freed slaves by the federal government. On their new lands the Freedmen established new communities, schools, and practiced their well honed farming skills. They were not looking to dominate the south, they were simply looking for peace, justice, and equality (Meltzer, 1970).

Carpetbaggers, much maligned in conventional histories, were in reality newly released young Army veterans who had traveled south to seek a living. They bought or leased plantations, hired Freedmen, and injected much needed cash into the southern economy (Meltzer, 1970).

### The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: White Supremacy

This hopeful beginning was not to last. Black codes denying Freedmen their social and political liberties were passed in the south. The Klan began to ride and share its violence and threat of violence, targeting anyone who tried to educate or aid the Freedmen, regardless of gender or race.

Meltzer relates the full story of the Ku Klux Klan in The Truth about the Ku Klux Klan (1982c). The Klan is a restoration of the old patrol system whose members had enforced the authority of whites over African-Americans through terror and violence. Central to the Klan's belief is the concept of White Supremacy. From 1865 down to today, race hatred has fired the emotions of the Klan. Its targets include African-Americans, Jews, Catholics, and members of other ethnic groups. The Klan has never existed without principled opposition. Meltzer proudly shares the efforts of Klanwatch, a current project of the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama. Klanwatch monitors Klan activities throughout the United States.

### The Post Reconstruction Era

#### Betrayal

Reconstruction ended with the removal of federal troops from the south in March 1877. With the last vestige

of federal protection removed, many Freedmen found themselves forced off their land and driven into the sharecropping system. James Baldwin expresses the cynicism in which this betrayal is viewed, "The Reconstruction, as I read the evidence, was a bargain between the North and the South to this effect: 'We've liberated them from the land--and delivered them to the bosses'" (1988, p. 7).

This era was also witness to the exodusters, those African-Americans who left the south for areas of the country where they hoped to enjoy their newly granted rights. As one exoduster explained, "The largest majority of the white people that held us as slaves, treat our people so bad in many respects that it is impossible for them to stand it" (Meltzer, 1964b, p. 134). Many moved into the northern and western states (Meltzer, 1964b, p. 129). However, life in the north did not bring economic equality. James Baldwin, African-American author, reflecting upon this exodus states, "When we left Mississippi to come North, we did not come to freedom. We came to the bottom of the labor market" (1988, p. 7).

#### Education and Hope

This period also witnessed the revival of hope, struggle and hard work. In Mary McLeod Bethune: Voice of Black Hope (1987a) Meltzer shares the story of an African-

American educator who struggled for freedom, education, voting rights, and women's suffrage. Against almost insurmountable odds she opened a girls school in Florida in 1904. This school later became Bethune-Cookman College. When the Klan threatened to burn down her school, Bethune had every light turned on in defiance. Bethune was a role model of a courageous, dedicated, and effective educator.

Booker T. Washington established a program of industrial and agricultural education at Tuskegee University. Washington took the position that African-Americans must gain their place in society through vocational education rather than agitation. Washington believed that African-Americans should support the white cultural establishment and that: "Agitation of questions of social equality is extremist folly, and the progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle, rather than artificial forcing" (Meltzer, 1984b, p. 139).

Equality would still be a long time coming.

John Hope, another African-American educator, following in Frederick Douglass' footsteps, espoused what became known as the anti-Bookerite position: "If we are not striving for equality, in heaven's name, what are we living for? . . . If we cannot do what other freemen do,

then we are not free. Yes, my friends, I want equality. Nothing less" (Meltzer, 1984b, p. 142).

### The Union Movement

Solidarity Forever  
(Blood-Patterson, 1988, p. 218)

"The war that freed the slaves transformed the nation's industrial life" (Meltzer, 1967a, p. 1). Within one year of the victory at Appomattox there were strikes and lockouts, the jailing of labor leaders, and the slaughter of African-Americans on the streets of New Orleans and Memphis (Meltzer, 1967a, p. 50). Employers everywhere faced labor's demands: the eight-hour day, better wages, and full employment.

The National Labor Union (NLU) was formed in 1866. The NLU generated pressure for the eight-hour day. In 1868 the eight-hour law for government workers was passed. Five states soon followed suit and passed similar laws.

At the NLU Convention of 1868 the issue of race was hotly debated. Finally, after much discussion, nine African-Americans were seated. However, African-Americans were not waiting to be given their places in the NLU; they set about organizing themselves. In 1869 they created the National Colored Labor Union (Meltzer, 1967a, p. 56).

During this period employers exhibited the same racism as union members. They used racial issues to try to weaken

the union movement and to pit white worker against African-American worker (Meltzer, 1967a).

Unsafe working conditions, long hours, child labor, poor wages, and even lower wages were the norm for the times. Lewis Hines' photos of child labor in the southern textile mills in The Eye of Conscience: Photographers and Social Change (Meltzer, 1974a) and the accompanying stories shocked the nation (Meltzer, 1967a).

Time of Trial, Time of Hope, 1919-1941

We return.  
 We return from fighting.  
 We return fighting.  
 Make way for democracy! We saved it in France,  
 . . . we will save it in the United States of  
 America, or know the reason why.  
 (Dubois, 1979, p. 15)

In Time of Trial, Time of Hope: The Negro in America 1919-1941 (Meltzer & Meier, 1966) we follow the African-American experience beyond the troubled post Reconstruction Era, the birth of the Jim Crow Laws, and into the post World War I world.

Soldiers returning from World War I, decorated with medals for bravery, faced racism, the segregation of Jim Crow Laws, unequal educational opportunities, and the threat of lynching in the south. Many moved north to find employment; there they also faced residential segregation

enforced with terror and violence, not unlike their southern experiences.

During this period the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) fought to do away with segregation, win equality in education, and also organized on a national scale in the struggle for civil and political rights. The NAACP also worked to get the courts to declare whites only primaries unconstitutional; a battle won in 1944. They worked to put an end to mob violence and lynching, publishing a report in 1919 which showed that in the previous "30 years 3224 men and women had been lynched by rope or fire or gun or club" (Meltzer, 1966, p. 41).

In 1925 A. Phillip Randolph, editor of The Messenger, a Socialist magazine of the 1920s, organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. According to Meltzer, "Randolph became the first Negro labor leader of national importance and a power in the Negro community" (1966, p. 45). Randolph's success is due to the fact that he had seen the importance of addressing injustice in the economic realm, as well as the social and legal (Meltzer, 1966).

The early 1920s was also the time of Marcus Garvey's short lived back to Africa movement. A movement that echoed previous sentiments, including the Klan's, about returning African-Americans to Africa.

### Harlem Renaissance

I, Too, Sing America  
(Meltzer, 1968a, p. 155)

Year I of the Harlem Renaissance, 1925, marked the flowering of African-American music, poetry, novels and art. Not the least amongst the "New Negroes" of that period was Langston Hughes, the unofficial poet laureate of the African-American people. Hughes' verse was first published in the Brownie's Book in 1921, just as he graduated from high school. Later, his verse was published in The Crisis, an NAACP publication edited by W. E. B. DuBois.

Hughes writes of "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" in the June 28, 1926 issue of The Nation (Lewis, 1979; Meltzer, 1968a). He speaks of his vision for African-American artists, a vision containing the foresight of the much later Black Nationalist movement:

Let the blare of Negro jazz bands and the bellowing voice of Bessie Smith singing Blues penetrate the closed ears of the colored near-intellectuals until they listen and perhaps understand. . . . We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. . . . We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves. (Lewis, 1979, p. 191)

Hughes believes that what was truly worth painting, writing, or singing about was centered in the culture of the common folk. His poems are filled with the dialect,

the language, the music, and soul of his people. His poems speak to the needs of the people and the social issues of his day: the Scottsboro boys imprisoned in Alabama, life on the plantation, in the ghetto, lynching, freedom, and equality (Meltzer, 1968a). Both his poems and stories reflect his dedication to realism, honesty, and pride in his culture.

Meltzer's biography of Hughes, completed after the poet's death in 1967, is a warm tribute to his friend and collaborator.

#### The Depression

Got no work for you no more.  
(Blood-Patterson, 1988, p. 180)

#### Tribulations

African-Americans have struggled with poverty both before and since the Emancipation Proclamation. By 1929 40% of African-Americans were living in urban ghettos. This was simply a reflection of the Northern migration of the previous 15 years. In the 1930s this migration continued at enormous rates: over 300,000 African-Americans migrated north (Meltzer, 1969a).

According to Meltzer in Brother Can You Spare a Dime? --The Great Depression (1969a), of all those "thrown out of work by the crash, proportionately more blacks than whites

lost jobs. The percentage of jobless Blacks was 4, 5, or 6 times higher than whites" (p. 39).

African-Americans were special victims of exploitation. According to a 1930 study of labor conditions in southern steel mills, they lived a life of grinding poverty. During the Depression they lost menial jobs to whites. In the cities, along with the rest of the urban poor, African-Americans were faced with the overcrowding of urban tenement life, one toilet to four apartments, in filthy, vermin-ridden buildings (Meltzer, 1969a).

African-American sharecroppers were at the bottom of the poverty ladder. Their children, exploited as child laborers for a good part of the year, attended segregated schools for the remaining three or four months of the year.

This period is chronicled visually by Dorothea Lange's photos in The Eye of Conscience: Photographers and Social Change (Meltzer & Cole, 1974e). Lange used her skill to capture the images of the survival of human dignity under the trying conditions of Depression era poverty.

#### Time of Hope

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) brought relief, hope, and perhaps a renewed faith in government. African-Americans entered federal agencies in increasing

numbers. Roosevelt had a "Black Cabinet" composed of men and women whose job it was to advise him in race relations. They also pressed him on economic and political issues.

African-Americans comprised 26% of the workers in the southern WPA. Yet they were paid less than their white counterparts. However, WPA salaries were higher than most African-Americans could earn in private industry. In the country as a whole about 16% of WPA workers were African-Americans. By 1939 more than a million African-Americans worked for the WPA.

In Violins and Shovels: The WPA Arts Projects (1976b) Meltzer presents a broad perspective of the Arts Projects and their impact on American culture. He pays specific attention to the works and contributions of African-Americans.

The WPA established "Black" units composed of African-American writers, actors, directors, and technicians. A good part of their work stressed entertainment rather than struggle. However, the "New York Black theater under Black and White directors produced political and social critiques" (Meltzer, 1976b, p. 47).

The WPA writer's project has had a lasting effect on American literature. Richard Wright, Margaret Walker, Zora Neale Hurston, and Ralph Ellison are just a few who worked in the writer's project.

Out of the project also came a serious study of American slavery. Twenty-three hundred ex-slaves (2% of the surviving slave population) were interviewed. Pioneering interview techniques developed in this project have become essential to the field of oral history. The interviews themselves have become a treasured contribution to the roots of American culture (Meltzer, 1976b).

The American Promise--World War II and Beyond

We have the power to change the tide.  
(Blood-Patterson, 1988, p. 63)

Meltzer's two books, The Black Americans: A History in Their Own Words (1964b) and The American Promise: The Voices of a Changing Nation 1945-present (1990c), bring the African-American experience into the 1980s. His works on Langston Hughes, the Fifth Amendment, the Jewish-Americans, the Hispanic-Americans, the Chinese-Americans, the terrorists, the peace seekers, the Bill of Rights, crime in America, American politics, Margaret Sanger, Betty Friedan, and Dorothea Lange are all relevant to a history of the World War II and post World War II African-American experience.

At the beginning of World War II a few African-Americans were employed by the government. However, by and large, discrimination still existed in civilian and military life. Despite shortages of manpower, the military

draft functioned with discriminatory quotas. The Army segregated its soldiers, the Navy used African-Americans for menial tasks, and the other branches of the service did not allow them entry (Meltzer, 1984b, p. 109). Although the defense industry was short of workers, African-Americans were not hired. Finally, the threat of a March on Washington, proposed by A. Phillip Randolph, forced President Roosevelt's hand. On June 25, 1941 he issued an executive order barring discrimination in the defense industry and government employment (Meltzer, 1984b, p. 117).

The end of World War II did not end prejudice and racism in the United States. Soldiers returning from the war found themselves in much the same position as those who had returned from World War I. However, the world was a different place; it was the beginning of the Cold War and the rampant virus of anti-communism was alive and well.

One of the memorable events of the post-war era was the Peekskill, New York riots of 1949. Paul Robeson, internationally known African-American activist, lawyer, actor, and superb vocalist was scheduled to sing, along with Pete Seeger and other progressive performers. Robeson, Seeger, and many hundreds of people driving to the concert found the road lined with an extremely hostile crowd. Upon leaving the event numerous people were

viciously attacked and beaten by the mob, while police stood by offering little or no assistance (Meltzer, 1990c).

Peekskill was a measure of the virulent anti-communism and the racism of the time. Paul Robeson became a casualty of the Cold War/McCarthy era. His very existence was erased from most of our history books (Meltzer, 1990c).

World War II brought home to America the issue of freedom for all regardless of race or ethnicity. If African-Americans fought for freedom on the war front, they deserved no less than freedom, justice and equality on the home front. As W. E. B. Dubois wrote at the beginning of the war, "Is there a great deal of difference between the code for Jews under Hitler and the code for Negroes under the United States of America?" (Meltzer, 1984b, p. 109). The stage was set for the Civil Rights Movement.

### The Civil Rights Movement

We Shall Not Be Moved  
(Carawan & Carawan, 1990, p. 25)

Meltzer brings the Civil Rights Movement to life. In 1954, the Supreme Court reinterpreted the Fourteenth Amendment, which guaranteed all citizens equal protection under the law and set aside the old separate but equal doctrine.

Racial segregation in the nation's public schools was now illegal. Yet, it was to take many years of struggle before the legality of this decision was fully enforced.

In The Black Americans: A History in Their Own Words (1984b) Martin Luther King speaks of Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott. For Martin Luther King the issue of the boycott was an ethical one that he traced directly back to Thoreau's Essay on Civil Disobedience. It was a message to the white community that the African-American population of Montgomery, Alabama, and their supporters would no longer lend their cooperation to an evil system. From that moment on Martin Luther King saw the struggle as an "act of massive non-cooperation" (Meltzer, 1984b, p. 252).

Fannie Lou Hamer (Meltzer, 1984b), reflecting on her struggles to register to vote in the state of Mississippi, understood how segregation, and the ideology and economic system that supported it, harmed not just African-Americans but all Americans. For, as she said, "What you don't understand is that as long as you stand with your feet on my neck, you got to stand in a ditch, too. But if you move, I'm coming out. I want to get us both out of that ditch" (p. 264). Her faith in people, a belief in struggle, and a vision for the future led her to say:

I've always believed that one day, even if I didn't live to see it, this country would be different. It

would be a place for all people to live, where they could be without hangings and the lynchings and the killings and the bombings. We are our brother's keeper, whether he is black, white, brown, red or yellow. As the Bible tells us, God has made of one blood all nations. (Meltzer, 1984b, p. 264)

### The Struggle Continues

Carry it on.  
(Blood-Patterson, 1988, p. 158)

Meltzer goes on to address the other issues that are relevant to African-Americans, as well as the other members of our multicultural nation: the influx of immigrants and refugees, homelessness, poverty, crime, American politics, feminism, and the environmental movement (Meltzer, 1990c).

He addresses the continuing concerns of African-Americans and other Americans with a quote from a 1983 speech by John E. Jacob, President of the National Urban League. Jacob spoke to the issue of the continuing struggle in the economic and political arenas, a struggle in which African-Americans

. . . call on America to sow the seeds of social justice and racial equality that it may reap a harvest of righteousness and freedom for all. . . . to share the bounties of this land we worked so hard for; to act right and do right to all of its children.  
(Meltzer, 1984b, p. 291)

### Critical Theory: The Natural Connection

Where are we moored?  
What are the bindings?  
What behooves us?"  
(Rich, 1991, p. 23)

Meltzer's life and works have been greatly influenced by the deeds and writing of Henry David Thoreau. Meltzer notes that Thoreau wasn't the first to go to jail for refusal to pay taxes in social protest; the significance lay in what his pen did with the experience (Meltzer, 1968b).

Meltzer's work, like that of Thoreau, is significant because he has dedicated the power of his pen to the search for historical truth and justice. This has taken him beyond "the narrow vision of white American nationalism and self-righteousness" to search for a history that represents the reality of all of America's peoples (Meltzer, 1969d, p. 286). His perspective and choice of narrative form together create a powerful picture of the history of the poor and oppressed as revealed through their own voices, voices heretofore hidden from history.

Meltzer's works help us view more clearly the relations of power in our society: how our economic system functions, the root causes of poverty and racism, and the way in which the majority of the American people are disenfranchised by the political system. However, Meltzer

does not leave us dispirited, disempowered. His words serve to inspire his readers.

He provides inspiration by demonstrating that there are alternatives to the passive acceptance of evil; there are moral choices to make in the struggle for the common good. He provides many examples of the long history of struggle. Voices from the past serve both as cautionary and inspirational tales by which we may guide our actions in both the present and the future.

It is just this use of the power of his pen to reveal the underside of history, the real peoples' history, that serves as a counter hegemonic force. It situates Meltzer's work within the oppositional tradition in children's literature.

This grand narrative of the African-American experience lends itself naturally to an analysis from the perspective of critical theory. Critical theory provides an analytical tool which serve to help to better understand the reality of the African-American experience and its relation to the rise of capitalism and racism in the western hemisphere.

Meltzer clarifies omissions, distortions, and the falsifications of history. We come to understand the role of the African-Americans in the military during the revolutionary and Civil Wars; the true contributions of the

carpetbaggers to Reconstruction era southern economy; the valuable role played by the much maligned Congressman Thaddeus Stevens; and Paul Robeson's real contributions to American culture, history and freedom.

Cultural hegemony operates through many venues within the context of the African-American experience: through slavery, racism, segregation, and social, economic and political injustice. It has been enforced legally at various points in time by Colonial laws, by the Constitution of the United States, and by state and local laws.

Historical change lies at the center of Meltzer's human agency (Brown, 1987, p. 12). Human agency is exemplified by both resistance and oppositional forces. Examples of resistance or reaction to hegemonic forces include runaway slaves, slave revolts, anti-draft riots, and the inner city riots of the twentieth century.

Oppositional forces are represented by those who struggled against injustice, while simultaneously posing alternatives to the dominant cultural paradigm. Henry David Thoreau, the Quakers, Thaddeus Stevens, Thomas Gridley Howe, Lydia Maria Child, Mary McLeod Bethune, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Dubois, Fannie Mae Hamer, and Martin Luther King all exemplify the voices of opposition. Their words and deeds stand beside the voices of the

ordinary, unsung heroes and heroines who lifted their voices in the cause of freedom: slaves, ex-slaves, African-American immigrants to the north and west, sharecroppers, union organizers and countless others from all walks of life.

The grand narrative of the African-American experience offers us many examples of empowerment, either of groups or individuals. Henry David Thoreau, by the power of his pen, touched many hearts and minds with his Essay on Civil Disobedience. His words traveled wide and far, beyond his lifetime, to inspire and influence Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and countless others around the globe. Other people were empowered as they actively struggled in abolitionist organizations, on the Underground Railroad, through the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Works Progress Administration, the Civil Rights movement, and through civic and grassroots organizations.

Meltzer's works offer a powerful, critical perspective of the African-American experience. They contain within them the language of critique, possibility and critical democracy. The language of critique abounds in his works as he reveals distortions of historical fact or character which have served to maintain the dominant hegemonic paradigm. The language of possibility surfaces in the many acts of individual and group struggle (i.e., human agency).

Every step on the road to freedom carries within it the language of possibility. Every fugitive slave guided to safety on the Underground Railroad, every Jim Crow law put to rest, everyone who has walked a picket line or on a freedom march, all exemplify the language of possibility.

Meltzer also strives to bring us the language of critical democracy; a language which carries within it the seeds of a society wherein citizens are intellectually aware of the world around them and are capable of promoting democracy in all spheres of social life. Where they are encouraged to develop their own unique abilities as well as demonstrate an active concern for the well being of all life on earth. The language of critical democracy implies a moral commitment to promote the public good. It includes strong values for equality and justice that are developed in a socio/historical context. I believe that it is the essence of Meltzer's career as citizen and writer. For he says that he hopes his books will hold out "the vision of a genuinely democratic and equitable society, will excite the imagination of young readers and stretch their minds" (Meltzer, 1991f, p. 4). For he wishes to create "an early awareness of the issues of race, class, and tyranny" (Meltzer, 1989c, p. 156); to instill in the young the ability to read the world, as well as the word (Freire, 1985). To foster in them the understanding that the social

world is a human construction, and that they have the right, the power, and the obligation to change it for the betterment of all life on earth.

I believe that the words of Uruguayan writer and editor, Eduardo Galeano (1988), most eloquently express the significance of the life and works of Milton Meltzer:

. . . The word has significance for those of us who wish to celebrate and share the certainty that the human condition is not a cesspool. We seek interlocutors, not admirers; we offer dialogue, not spectacle. Our writing is informed by a desire to make contact, so that readers may become involved with words that come to us from others, and that return to them as hope and prophecy. (pp. 122-123)

#### Into the Classroom

"How can such books as mine be used in the classroom?" asks Meltzer (1991c, p. 121). "If such books, together with the work done in classrooms, raise the student's consciousness of what freedom and equality and justice mean, then it will be one small step toward helping us all become more human" (Meltzer, 1991c, p. 14).

In the next chapter I will address the relationship between the Inquiry Process, a form of liberatory pedagogical praxis, and Meltzer's documentary social histories and biographies for adolescents. I believe that the use of Meltzer's books in the classrooms of America, within the context of such a liberatory praxis, will carry us one step closer to a true participatory democracy.

CHAPTER 5  
WEAVING THE WEB OF DEMOCRACY:  
THE INTERTEXTUALITY OF LIBERATORY PRAXIS

In the previous chapters I have discussed whole language, critical theory, Milton Meltzer and his works. In this final chapter I hope to illustrate the connections between these three major topics and to provide a concrete example of a whole language liberatory praxis: the Inquiry Cycle. In order to make these connections I must first undertake a brief presentation of John Dewey and the concept of democracy.

John Dewey and the Democratic Spirit

Democracy has to be born anew every  
generation, and education is the midwife.  
(Dewey, 1916, p. 83)

Democracy is the thread ~~that~~ weaves whole language, critical theory, the works of Milton Meltzer, and the Inquiry Cycle into a liberatory tapestry.

Dewey believed that an "adequate democratic theory required a deep-seated philosophical anthropology that addressed the fundamental feature of human experience" (Westbrook, 1991, p. xv). He envisioned democracy as an "associated method of living together that breaks down

class barriers. It is a way of life in which the self-realization of the individual in a community involves the equal self-realization of every other person in that community" (Shannon, 1990, p. 62). Dewey advocated a participatory democracy, i.e., a belief that democracy is an ethical ideal around which citizens gather together to build communities in which the necessary opportunities and resources are available for every individual to realize fully his or her particular capacities and powers through participation in political, social, and cultural life (Giroux, 1988b).

Dewey argued that democracy as a way of life is a moral ideal, and as such, it implies a form of community in struggle, a community whose aim is to reconstruct human experiences in relation to the ideals of freedom, liberty, and fraternity (Giroux, 1988b; Shannon, 1981). Thus democracy has both a political and ethical dimension against which all social institutions should be evaluated.

Dewey found civil and political democracy meaningless without economic and industrial democracy (Dewey, 1916). Excessive "accumulation of wealth under capitalism stifled the development of others and was therefore undemocratic" (Shannon, 1981, p. 62). Capitalism is a social construct; therefore, it could ultimately be transformed into a more

social democratic system which would provide for the common good.

Dewey linked ethics, politics, and democracy to the issue of schooling. "Schooling is not neutral" (Dewey, 1916, p. 83). Its central purpose is the development of a critical intelligence and disposition which would enable students to develop into socially responsible citizens. Thus public schooling would be informed by ethical criteria, criteria that were derived from Dewey's concept of democracy as a moral and political tradition (1916).

"Development of the child's capabilities was not just an epistemological issue, it was also a moral undertaking and could not be removed from a wide social and political discourse" (Dewey, 1916, p. 84). Therefore, schooling is both a moral and a political issue.

According to Giroux (1988b) actions by Dewey and others "to interrelate ethics, school, and democracy led to what he calls a politics of difference" (p. 85). This politics of difference was grounded in Dewey's belief that a theory of dialogue and community had to be central to a theory of democracy. This was based on an appreciation of difference, and tied to the need to connect the politics of difference with the notions of struggle and social justice.

Democratic community life in schools, seen as a pedagogical task, had to be grounded in daily associations

which stressed cooperation, solidarity, and social responsibility. The issues of ethics and social responsibility were to be linked to the society at large. Dewey felt that children could only become full fledged members of society through a lived democratic experience in school; one in which they not only learned facts and skills, but experienced democracy as members of a community of cooperative inquiry (Westbrook, 1991).

Dewey believed that children come to school with a rich variety of experiences, experiences which serve as the foundation for schooling. Integral to this foundation were what Dewey termed four basic impulses: (a) to communicate; (b) to construct; (c) to inquire, and (d) the capability to express in finer form the natural resources they brought to school (Westbrook, 1991, p. 98).

Dewey felt that "just as a democratic society is neither child centered, nor adult centered, so a school for democracy can neither be child centered nor adult centered" (Westbrook, 1991, p. 99). Schools were to be places where children would come to learn how to learn. The interests and activities of the child were to be connected to the subject matter of the curriculum (Westbrook, 1991, p. 99). For Dewey, "the subject matter of the curriculum was the embodied experience of the human race, and, as such, it was that toward which the immature experience of the child

pointed" (Westbrook, 1991, p. 100). Dewey's concept of the "embodied experience" (Westbrook, 1991, p. 100) is also appropriately termed human culture.

Dewey hoped that schools, through the cultivation of democratic characteristics, participatory citizenship, and altruism, might serve as the vehicle for the transformation of society. His "confidence that children would develop a democratic character in the schools he envisioned was rooted in the belief in the ability of teachers to create an environment in the classroom in which they possessed the means" to transform the children's innate capacities for learning into "habits of social intelligence and responsiveness" (Westbrook, 1991, pp. 108-109).

Dewey envisioned teachers as intellectuals, that is, as reflective thinkers whose social function demanded that they be given the ideological and material conditions necessary for them to make decisions, produce curriculum and activities out of their own point of view. Dewey wanted to give them the power to create the necessary environment. They were to work around the essential principles of a pedagogy for democracy: "integration of theory and practice around the reconstruction of experience linked to forms of community life" (Giroux, 1988b, p. 86).

Dewey viewed literacy as a tool one used to attain a goal; a means to an end, not an end in itself. It

constituted an essential element of Dewey's experience-based education. Dewey understood that literacy alone could not ensure the continuity of democracy; it must be "accompanied by experiences that developed a conscious understanding of cooperation, a realization of the relation and interdependence of social groups, and a belief in the dignity of labor and the right of everyone to full development. . . ." (Shannon, 1990, p. 78).

Dewey first had the opportunity to create his visionary school with the opening of the Laboratory (Lab) School at the University of Chicago in 1897. At the Lab School Dewey sought to connect the school experience to the real world by placing occupations at the heart of his curriculum. However, according to Robert Westbrook (1991), he

. . . self-consciously purified these occupations of one of their most essential features as they were conducted in American society by removing them from the social relations of capitalist production and putting them in a cooperative context in which they would have been virtually unrecognizable to those who performed them in the larger society. (p. 110)

Thus he created an idyllic setting for his students; students who were unrealistically given the opportunity for unalienated labor. According to the reflective study by two former Lab School teachers, Katherine Camp Mayhew and Anna Camp Edwards, "Students often underwent a rude awakening to the real world" after graduation from the Lab

School (Westbrook, 1991, p. 111). In the Lab School setting intelligent choices were also moral choices; attitudes had been cooperative in spirit; and individual ideals and interests essentially grew to be aligned with the school society. The real world of early twentieth century capitalism and individualism was a rude shock indeed (Westbrook, 1991).

I believe that there is a lesson to be learned from Dewey's experience of creating a counterhegemonic school. What was lacking in the early Lab School (1887-1904) was the connection to the subjective reality of the world outside of the school environment. If schools are to take part in a social transformation, they need to be part of society at large. Students need real life experiences to fully understand the ramifications of the social construction of knowledge and power in society. They must be empowered within a real social context, or they may develop a false consciousness of self vis-à-vis society.

#### Critical Theory: The Dewey Connection

While critical theorists trace their history to the Marxist tradition of the Frankfurt School, they also credit Dewey's influence upon the development of their concepts. Dewey's concept of participatory democracy is directly related to J. Goodman's (1987) concept of critical

democracy, whose focal point is a moral commitment to promote the public good over any individual rights to accumulate power and privilege. Dewey understood that civil, political, and economic democracy were all interconnected. He understood quite well the social construction of power and knowledge in early twentieth century capitalism.

Dewey's vision falls well within the language of possibility. His philosophy of education is rooted in a view of democracy as freedom; a freedom rooted in the understanding of the necessity of social transformation in the interest of equality and justice.

Dewey envisioned schools as sites of lived democracy. There children could grow to develop critical facilities which would be applied in their future roles as socially responsible citizens; citizens who would struggle to transform self and society for the common good. This is reflected in the critical theorists' concept of critical citizenship. The struggle to transform self and society for the common good is directly related to what critical theorists term human agency.

Dewey tied the appreciation of cultural and social differences to the notion of struggle and politics. According to Giroux (1988b) this provides a basis for a politics of difference, of diversity.

Although Dewey viewed children as active learners, who brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to school; at the same time he believed that children were immature young members of our society, who needed guidance in their exploration of the world. They thus began their educational socialization with the experience of life in a democratic setting. This correlates directly to critical theorists' concept of schools as democratic public spheres.

Dewey envisioned teachers as intellectuals. Years later critical theorists set forth the concept of teachers as transformative intellectuals, a further refinement and redefinition of Dewey's concept.

#### Whole Language: The Dewey Connection

Whole language has been heavily influenced by the work of Dewey. Yetta Goodman in The Whole Language Catalog (1991) states that Dewey "provided a theoretical rationale from which came key ideas: the power of reflective thinking; learners being at the center of the process of curriculum development and the integration of language with all other studies in the curriculum" (p. 386).

Whole language classrooms, where both children and teachers are empowered, are exemplars of a lived democracy. The language and culture that children bring to school are both celebrated and considered as the raw material, the

foundation upon which to build the school experience. Education is purposeful, meaningful, and experiential.

Whole language, as we know it, could not exist without a profound belief in the social nature of learning, the power of human agency, the transformative power of education, and the vision of a viable democracy.

#### Meltzer: The Dewey Connection

Meltzer, as a social historian, has made an analysis of the social construction of power and knowledge comparable to that of Dewey. His works, as examples of the oppositional tradition, demonstrate his understanding of the root causes of poverty, racism, crime, homelessness, and the other injustices of our society. Many of these issues are addressed directly in Poverty in America (1988b), American Politics: How It Really Works (1989a), and Crime in America (1990b). His works also serve as a celebration of the past and present cultural diversity of our nation. They offer lessons of understanding and hope for the future.

Meltzer's connection to Dewey also lies in his belief in human agency, a belief woven throughout his works. Rescue: The Story of How Gentiles Saved the Jews in the Holocaust (1988b) is a powerful example of human agency.

Meltzer hopes that young readers will find "a vision of a genuinely democratic and equitable society" (1989c, p. 156). As they gain a clear understanding of the past, they will hopefully be inspired to continue the struggle for justice. Meltzer is aware that "books and schools alone cannot wipe out injustice, we must see broader social change" (Meltzer, 1968, p. 111). Meltzer's words reflect Dewey's beliefs regarding democratic schooling and the need for a democratic social transformation of society.

#### Praxis

In the next few pages I will share examples of praxis; praxis specifically informed by either critical theory or whole language. The term praxis refers to practice that emerges from a sound theoretical analysis of education and society (J. Goodman, 1992, p. 52). The examples in this section will provide a background for the discussion of the Inquiry Cycle and the related use of Meltzer's book, Columbus and the World Around Him (1990). The next few pages should help to illuminate the diverse potentialities of whole language and critical theory.

## Critical Theory

### The Educative Research Process

Andrew Gitlin (1990), in an article entitled "Educative Research, Voice and Social Change," shares his application of critical theory. The educative research process is a "dialogical approach that attempts to develop voice as a form of political protest" (p. 443).

Gitlin utilized the process with a group of graduate students; all practicing teachers. Through the analysis of their language, and development of historical perspectives, teachers reflected upon the subjective conditions of their teaching experiences. It was Gitlin's hope that their consciousness would be raised, and that they would move through the language of critique to the language of possibility. Many, but not all, developed an understanding of the social construction of knowledge and power. They began to connect this to their teaching experiences. Some began to act, to organize, and to work toward transforming both their classrooms and the schools. It is important to note that not all developed a critical perspective; some chose to fulfill their personal agendas.

### Connectionist Pedagogy

In Elementary Schooling for Critical Democracy (1991), Jesse Goodman has set forth a connectionist pedagogy. This

is a pedagogy which aims to educate children in a manner that will develop their compassion, altruism, cooperation, civic responsibility, and commitment to work for the general welfare of our planet (p. 27). Included in it are clear and consistent educational experiences that emphasize the social bonds and responsibilities that citizens need to create the ideal democratic society. Purposes for learning must highlight the collective good, rather than individual concern.

Harmony School, the ethnographic base for J. Goodman's book, reflects this connectionist pedagogy. Integral to the Harmony School curriculum was an active involvement in social issues related directly to their community; issues such as environmental degradation or homelessness. Thus students learned to read the world as well as the word (Freire, 1987).

#### Gender and Literacy: The Resistant Reader

Pam Gilbert, in "The Story So Far: Gender, Literacy and Social Regulation" (1991), explains how her interest in the social context of literacy led to her study of classroom literacy production as it relates to the social construction of gender. She found that the meaning women derive from texts is directly related to their personal discursive histories. Their discursive histories reflect

their previous experiences with the forms of discourse that exist in their culture, i.e., texts, oral language, art, film, etc.

Gilbert found that young women who do have access to other than the dominant discourse are able to read and write from a much more informed, critical perspective. Those who are familiar with feminist ideology will bring that perception to the reading of texts. They will actually challenge or resist the dominant ideology; they become resistant readers.

Young women who have had no prior access to feminist ideology may resent the implications of feminist ideology, and may instead turn to challenge those who are reading from a feminist perspective. The meaning they derive from texts will remain within the ideology of the dominant paradigm.

Gilbert's concept of the resistant reader provides an important lesson. We need to take into consideration the past experiences of our students when we present them with texts that offer an alternative, or counterhegemonic viewpoint. Students also need to be exposed to the alternative or counterhegemonic ideology prior to reading conventional texts. It is through this ability to read from an alternative or counterhegemonic perspective that

students will begin to comprehend and unravel discursive power networks, will become resistant readers.

### Whole Language

School is a place where the learning which occurs in the present can act to give new life and vitality to the past and create new possibilities and plans for the future. (Short & Burke, 1990, p. 9)

### The Inquiry Cycle

In this section I would like to focus on one example of whole language praxis: The Inquiry Cycle (Short, 1991). The idea of learning as a process of inquiry harkens back to John Dewey's early work on experience based education (1938). In the 1960s it gained preeminence as an integral part of Hilda Taba's (1962) work on inquiry and integrated curriculum. The specific Inquiry Cycle (Figure 1) which is the focus of this discussion is an adaptation of the authoring cycle as developed by Carolyn Burke and further modified by Kathy Short (Short, 1991).

"The arrows in this figure . . . indicate that there is continual movement back and forth" (Short & Armstrong, 1992, p. 7). The cycle is open, fluid, flexible, non-sequential and responsive to the needs of the learners. Collaboration, rethinking and reflection may lead the inquirers into other avenues of research. The cycle itself

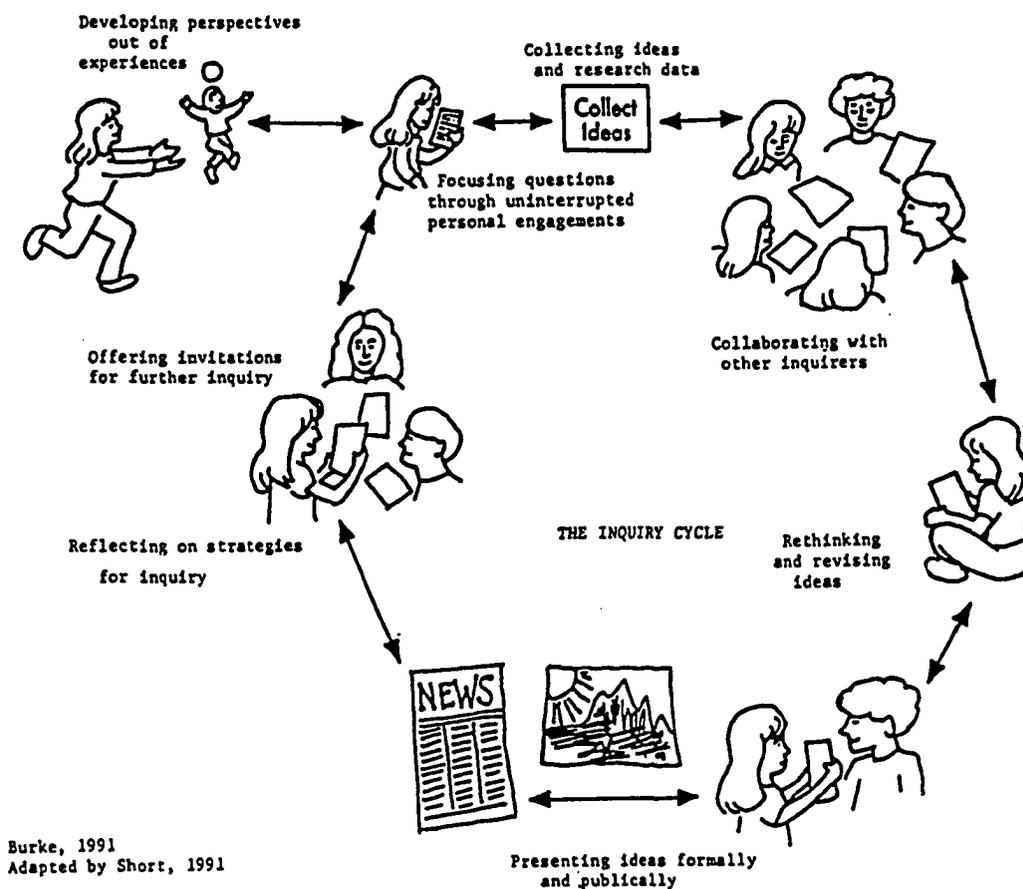


Figure 1. The Inquiry Cycle.

creates new experiences, new anomalies, new perspectives, and a continuing opportunity for learning and growth.

The cycle is neither child centered nor teacher centered, but learning centered (Short, 1991). Learning becomes a process of inquiry; and systematic inquiry becomes synonymous with research.

The purpose of engaging in inquiry is to explore and develop further questions. Progress is measured, not only

by the answers, but by the new questions that arise in the Inquiry Cycle (1991).

Traditional classroom roles dissolve as one person may assume the role of teacher, student, and researcher. This is based upon the belief that learners need to pose their own questions, rather than respond to the questions of others (teachers or school texts). The teacher's role is to create the environment that allows students to find the questions that matter to them. The process is a means of empowering learners (1991).

There are three other theorists whose ideas are integral to the Inquiry Cycle and to any analysis of a literature based classroom. The following is brief exposition of the theories of Charles S. Peirce, Suzanne Langer, and Louise Rosenblatt.

Anomalies. Anomalies provide the focal point for Charles S. Peirce's model of critical thinking. Peirce, semiotician and philosopher, notes that as humans are actively engaged in the world, they are faced with anomalies. Anomalies provide opportunities to analyze, make choices, and search for explanations; to inquire into the meaning of the anomalies. Our knowledge base provides the basis of our inquiry into the meaning of these anomalies. Once we find a possible explanation, we test it. If our hypothesis is correct, we integrate this new

knowledge into our perspective of the world. Perhaps it may even help us to view the world from a new perspective.

These anomalies, these discontinuities that we face, provide a basis for the Inquiry Process (Short, 1991). Dewey, upon reading Peirce, integrated this perspective into his educational philosophy; the teacher's role is to create an environment that challenges students, that opens the door to possible anomalies. This type of critical thinking results in a continuous change of perspective (Short, 1991).

Disciplines. Short (1991) incorporated Suzanne Langer's concept of disciplines into the Inquiry Process. Disciplines, or different domains of knowledge, are in reality social constructs. Therefore they are open to new interpretations and change. Each discipline offers a different perspective, a different set of questions, and thus allows us to learn something different about the same thing.

It becomes the teacher's role to facilitate students' ability to see from these different perspectives. In terms of pedagogy, teachers must expose students to a variety of perspectives and to a variety of sign systems, i.e., arts, music, dance, literature. These different sign systems allow us to experience the world differently and take different perspectives (Short, 1991).

Reader response theory. Louise Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory of reader response is essential to the Inquiry Cycle. Rosenblatt views the relationship between reader and text as an active transactional process. This process, in which meaning emerges, is termed the "evocation of the poem" (p. 4). During the process the text activates the reader's past experiences with other texts. This event, wherein one text is interpreted by making connections to other previously composed and evolving texts, is called intertextuality (Short, 1986). Texts are very broadly defined here to include all the symbolic cultural representations of meaning (the written word, oral discourse, art, etc.). The meanings taken from texts will be as varied as the process of intertextuality.

Rosenblatt (1978) has also set forth two other related concepts: efferent reading and aesthetic reading. Readers assume an efferent stance when their intent is to take something away from the text; they assume an aesthetic stance when their primary concern is with what actually happened during the reading process. Neither efferent nor aesthetic reading are mutually exclusive; the same text may be read from either perspective or in combination.

What is important is the manner in which intertextuality affects meaning making, for this impacts directly upon the Inquiry Cycle.

Summer 1991--Literature in Science and Social Studies

In the summer of 1991 Dr. Kathy G. Short facilitated a graduate course in the Division of Language, Reading, and Culture at the University of Arizona entitled: Using Literature in Science and Social Studies. The primary focus of the course was the use of the Inquiry Cycle in a study of the multiple perspectives taken towards the meaning of the word "discovery."

The class consisted of 45 graduate students situated in working groups of four or five. Many had previously taken one or more courses with Dr. Short. Others, as practicing teachers, were attracted by the utility of the course title. Each student kept a journal in which they recorded their reflections upon the class and the readings.

The core content revolved around the various elements of the Inquiry Cycle: readings, complimentary exercises, reflections, and small and large group discussions, and presentations. The class began with a number of ice breaking collaborative activities; all related directly to the issue of literacy and the meaning of the word "discovery."

In the context of the class, literature had two roles: (a) as content and (b) as a way of learning about the social and political issues of the times (Short, 1991).

Discovery. In this narrative account of the course I plan to focus primarily on the meaning of the word "discovery" in the area of Social Studies; specifically in its relation to Columbus's encounter with the New World. It is my intent to demonstrate the power of the use of literature within the framework of the Inquiry Cycle. However, I will focus mainly on the literature and the insights gained from the class, rather than on the Inquiry Cycle process.

We began our inquiry with the reading of two pieces on Columbus: "Discovering Columbus: Rereading the Past" by William Bigelow (1989) and Where Do You Think You Are Going, Christopher Columbus? by Jean Fritz (1980).

Bigelow, writing from a very critical perspective, exposes the myth of Columbus by emphasizing the cultural genocide, atrocities, and the fifteenth century European perspective of discovery: colonialism. His criticism is very harsh; he holds nothing back in his condemnation of Columbus and his deeds. He writes with the certainty of someone who knows the truth.

Bigelow utilized a number of experiential activities in his high school class to further facilitate students' comprehension of the "discovery" of the New World and its aftermath. Bigelow views teaching as "political action" (1989, p. 643), for it is his intent to foster in students

the ability to read the word and the world (Freire, 1987). In essence, he is fostering critical literacy in the hopes that students will become empowered and work to change the world.

Fritz (1980), writing for elementary school children, presents a different perspective. I believe she is trying to popularize the myth of Columbus: the book is a trivialized, light hearted, at times flippant, portrayal of the "discovery." She appears to pass lightly over the horrors of the encounter; whitewashing the terror in view of the myth. Native Americans are presented as rather simple, naive people. This book is at best a simplistic account of the event.

These readings provide two, perhaps extreme, perceptions of the meaning of the "discovery" of the New World by Christopher Columbus. At this point Dr. Short introduced the class to Milton Meltzer by reading excerpts to us from his autobiography; placing Meltzer and his work in context.

In Columbus and the World Around Him (1990), Meltzer places Columbus in historical context (as fully discussed in Chapter 4). However, it is this contextual history, exposing the man and his time in both "sunshine and in shadow" (1991d, p. 6), that leads both Meltzer and his readers to look at Columbus from a new perspective.

Meltzer writes from an inquiry stance. Always in search of the truth, looking for answers. Meltzer poses questions in his text: How could Columbus claim to discover land that he believed belonged to the Khan? How could one justify the treatment and eventual physical and cultural genocide of the indigenous peoples of the New World? Is violence the only response to the clash of cultures? What is the Native American perspective of this encounter? Is celebration the appropriate response to the Columbian quincentennial; should we not mourn?

Meltzer's work proved to be, in the context of the Inquiry Cycle, very powerful. The myth of Columbus was shattered in the class. Anomalies were brought to the forefront and could not be ignored. However, there were different degrees of response to the shattering of this myth.

A few students entered the class as resistant readers (Gilbert, 1990). Critical literacy was a way of life for them. They took this myth shattering in stride.

Students who became resistant readers (Gilbert, 1990) in this process realized that perhaps there were other cherished myths about American history that were also open to question. They began to make connections. How might this affect other aspects of their world view? How would they approach the teaching of American history in the

future? Who were the founding fathers? Where were the founding mothers? Would different disciplines approach the encounter differentially? How would an art historian look at the period as compared to a cultural anthropologist? How does perspective affect comprehension? Their perspectives began to change; their views of the world altered.

There were a few students who were quite displeased to have their world views challenged. They refused to move beyond the dominant paradigm. This experience was not related to their motives for attending the course. They were solely interested in the pragmatic aspects of the course.

From the point of view of the Inquiry Cycle, I would say that the course was a success. Through collaborative activities, reflection, reader response, and chosen research topics students came away much enriched. Many of them gained new insights and experienced personal growth as part of the Inquiry Cycle experience. They left the course with a great deal of knowledge about the use of children's literature in Social Studies and in the Sciences. Perhaps most important of all they were exposed to a variety of perspectives surrounding the meaning of the Columbian quincentenary.

Broadening the Perspective--The Inquiry Cycle  
and Critical Theory

I posed the question to myself: What were the limitations of the Inquiry Cycle experience? How might the Inquiry Cycle be enhanced by the explicit inclusion of critical theory? How might this be reflected in praxis at all levels of schooling--from early childhood through the graduate level?

Reader response. Meltzer's book provided an interesting opportunity to reflect upon reader response theory. It was clear that students' struggles with Meltzer's depiction of Christopher Columbus reflected the ideological hegemony with which they were imbued. Gilbert and Rosenblatt clearly point out the importance of discursive histories, or what is called intertextuality, in the transaction between reader and text. This too is mediated by the dominant hegemonic ideology.

Anomalies. The issue of anomalies is central to the Inquiry Cycle. If we approach a subject from the perspective of critical theory, will not different anomalies arise? Gilbert's discussion of the social construction of gender provides an obvious response. Without a feminist consciousness a young reader may not question the role of women as portrayed within a particular historical epoch. The anomalies we become aware of are a

direct reflection of our socially constructed selves; which leads to the socially constructed perspective by which we view the world.

Meltzer's works, written from a critical perspective, bring forth a multitude of anomalies. Will our students begin to question why the ideals of our democracy are not realized for all Americans after reading his works on the African-American experience? Students who read The Human Rights Book (1979a) may begin to question why our government does not have a consistent human rights policy for all people, regardless of ethnicity, race or country of origin.

Questions. Students are to be further empowered in the Inquiry Cycle as they search for answers to their questions, to the questions that really matter to them. However, where do these questions really come from? If we truly understand the social construction of reality and ideological hegemony, then the answer is quite simple. The questions that our students pose are in themselves a direct reflection of this ideological hegemony. A few, based upon their past discursive histories, may exhibit a counter hegemonic stance in their questioning. However, for the most part, students' questions will reflect the dominant ideological hegemony.

This issue of the effect of the dominant ideological hegemony may be exemplified by two diverse responses to Meltzer's book, Winnie Mandela: The Soul of South Africa (1986d). Apartheid, the dominant ideology of South Africa, will affect the kinds of questions a white Afrikaner child poses about this text. The questions of a child influenced by the counterhegemonic position of the African National Conference will reflect that ideology. Yet, too often, it has been the counterhegemonic position that has been silenced as the ideology of apartheid has dominated the classrooms of South Africa.

Disciplines. Yet, you may ask, does not the Inquiry Cycle expose them to a variety of disciplines and therefore, to different perspectives? Again, the issue is that the disciplines and the perspectives they represent are in themselves a reflection of the social construction of reality, the dominant hegemonic ideology.

Meltzer's book, Columbus and the World Around Him (1990), may hold quite diverse meanings for a cartographer and a social scientist. The cartographer will focus on the advances in navigation and the growth of the science of cartography. The social scientist may interpret the event in terms of broader historical changes. However, if both are imbued with the dominant ideological hegemonic world view, neither of them will look at the period from a

critical perspective. They may both perceive the conquest of nature and indigenous peoples of the New World as part of the natural, God-given course of history (Sale, 1991).

Expansion and empowerment. I believe that the Inquiry Cycle may be further empowered by the explicit inclusion of critical theory. However, this will change to some extent the teacher's role in the process. She will begin to take a more direct, connectionist role; actively seeking to expose students to the perspective of critical theory. There are numerous ways by which this may occur. I would like to explore just a few of these possibilities.

I believe the teacher needs to engage directly in changing the culture of the classroom by continually demonstrating, through her own praxis, the concepts, values, and the language of critical theory when appropriate. Daily exposure to this praxis will help to legitimate this perspective. I would like to draw upon my own experience as a classroom teacher for an example of such praxis.

This example comes from experiences with my fifth grade students in a predominantly working class Hispanic neighborhood in Tucson, Arizona. Every morning I shared one or two topical newspaper articles with the class. The language and the content of these articles became our curriculum. Together we began to read the world as well as

the word (Freire, 1987). We began to look at language, not only as a tool, but also as a topic (Edelsky, 1992). I found myself in the role of mentor or tutor (Vygotsky, 1978, 1989). In the beginning I had to demonstrate the contradictions inherent in the articles. However, it wasn't long before a good number of students began to make the analyses on their own. Articles on education, often juxtaposed on the same page as articles on the military budget, served to sharpen their analyses. In addition, I provided the class with data comparing the cost of specific military hardware to items representing human needs (new schools, day care, health care). Students began to make connections to our subjective school conditions (broken blinds, old black boards, paper shortages, broken desks, etc.) and the monumental increases in military spending.

Many of these students had relatives who had been involved in union struggles in the mining industry of the southwest. They applied this consciousness, along with my tutelage, to their own analyses of articles on poverty and unionization. They were able to voice their diverse opinions because our classroom culture was open to multiple perspectives and voices. They even went so far as to initiate a strike against me, complete with demands, picket signs, scabs, and a wonderful rendition of "We Shall Overcome." Many of my students left my classroom as

critical readers, imbued with a deep sense of justice and cultural diversity. I can only surmise how much more powerful the experience might have been if the class had read Meltzer's book on the early union movement, Bread and Roses: The Struggle of American Labor 1865-1915 (1967a).

I also believe that, when appropriate, the teacher should present specific lectures on critical theory, its history, terminology, and major concepts. However, lectures are not enough. Students need to be actively involved in the learning process. The teacher might preface a lecture on critical theory with a related activity. For example, prior to the lecture the teacher could provide students with a topical newspaper article or perhaps a relevant piece of children's literature. Subjects such as issues of gender, the military budget, homelessness, the English-only movement or the Columbian quincentennial might prove fertile ground for this activity. Students, working in small groups, could then read and critique the article or book. After the lecture, the same groups could reevaluate their critique based upon the concepts presented in the lecture. Reflections on this experience could be shared with the class. In addition to gaining a body of knowledge (i.e., critical theory) students will have participated in a meaningful learning experience in the application of critical theory.

The teacher may, separately or in connection with the above experience, utilize Gitlin's (1991) concept of the educative research process. Students could be encouraged to reflect upon the ways in which their personal and social histories have been either constrained or enhanced by the dominant hegemonic ideology. This would also be an appropriate time to introduce, as an example of the social construction of self, Meltzer's autobiography, Starting from Home: A Writer's Beginnings (1989a).

I believe Gitlin's educative research process also leads naturally into a visionary exercise, i.e., one in which students may envision their ideal world or classroom and the means necessary to achieve this vision. Thus students can begin to utilize the language of critique, possibility and democratic imagery.

Finally, I would like to call for the integration into the Inquiry Cycle of questions based on concepts from critical theory. I would like to call these generic questions, i.e., questions that may be utilized in all types of inquiry and may be integrated into the Inquiry Cycle as needed. The following are examples of such generic questions: In whose interest is any given custom, tradition or law? Is this life affirming? Who benefits? Who is harmed? Is democratic decision making valued or devalued? Whose voices are heard--those in power or those

who are oppressed or disenfranchised? Does this promote the common good? If problems are posed, are the solutions presented in terms of individual solutions or systemic solutions?

These generic questions can be translated into specific questions. The following arise when considering the numerous books Meltzer has written on the African-American experience: In whose interest was the institution of slavery? How can we relate the institution of slavery to democratic values? In our history books, whose perspective of slavery is presented, that of the slave owner or that of the slave?

The specific form the questions will take depends upon the needs of the learners and their past discursive histories. If a group of fifth graders have previously read Meltzer's biographies of Jefferson and Franklin, they may pose questions that reflect this discursive knowledge. If a group of student teachers has been exposed to the terminology of critical theory, they may utilize these terms in their questions. The specific forms and uses are up to the learners. It is important to remember that the Inquiry Cycle is an open circle, flexible, non-sequential and responsive to the needs of the learners.

I believe it is the teacher's role to introduce these generic questions through meaningful classroom activities.

Perhaps, in the aftermath of the recent civil unrest in many of our nation's cities, students might want to read the following two books by Meltzer: Poverty in America (1986c) and Crime in America (1990b). These books, by themselves, or as part of a larger study of the African-American experience, provide a fine opportunity to introduce these generic questions to students. I find it easy to imagine questions that may arise from such a reading: Why have economic conditions worsened during the past 20 years? Why does our country have the highest rate of poverty in the industrial world? Who is to blame for the poverty? If the total cost of white collar crime is 10 times that of street crime, why don't we hear about it on TV or read about it in the papers? Who benefits and who is harmed when profits are more important than people?

I believe a knowledgeable whole language teacher can accomplish two things during a classroom discussion of these books: (a) she can rephrase students' questions and comments into terms that are consistent with these generic questions and (b) she can interject these questions into the discussion. Perhaps as part of such a discussion the class may brainstorm their own generic questions, i.e., questions that deal directly with issues of equity, democracy, voice and justice. Over time, students will become skilled at this type of critical reading; they will

become accomplished at reading the world as well as the word (Freire, 1987).

These suggestions should facilitate a much more critical analysis of the world, encourage the discovery of different anomalies, and in general, foster in students the development of a critical perspective. This will serve to fulfill the intent of the Inquiry Cycle, which is to expand the range of students' knowledge, to encompass the full spectrum of perspectives. It will serve to create an environment that "transforms, rather than subsumes students' voices" (Short, personal communication, May, 1991).

I believe it important that critical theory, as incorporated into the Inquiry Cycle, be integrated into all levels of schooling: from early childhood through graduate school. Critical theory, as presented in the democratic curriculum model of the Inquiry Cycle, needs to become an integral part of our teacher training programs. For it is the student teachers of today who have the potential to work towards the realization of the democratic schools and society of the future.

#### The Web Completed--Conclusion

The primary purpose of this thesis was to weave together the theoretical concepts found in the writings of

whole language theorists, critical theorists, and the works of Milton Meltzer. I have presented what I believe are the major concepts in critical theory and their embodiment in the works of Milton Meltzer. His works, as exemplars of the oppositional tradition in children's literature, provide the language of possibility and hold the promise of a true critical democracy. Meltzer's belief in the process of inquiry in the search for truth is one of the many threads that tie his works to critical theory and whole language.

The significance of whole language is clear. I believe that whole language constitutes the visionary basis for the democratic education of the future; it has the potential to provide the theoretical and pedagogical foundation for the social transformation of students, teachers, schools, and society. However, for this potential to be fully realized, whole language must incorporate the explicit political and social analysis of critical theory. For it is this critical perspective that will enable whole language to become truly democratic by embracing the broadest possible spectrum of perspectives. Thus whole language will be able to move beyond the classroom and into the realm of social transformation, into a new radical social paradigm. This new radical social paradigm will harken back to Dewey's vision of democracy;

it will bring forth a genuine critical literacy based upon an analysis of the social construction of knowledge, power and reality.

In this new radical social paradigm, teachers, as transformative intellectuals, will become visionaries; visionaries who will carry with them the seeds of a participatory democracy. They will spread the call for an extension of Ken Goodman's "Manifesto for a Reading Revolution" (1976) to a social and political revolution. This vision will be actualized as the children in the whole language classrooms of today are empowered to become active, critical citizens in a future participatory democracy.

## APPENDIX A

## GLOSSARY

- CONNECTIONIST VALUES:** moral compassion, social responsibility, antiracialism, globalism and antisexism; serve to counter the dominance of individualism of society.
- COUNTERHEGEMONY:** deliberate theoretically and politically based opposition to current hegemonic conditions.
- CRITICAL DEMOCRACY:** a vision of a society wherein citizens are intellectually aware of the world around them, are capable of taking an active role in promoting democracy in all spheres of social life, are encouraged to develop their unique individuality and can exhibit a vital concern for not only their own well being, but also the well being of all life on earth; implies a moral commitment to promote the public good, includes strong values for equality and justice developed in a socio/historic context.
- CRITICAL THINKING:** establishing links between one's individual actions and thoughts and the socio/historical and cultural contexts within which one lives (J. Goodman, 1989); the ability to read the word and the world (Freire, 1987).
- CULTURAL HEGEMONY:** the use of a cultural apparatus which promotes consensus through the reproduction and distribution of dominant systems of beliefs and attitudes. The mass media contribute to the process of cultural hegemony.
- CULTURE:** from the point of view of critical theorists culture is perceived of as a form of protest that involves asymmetrical power relations that provide a site of constant struggle (Giroux, 1988b).
- DEMOCRACY:** a living social arrangement, the idea of community; there is a definitive distinction between democracy as a living social arrangement and democracy as a form of government.

- DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM:** the idea that the material world impacts upon us and we in turn impact upon it (incorporated in this is the belief that the world of people is just as objective as the world of nature); a belief that the Marxist notion of class struggle is inherent in every epoch (see historical materialism).
- DIALECTICS:** the methodology of Marxist social science; a way of looking at reality as a set of processes; dialectics recognizes the reality that everything changes, and that these changes are the result of internal forces, tensions or contradictions, these changes eventually cause qualitative, irreversible transformations, and since everything in the universe is connected, when change occurs in one part, it can sometimes have very powerful effects somewhere else.
- DOMINANT CULTURE:** the ideological expression of the dominant society. Our dominant ideology is tied to the ethos of consumerism and positivism.
- HEGEMONY:** the dual use of force and ideology to reproduce societal relations between dominant (ruling) classes and subordinate groups (Giroux, 1988).
- HISTORICAL MATERIALISM:** historical changes in society and material life produce changes in human consciousness and behavior, thus humans both transform and are transformed by their world.
- MODE OF PRODUCTION:** in Marxist terms, the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life processes in general; one aspect of economic determinism.
- MATERIAL PRODUCTION:** the concrete, material aspects of the process of production.
- POWER:** the domination of one social group over another group, over nature, over anything; power also implies legitimate authority; power has no meaning or value out of social context (Foucault, 1972).
- PRAXIS:** practice that emerges from a sound theoretical analysis of education and society.
- PRODUCTION:** an economic term referring to all those human activities that have to do with the creation of wealth.

**RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION OR PRODUCTION RELATIONS:** in Marxist terms relations of production refer to the relations between workers, bosses and other members of the hierarchic social structure; relations which correspond to the definite state of the development of the material forces of production; the sum total of the relations of production constitute the economic structure of society.

**RESISTANCE:** an oppositional act which is not based upon conscious theoretical and political analysis. It may be actualized in educational settings in such expressions of student passivity and indifference.

**SELECTIVE TRADITION:** an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a preshaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification (Williams, 1977). The literary canon which excludes the diverse multicultural heritage of the United States is a prime example of the selective tradition.

**THEORY OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION:** moved the focus from economic and material determinism to all aspects of culture and ideology as the determining force in social relations and stratification of society.

**VOICE:** freedom of discourse to both hear and express a diversity of viewpoints; to make ourselves understood and listened to, and to define ourselves as active participants in the world; one of the important characteristics of democratic living is the feeling that one is free to express himself or herself.

## APPENDIX B

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS BY MILTON MELTZER

Milton Meltzer's dedication to truth, social and economic justice is evident throughout the following volumes. His works are part of the oppositional tradition in children's literature; a position which works counter to the selective hegemonic tradition of the dominant culture.

Over time, Meltzer has developed a particular narrative style in which he situates the subject of his writing in socio/historical context. This provides a holistic, meaningful context for the work. His works are further enhanced by the inclusion of original sources such as diaries, letters, books, newspaper reports, photos, broadsides, posters, diagrams and maps. His intent is to include the voices of the people in their histories. He approaches his subjects from a critical social perspective. In addition to the narrative, Meltzer includes valuable bibliographic references (Notes on Sources). This facilitates further study on the part of teachers and/or students.

Included in this annotated bibliography, presented chronologically, are narrative documentaries, biographies, one novel, Meltzer's autobiography, and co-authored works: all of which constitute a large representative sample of his works for young people.

Meltzer, M. (1961). Milestones to American liberty: The foundations of the republic. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

This chronological selection of American documents is accompanied by Meltzer's narrative interpretation of the historical period. Included are photos, replicas of paintings, documents, broadsides, pamphlets, prints, silhouettes, cartoons, newspaper headings, articles, leaflets, posters, Federal and State papers, court decisions, and presidential addresses spanning the years 1620 to 1960. Themes represented are democratic values, American idealism, economic democracy, and cultural pluralism. This collection provides the historical foundation upon which to build a better understanding of the present in order to plan for the future.

Meltzer, M. (1964). A light in the dark: The life of Samuel Gridley Howe. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

This is a truly warm-hearted narrative of the life of progressive social reformer and abolitionist Bostonian, Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe. Howe led a somewhat adventurous early life in the mid 1820s as physician to the Greek forces rebelling against Turkish rule. While in Greece, he published An Historical Sketch of the Greek Revolution, aided in the establishment of public works programs as a new form of relief administration, and established an agricultural colony to aid war victims.

Upon his return to Boston in 1831 he became the director of the New England Asylum for the Blind. In this capacity he researched and created a new "Howe" type which enabled his blind students to more readily read the printed text.

In his capacity as a public figure he met and worked with Charles Sumner, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Horace Mann, and Dorothea Dix. As an abolitionist he became one of the secret six who backed John Brown's raid. In 1843 he married Julia Ward (who later gained her own fame in the feminist movement and as the lyricist of "John Brown's Body").

Howe continued his good works throughout the remainder of his life. In 1863 he became chairman of the Massachusetts Board of State Charities. In this capacity he fostered humanitarian principles of public welfare. It was his belief that all humans have the right to realize their full humanity and that "society's greatest economy is to spend its wealth so that not a single human life is needlessly wasted."

Meltzer, M. (1964, 1965, 1967). In their own words: A history of the American Negro, 1916-1966. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

Included in this three volume documentary history of African-Americans are oral narratives recorded from ex-slaves, letters, memoirs, poems, excerpts from novels, newspapers, magazines, engravings, autobiographies, photos, and posters. This fine collection of the people's voice has since been updated and published under the title, The Black Americans: A History in Their Own Words.

Meltzer, M. (1965). Tongue of flame: The life of Lydia Maria Child. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

Lydia Maria Child gained popularity as the founder of the first children's magazine, writer of the first history of women, author of one of the first American novels dealing with Indians, and creator of a good housekeeping text. Child was an ardent abolitionist, feminist, and crusader for social justice. She was the author of the first anti-slavery book published in the United States (1930). She also spent a year as the editor of the New York based newspaper, The National Anti-Slavery Standard. Her abolitionist activities and the publication of her anti-slavery book brought her public vilification. This also resulted in the cancellation of many subscriptions (especially southern) to her children's magazine, Juvenile Miscellany.

Meltzer, M., & Meier, A. (1966). Time of trial, time of hope: The Negro in America, 1919-1941. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc.

The authors referred to this period as the "long armistice between World War I and World War II." African-American soldiers, who served in Europe during World War I, came home to parades and the reality of life in America. Segregation and Jim Crow laws faced them in the South. Whites only signs faced them in public buildings. The share cropping/tenant farmer system still kept African-Americans in virtual wage slavery. African-American children attended segregated schools. The poll tax presented an obstacle at the voting booth. The lynch mob and the Klan spread terror. Fighting for one's country did not guarantee equity at home.

Many southern African-Americans migrated north in search of jobs. There they faced restrictive housing covenants and stiff competition in jobs. Legal or mob violence was found to be a problem in the north, as well as in the south.

However, this was also the period of the rise of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the organization of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (1925), and the period of Marcus Garvey's Back to Africa Movement. It was also the time when African-American political leaders, using the political threat of a National March on Washington for Jobs and Equal Participation in National Defense moved President Roosevelt to appoint the first Fair Employment Practices Commission.

Many were disappointed when employers defied the Commission. Yet they proved that organization and political action could begin to make changes in the system. It was a time that provided a glimmer of hope and the foundation for the future Civil Rights Movement.

Meltzer, M. (1967). Bread and roses: The struggle of American labor 1865-1915. New York: Knopf.

Meltzer's skill as a writer, coupled with the words of the people, contribute to this fine narrative history of American labor. He provides a clear picture of the effects of the industrial revolution on both the material and social being of the American working class. Interspersed throughout the text are original eyewitness accounts, songs, poems, photos, and reproductions of posters from this period. It is through an understanding of this history that we may better comprehend the social conditions of the current era.

Meltzer, M. (1967). Thaddeus Stevens. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

Thaddeus Stevens was an ardent abolitionist, advocate of free public schools, champion of free dissenters, political leader, orator, congressman, and a lawyer who rose to the defense of fugitive slaves and free African Americans. Stevens proposed the resolution that became the Fourteenth Amendment. He also deserves credit for the struggle for the Fifteenth Amendment. Yet Stevens has either been discredited or simply omitted from conventional history courses. He was a man of integrity who put his complete being into the struggle to change the social fabric of America. Meltzer has done a great service by writing this book.

Meltzer, M. (1968). Langston Hughes: A biography. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

Langston Hughes was the unofficial Poet Laureate of the African-American people. Meltzer has set this biography in the context of the meaning of being a "Black" man in America. As a teenager, Hughes was touched by the words of Dr. W. E. B. Dubois: "One ever feels his two-ness--an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn

asunder" (pp. 16-17). Meltzer covers Hughes' life and travels: from his youth in Kansas and Cleveland, to Harlem, Lincoln University, Africa, Europe, Mexico, Russia, the Spanish Civil War and back to Harlem. He explored the world through experience; he explored the meaning of self and expression through his poetry and short stories. It is my belief that this book, undertaken while Hughes was still living, is a true labor of love and friendship.

Meltzer, M. (1969). Brother can you spare a dime? - The Great Depression, 1929-1933. New York: Facts on File.

In this narrative history of the Great Depression (1929-1933) the human story is skillfully interwoven with the facts through the use of historical sources. These sources include journalists' reports, literature, and songs of the time. Clearly outlined are the disparities between the few immensely wealthy people at the top of the economic ladder and the great suffering masses at the bottom of the economic ladder. Meltzer draws the connection between the haves and have nots of the Depression Era and the modern era. For many Americans the Depression continues; 20 percent of the population still live under these conditions.

Meltzer, M., & Lader, L. (1969). Margaret Sanger: Pioneer of birth control. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

Margaret Sanger, daughter of a free thinker and socialist rebel, lived in New York City in the 1910s. This period of social fervor brought a florescence of progressive ideas--socialist, anarchist, reformist. Sanger's living room became a gathering place for the radicals of that period; John Reed, Emma Goldman, and Big Bill Heywood all graced her table.

Sanger, trained as a nurse, attended many childbirth cases amongst the poor tenement dwellers of New York City. She realized that poverty and large families seemed to go hand in hand. Contraception was the answer. However, due to Comstock's morality laws, contraception was not legally available to women.

Sanger set out to challenge the laws in court. Although she lost in the courts, her struggle for birth control received ample publicity in the press. In 1917 she founded the Birth Control League and established the first American Birth Control Center in the Brownsville section of New

York. Sanger, along with other workers and a patient, was arrested. Eventually she was able, through sheer tenacious belief in her cause, to get the laws changed so that women could obtain birth control materials and advice. She continued to work for changes to liberalize the laws regarding birth control, both on a state and federal level. It wasn't until 1937 that the American Medical Association agreed to support birth control. Two years later Planned Parenthood was created.

Margaret Sanger paved the way for women to take control of their bodies. Her struggle improved the lives of many women. However, the struggle to maintain control of women's bodies continues to this day.

Meltzer, M. (1970). Freedom comes to Mississippi: The story of Reconstruction. Chicago: Follett Publishing Co.

The story of Reconstruction is the story of hope, success, and tragedy. Freedom without the right to vote, the land and resources to make a living could only leave the Freedmen in dire poverty. They faced the wrath and weaponry of white southerners who were determined to keep them in virtual slavery. Whippings, shootings, and lynchings occurred throughout the South. The Black Codes were established (first in 1865 in Mississippi) to keep the Freedmen legally in a position inferior to the white man.

Fine examples of the Freedmen's self-sufficiency were evident on the plantations of the Georgia Sea Island (South Carolina) and on the confiscated Davis Bend Plantations in Mississippi. In these places and elsewhere, the Freedmen demonstrated their competence as farmers, built their own homes, schools and churches, started fire companies, reading clubs, burial and insurance associations, military companies and fraternal groups. They created their own civic society. However, when President Johnson ordered land to be returned to their former owners, the Freedmen were forced off the land and had to return to work for their old masters in the capacity of sharecroppers or wage hands.

Reconstruction also brought a short lived period in which the Freedmen had the right to vote and participate in politics. They worked with the carpetbaggers to reconstruct the social fabric of the south. Meltzer points out that the carpetbaggers were not greedy Yankees; they were young Union army veterans who sought land and

opportunity in the south before the passage of the Reconstruction Acts of 1867. They bought or leased plantations, hired Freedmen, paid in cash, and pumped badly needed money into the economy.

Reconstruction in the South ended in 1877. Its demise was due to a number of causes: the depression of 1873 which took the north's attention away from the problems of Reconstruction, the abandonment of whites from the Republican party which left it in the Freedmen's hands, the renewal of the call for white supremacy, and the political "exchange" of home rule in the South for the Democratic acceptance of the Republican Rutherford B. Hayes as President. The demise of Reconstruction only set the stage for the later Civil Rights Movement.

Meltzer, M. (1971). To change the world: A picture history of Reconstruction. New York: Scholastic Book Services.

This picture history is a fine companion to the aforementioned volume, Freedom Comes to Mississippi. The pictures and narrative enhance the previously noted book.

Meltzer, M. (1972). Hunted like a wolf: The story of the Seminole war. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux.

This is the fascinating history of the Seminole War (1835-42). The Seminoles were a composite of many tribes, including the Creeks, who fled to the safety of Florida. Living amongst the Seminoles were African-Americans, many were runaway slaves who had escaped to Florida, others were legal slaves of the Seminole (the Seminole having developed slavery by 1750 as did other residents of the Southern colonies).

The root of the Seminole War lay in the biracial social fabric of Seminole society. On the one side were whites, greedy for land and slaves to work the land; on the other side were the Indians who had the land and who had sheltered many runaway slaves.

This longest and bloodiest of Indian Wars, lasting seven years, is replete with heroes and bravery and treachery, lies and massacres on the part of the Federal troops. At the end the destruction of the Seminole tribe was complete. Only 1,000 remained in Florida by the 1960s. This was not an isolated incident. It is simply another tragic example

of the centuries old Federal Indian policy of cultural genocide.

Meltzer, M. (1972). The right to remain silent. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

The right to remain silent is the basis of the Fifth Amendment. Meltzer traces the history of the right to remain silent back to ancient Talmudic principles of the Babylonian era. He continues this trip through history to the tower of London, the Star Chamber courts and all the way up to the witch hunts of the House UnAmerican Activities Committee.

Meltzer is a champion of civil rights. In this volume he shows us that the right to remain silent is a Constitutional right; a right meant to protect both the innocent and the guilty. It shields both from the arbitrary rule of law and official lawlessness. In order to better protect this right we need to understand its place in history.

Meltzer, M. (1972). Underground man. Scarsdale, NY: Bradbury Press.

Seventeen-year-old Josh Bowen, son of a New York farmer, is the protagonist of this novel. As the novel commences, Josh and his father come to a parting of the ways over the young man's future. A perceptive circuit riding preacher solves the problem by taking the young man on as an apprentice. Through his apprenticeship and a chance encounter with a run-away slave, Josh becomes aware of the deep-seated issue behind the institution of slavery.

Josh, by the age of 20, has become a Methodist minister and a vocal opponent to slavery. He is apprehended by the law in Lexington, Kentucky, while working with the Underground Railroad. His 25 year prison sentence is marked by physical and emotional deprivation. However, the last year of his sentence is rescinded; he receives a governor's pardon earned through his service to others during a major cholera epidemic. The remainder of his life is spent in furthering the abolitionist cause.

This volume is a sensitive and stirring accompaniment to Meltzer's other works on this era.

Meltzer, M. (1974). Bound for the Rio Grande: The Mexican struggle, 1845-50. New York: Knopf.

Meltzer intersperses letters, diaries, illustrations, songs, and poetry throughout this fine narrative as he covers the political and social upheaval caused by the Mexican War. During this period the term "Manifest Destiny" was first articulated. This "Manifest Destiny" envisioned a great democratic power whose "floor shall be the hemisphere." Manifest Destiny was tested by the invasion of Mexico--the first official invasion of another country by the United States.

Meltzer provides a picture of differing opinions on the war. However, the main reason for the war was the annexation of land that would become a future slave territory. This war laid the groundwork for the war between the states; both politically and through the provision of "practice" for the future military and political leaders of the next decade.

Meltzer, M. (1974). Remember the days: A short history of the Jewish Americans. New York: Doubleday & Co.

This short history of Jewish-Americans covers the period beginning with the crew of Christopher Columbus to the 1970s. The history of the Jewish people is paralleled by the history of anti-Semitism. Meltzer dispels myths that may lead to anti-Semitism: Jews are not running the country, they are not all rich, and one-sixth of American Jews live in poverty. The history of the Jews in America and their relations to other Americans is truly a history that pleads for cultural pluralism.

Meltzer, M., with Cole, B. (1974). The eye of conscience: Photographers and social change. New York: Follett.

Milton Meltzer continues his tradition in this book of focusing upon the human dignity, strength, and struggles of those who have suffered the gross inequities of our social system. Dorothea Lange and Jacob Riis are amongst the more well known contributors to this volume. There are eight others whose photos cover the struggles of the United Farm Workers Union, the human face of the Civil War, homelessness, disabilities, pollution, and child labor. Lewis Hines' photo of the youthful Pennsylvania coal mine workers reveal to us the faces of children whose childhoods were lost to life in the coal mines. Ira Nowinski's photos

of the soon to be evicted elderly tenants of the Joyce Hotel can only serve to foster questions about poverty and old age. Photos of human tragedy and hope serve to both conscientize and move one towards social action.

Meltzer, M. (1974). World of our fathers: The Jews of Eastern Europe. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, Inc.

This is a comprehensive introductory history to the world of Eastern European Jewry from the earliest of times (70 c.e.) to the pogroms of the 1920s. Meltzer covers culture, daily life in the shtetl, political and religious movements, conscription, and the pogroms. He provides a rich cultural tapestry from which one can truly appreciate the culture that was soon to be decimated by Hitler's minions.

Meltzer, M. (1976). Never to forget: The Jews of the Holocaust. New York: Harper & Row.

Meltzer presents us here with the human reality of the Holocaust. The Holocaust was unique in the history of humankind as it represents the first time that a group of people were targeted for genocide based solely on the belief of an imaginary racial inferiority. The question is, how could this come about? Meltzer addresses this in the first section of the book as he traces the history of anti-Semitism and the historical conditions leading up to the Third Reich.

The second part of the book is devoted to telling, through voices from the past, the story of the round up and destruction of the Jewish peoples of Eastern Europe. Meltzer skillfully weaves the words of the people together through the use of historical narrative. The testimonies of the survivors speak to the unspeakable evil of that period.

The third section of the book provides us with a look at acts of resistance against the Nazis. This was the first time I read of the uprisings at Auschwitz, Sobibor and Treblinka. Sobibor was closed after the uprising. At Treblinka the uprising and consequent escape was accompanied by the burning of the gas chambers and the destruction of the camp. This section does much to dispel the notion of Jews passively accepting their fate.

This very powerful book imprints on my mind the necessity that the Holocaust must never be forgotten lest it be repeated.

Meltzer, M. (1976). Violins and shovels: The WPA arts projects. New York: Delacorte Press.

The Works Progress Administration's Arts Projects engendered a fluorescence of community based arts projects in the United States during the Depression Era. Milton Meltzer truly brings these to life in this small volume. In 1930 Meltzer applied for and obtained a position as a WPA writer. Thus, he has an intimate knowledge of many aspects of this period.

Harry Hopkins, Chief of the WPA, felt that art was a necessity, something "everybody's spirit thirsted for." The WPA set out to provide work that would satisfy the people's hunger for plays, books, music, and pictures. I found the discussion of the Federal Theater Project truly fascinating. The Federal Theater Project contributed to regional theaters, created original children's plays, and supported the rising talents of many Americans, including African-American writers, actors, directors, and technicians. The "Living Newspaper" was a play format based on facts and emotions dealing directly with the then current social problems (foreclosures, drought). The workers in the Federal Theater Project endured constant tension as they struggled to bring their message to the people while simultaneously trying to avoid the heavy hand of the censor.

The WPA Federal Art Projects employed 5000 artists who had been on relief. In addition to creating works of art, they created the Index of American Design, a pictorial record of American Folk Art. They also staffed community art centers which provided mass education for children and adults.

The Federal Music Project took music to the people in the form of concerts and lessons. People in this project also made a record of American folk music which resides today in the Folk Song Archives of the Library of Congress.

The WPA was a source of education and joy to many Americans. It provided opportunities for those who might never have had the chance for art or music lessons. The Federal Theater Project, faced with layoffs due to the drought, the loss of Federal funding, censorship and red baiting, was eventually killed by the Dies Committee and

the Woodrum Hearings: precursors to McCarthy's House UnAmerican Activity Committee.

Meltzer M. (1979). The human rights book. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux.

In this volume Meltzer discusses the authoritarian regimes in Argentina, Indonesia, South Africa and the former U.S.S.R. Their cultural and regional differences are ameliorated by the common bond of terror, torture, and denial of human rights. Meltzer explains why artists and writers, those who live by words and symbols, are viewed as threats by these regimes.

The second half of the book contains copies of documents such as the U. N. Declaration of the Rights of the Child and The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Meltzer, M. (1980). All times, all peoples: A world history of slavery. New York: Harper Collins.

This is a brief, easily read, overview of the world wide history of slavery. The point is clearly noted that race did not play a role in early slavery. The institution of slavery can be traced back 10,000 years in human history. However, it was not until 300 years ago during our colonial period, that racism became a rationale for slavery. Independence from Britain did not end slavery. Instead, it posed a problem for Jefferson and a few other colonial planters who felt that slavery was a crime; yet were unwilling to give up their own slaves or lose political power through active opposition to slavery.

Although the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights prohibits slavery, it continues to exist today in the African Sahara and the Arabian peninsula.

Meltzer, M. (1980). The Chinese Americans. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

Meltzer provides us with a clear picture of the life and culture of early Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans. He clears away the distortions and omissions of history as he reveals the facts behind the exploitation and racist treatment of Chinese workers. Highlighted are their struggles against injustice, the unifying strength of

culture and family, and their contributions to American society.

The Chinese faced individual prejudice and institutional racism. They were used as a source of cheap labor in the building of the Central Pacific Railroad. Yet when the official photo of the joining of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific was taken at Promintory Point, Utah, Chinese workers were strangely omitted: erased from history.

American citizens participated in anti-Chinese riots in the late 1800s. When the Chinese faced mobs and lost lives and property in the towns and gold fields of the west, many fled to relatively "safe" enclaves in the Chinatowns of San Francisco and Los Angeles.

They faced legal discrimination in the form of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. With the passage of this act they became the first people to be shut out of the United States on ethnic grounds. It wasn't until the 1960s Civil Rights Era that racial discrimination was finally removed from the immigration laws.

Meltzer, M. (1982). The Hispanic Americans. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

Meltzer focuses on three groups of Hispanic people in this volume: Mexicans (Chicanos), Puerto Ricans, and Cubans. He provides us with a picture of their daily lives, histories, and struggles in the face of economic hardship, stereotyping, and racism. He specifically deals with issues of immigration, exploitation of farm workers, and bilingual education.

This book has two faults which I believe reduce its value. First, Meltzer has confused the terms Mexican and Chicano. Chicano comes directly from a specific historical period and the word has highly charged political and culturally nationalistic overtones. If this book is to be used in classrooms in the southwest, the issue of terminology needs to be clarified. The inclusion of an additional chapter on the Chicano Movement would aid in this clarification.

Second, the book needs to be updated so as to present the full impact of the influx of Central American refugees and the Sanctuary Movement.

Meltzer, M. (1982). The Jewish Americans: A history in their own words, 1650-1950. New York: Harper Collins.

In this comprehensive history of Jewish life in America, the reality of anti-Semitism in all its manifestations transcends the totality of Jewish existence in the New World. The first Jews, fleeing persecution in Portuguese Brazil, arrived here in 1654. Jews were present in the ranks of the Revolutionary Army.

Two major periods of immigration kept the Jews from disappearing into American culture. In the first half of the 18th century the German Jews came. Some fought in the Mexican War; others were amongst some of the first permanent settlers in the West. They fought on both sides in the Civil War.

The early 20th century saw the immigration of Russian Jews. This period brought the florescence of Jewish culture on the lower East Side of New York, the rise of the Union movement, and Yiddish newspapers and theater.

In the 1920s Jews became the targets, along with Catholics, of the Ku Klux Klan. They continued to face anti-Semitism in housing, jobs, and higher education. World War II and the Holocaust brought new meaning to anti-Semitism. The issue is still alive as Jews, from all parts of the globe, must deal with it in relation to the politics of the Middle East.

Meltzer, M. (1983). The terrorists. New York: Harper & Row.

In this volume Meltzer explains the historical roots of modern day terrorism. Terrorism, or murder for political ends, is perhaps as ancient as civilization itself. For thousands of years assassins have killed public figures for political reasons. Meltzer informs us that the word assassin and the model for present day terrorism come from the Assassins, an 11th century Muslim sect. They were Shiite Muslims who warred against the Sunni Muslims. Murder was a sacred obligation. They were highly disciplined and observed a strict code of secrecy. The Assassins relied on force and murder to obtain their ends, and they were willing to die for their cause.

Meltzer brings us into the 19th and 20th centuries with chapters on the French Revolution, the Russian anti-Tzarists, the American Anarchists, the Irish Republican

Army, the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the Red Brigades, and the Weather Underground. Each of these groups is placed within historical context.

In the latter part of the book Meltzer deals with the issue of the terrorist state. This allows the reader to comprehend that state terrorism is much more organized and effective than any of the acts perpetrated by the aforementioned groups. Wherever there is state terrorism--Hitler's Germany, Stalin's U.S.S.R., or Pinochet's Chile--there is a loss of life and concomitant loss of civil liberties.

Meltzer, M. (1984). A book about names. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

This is a well researched book on the history and meaning of names in the United States. Origins are traced to custom, tradition, law, myth, history, folklore, legend, fashion, nonsense, symbol, and taboo. Meltzer maintains his reputation as a social historian through the incorporation of meaningful social history.

Meltzer, M. (1984). The Black Americans: A history in their own words 1619-1983. New York: Harper Collins.

This is the revised and updated version of Meltzer's three volume work, In Their Own Words. A few documents have been omitted, while new ones have been added to bring the history into the 1980s. Meltzer introduces each section with a short historical narrative. This volume begins with an autobiographical slave narrative written in 1791 in which the author describes his capture and travel on a slave ship to Barbados. The voices of slaves, rebels, musicians, politicians, authors, and visionaries are all represented.

Meltzer, M. (1985). Ain't gonna study war no more: The story of America's peace seekers. New York: Harper & Row.

This is a comprehensive history of the role of pacifism and conscientious objection in the United States. Through the use of narrative and the words of past resisters, Meltzer presents a picture of those Americans who have resisted all forms of war and violence: from the early Quakers through the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, and to the current effort to freeze and finally end the nuclear

arms race. Important concepts included are "just war," CO (conscientious objection), and pacifism.

Meltzer, M. (1985). Betty Friedan: A voice for women's rights. New York: Viking Kestral.

This is a fine overview of Betty Friedan's life and influence as a Jewish American feminist, author, political figure, and founder of the National Organization of Women. As a Jewish child in Peoria, Illinois in the 1920s, Betty Friedan experienced first hand the harsh realities of anti-Semitism. Later, as an undergraduate at Smith College, she again face anti-Semitism. It was during this time that she discovered the power of the word, of ideas.

During this period Friedan was privileged to spend a summer at Highlander Folk School where she became acquainted with labor journalism and public speaking. After Smith College, she moved on to Berkeley to take an M.A. in Psychology. She moved to New York in 1943 and became a labor reporter; at issue for her was unequal pay for women.

Friedan, in her landmark book, The Feminine Mystique (1961), set forth the idea that the only way for women to find themselves is through creative work of their own. Her book helped to open the atmosphere for the nascent women's movement. Friedan helped to found and became the first president of the National Organization of Women.

Meltzer, M. (1985). Dorothea Lange: Life through the camera. New York: Viking Kestral.

Meltzer's biography of Dorothea Lange will certainly touch the hearts and minds of young readers. The young Lange is portrayed as a loner who considered herself outside of the crowd. Yet she was a person who gained a great deal of satisfaction from observing the world around her, from her desire to bring the world closer. By the time she was a senior in high school she knew she wanted to become a photographer. Through sheer spunk and nerve, Dorothea got her first job as an apprentice to an established photographer. Thus she launched her career.

It was a number of years before this career really took off. It was Dorothea's passion for people and the Great Depression that brought her fame. She is most well known for her Depression Era photos depicting the suffering and strength of those at the bottom of the economic ladder.

These photos brought the visual reality of the Depression to all Americans; poverty could no longer remain invisible in America.

Meltzer, M. (1986). George Washington and the birth of our nation. New York: Franklin Watts.

In this biography Meltzer portrays Washington as a resourceful, capable individual who gained most of his education from life itself. Washington was educated at home. His formal education ended when he was in his early teens.

Meltzer chronicles Washington's career from his first surveying expedition to the Presidency. Washington appears to have been a capable, dedicated, loyal public citizen. Meltzer does not treat Washington with the critical finesse as in his other works. This is basically a straight forward, well researched biography.

Meltzer, M. (1986). Mark Twain: A writer's life. New York: Franklin Watts.

Meltzer has captured the spirit of Mark Twain in this biography. Samuel L. Clemens was born November 30, 1835 in Florida, Missouri. Although his family always had to scramble for a living, they were still slave holders. When he was a child, they moved to Hannibal, Missouri, where the young Samuel Clemens began to dream of becoming a riverboat pilot. Later, in his teens, his dream came true; he spent a four-year stint on the river.

Clemens had dreams of travel. He moved to Carson City, Nevada, where he began to study and write about human nature under frontier conditions. His humorous frontier pieces were printed in the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise under the pseudonym of Mark Twain. From Virginia City he moved on to work for the San Francisco Daily Morning Call. He continued to develop his skills as a writer, reporter, and popular lecturer.

Restlessness was his trademark. In the late 1860s he moved to New York where he continued his writing and speaking. He began to speak out on political issues, even marched in a suffragette parade. Twain was a believer in pacifism and resistance to authority.

Meltzer's book, interspersed with Twain's own words, presents a picture of the author in historical context. As such, it provides a fine, comprehensive overview for juvenile readers.

Meltzer, M. (1986). Poverty in America. New York: William Morrow & Co.

In this impressive volume Meltzer dissolves the myths about American poverty. He provides definitions for economic and sociological terms to aid young readers in better understanding the text.

Meltzer presents the state of poverty in America today. We are facing an economic upheaval not seen since the 1930s. The causes of recession, chronic unemployment, hunger, homelessness, bankruptcies, farm foreclosures, and the feminization of poverty are due to systemic problems. By focusing on the root causes of poverty helps us to move away from the blame the victim mentality. The solution to poverty lies in a redistribution of wealth: corporations cannot continue to place profits before people.

Meltzer, M. (1986). Winnie Mandela: The soul of South Africa. New York: Viking Kestral.

This short biography is part of the Women of Our Time Biography Series. Winnie Mandela is portrayed in her role as a leader in the African National Congress' struggle against apartheid. Meltzer relates Winnie's early life and marriage to Nelson Mandela. Winnie developed as a leader in her own right after Nelson was imprisoned. She faced her own political trials, imprisonment, and struggles in order to live under court-ordered bans. These bans restricted her to her home and restricted the number of people allowed in the same room with her at one time.

This book dispels the myth of white supremacy as it provides a basic understanding of apartheid.

Meltzer, M. (1987). Mary McLeod Bethune: Voice of Black hope. New York: Puffin Books.

Mary McLeod Bethune, African-American educator, is artfully presented in this volume of the Women of Our Time Biography Series. Meltzer's deft hand has created a well written narrative history of her courageous struggles for freedom,

education for African-American children, voting rights and women's suffrage. Against almost insurmountable odds, she opened a school for girls in Daytona, Florida. As the school grew from five to 250 students, she found the need to enlarge it. With just \$5.00 down and a \$250.00 note, she opened the school on the grounds of what was later to become Bethune-Cookman College. Faith, hard work, sheer determination, and the appreciation and support of her work by others carried her through many struggles.

Meltzer, M. (1987). The American revolutionaries: A history in their own words. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

Meltzer brings the Revolutionary Era to life with the words of the people. Through letters, diaries, journals, memoirs, interviews, ballads, newspapers, pamphlets, and speeches, Meltzer recaptures the spirit of the times. Each chapter is prefaced with introductory comments by Meltzer. There is a wealth of fascinating history in these pages--ranging from the sad plight of the indentured servant to an on-the-spot report of the Boston Tea Party. Meltzer provides us with a window into the people's history of early America.

Meltzer, M. (1987). The landscape of memory. New York: Viking Kestral.

Meltzer, as a social historian and intellectual, is deeply concerned with memory; for memory is the link to the past. It is the past that shapes the present and provides us with the knowledge to build a foundation for the future. It is this lack of memory, the ahistorical mindset of the American people, that he is concerned with. For without a good sense of our past, we may open the future to totalitarian regimes. We must remember and understand the past in order to create a humane, just future for all.

Meltzer also explores memory from a variety of view points: types of memory, fact knowledge and skill memory, memory capacity, loss of memory and methods of increasing memory. He compares human memory to the computer; the computer may store many facts, but it lacks the human capacity to make judgments. He also discusses the uses of memory in the arts. This is a fascinating book.

Meltzer, M. (1988). Benjamin Franklin: The new American.  
New York: Franklin Watts.

This is a delightful history of Benjamin Franklin. Meltzer's narrative is enriched by excerpts from Franklin's Autobiography, his letters, and other writings. He reveals a picture of a sociable, intelligent, talented individual dedicated to issues of truth, goodness, science, and citizenship. Perhaps it was Franklin's ability to attend to the very world around him (the natural world) that helped him to shape his questions and to pursue his many experiments and discoveries. Counted amongst his works are the stove, the lightning rod, astronomical instruments, bifocal eyeglasses, the flexible catheter, and improvements in the printing press.

Meltzer places Franklin within the context of his times when he reveals that Franklin was extremely ethnocentric. He did not welcome non-whites to America, or even whites who were not English. At times he was also full of contradictions. He did not believe the Indians could be assimilated into his culture. He believed they would always have a frontier in which to continue their lifestyle. At the same time he believed it was America's destiny to colonize the continent! And he admired and simply expropriated the concept of a nation as exemplified by the Iroquois Confederacy.

Franklin was a complicated, fascinating individual. His skill as a politician and diplomat are clearly visible in this rich narrative history.

Meltzer, M. (1988). Rescue: The story of how Gentiles saved Jews in the Holocaust. New York: Harper & Row.

This volume is a collection of stories illustrating instances in which Gentiles courageously risked their lives in order to save Jews.

Meltzer prefaces the stories with a chapter on the Holocaust and the place of Judaism in Europe. The importance of this book lies in the statement that we must seek the goodness in humanity when we are faced with a great evil. The Gentiles in these stories are to be counted amongst the heroes and heroines of the Holocaust; those who did not let differences in faith impinge in any way upon their common humanity.

Meltzer, M. (1988). Starting from home: A writer's beginnings. New York: Puffin Books.

Milton Meltzer has taken the liberty to enhance reality with a touch of fiction in this delightful autobiography. Meltzer is the son of Eastern European working class Jewish immigrants who settled in Worcester, Massachusetts. His early coming of age experiences during the Depression Era are reflected in his writing.

Anna Shaughnessay, his high school English teacher, was a major influence on his life. She introduced him to Henry David Thoreau's Walden. She supported Meltzer's and other students' intellectual development by the creation of "The Club," an afterschool literary discussion group. Miss Shaughnessay influenced them even further as she conscientiously helped them to place their readings in historical context. Under Miss Shaughnessay's tutelage Meltzer undertook research on local Worcester history, the history of slavery, and the radical abolitionists. Meltzer began to see writers as people who could use their writing to help people in trouble. Perhaps this is an apt description for his works. He has taken his concrete life experiences and used them as the impetus for his writings; writings which call for justice, economic democracy, and the fulfillment of all human beings within the context of a pluralistic society.

Meltzer, M. (1989). American politics: How it really works. New York: William Morrow & Co., Inc.

Meltzer sets forth the real as opposed to the idealized mythological manner which is used to describe American politics. Our democratic politics comprise an activity by which different interests within governing units work out compromises in proportion to their influences. Meltzer clearly shows that, even during periods when we have had progressive administrations, the unequal distribution of wealth has not been rectified.

I found the chapter on the high tech media campaigns very interesting. Candidates hire professional political consultants who create the "image" for the public. With the use of television the "image" is much more important than the message. Those candidates who have the "big money" hold the key to winning.

Of sad note is the disillusionment of Americans with the voting process. This book truly demonstrates how democracy

in America has been eroded by technology, "big money," and the profit motive.

Meltzer, M. (1989). Voices from the Civil War: A documentary history of the great American conflict. New York: Harper Collins.

Meltzer brings us to a better understanding of the Civil War through the voices of the ordinary people. He has utilized letters, diaries, journals, memoirs, interviews, ballads, testimony in public hearings, and speeches to create this text. Each selection is prefaced by a short explanatory note. We hear the voices of the well known: Frederick Douglas, Abe Lincoln, John Brown, and Lydia Maria Child; also represented are the voices of the ordinary people: soldiers, reporters, social reformers, nurses, workers, and many others. The battle reports from soldiers' diaries provide a vivid picture of the results of warfare upon the human body and soul. It simply boggles the mind to think that war is still seen as a solution to the problems of humanity. This is a fine living history of the period.

Meltzer, M. (1990). Columbus and the world around him. New York: Franklin Watts.

Meltzer brings Columbus to new light by situating him in the context of late medieval/early Renaissance Europe. Columbus was a man of his time, eager for riches and fame. Meltzer presents his virtues and foibles. Columbus brought social dislocation, death, destruction, and disease to the people he termed Indians. In the collision of the two cultures, of the two world views, Europeans dominated by sheer strength of their weaponry and intentions of conquest. However, this cultural exchange was not just in one direction. Meltzer points out that the Indians' concepts of equality and liberty were noticed and carried back to the European continent. This same concept of liberty was visible in the struggles of the European people over the next few hundred years, and it helped to shape the "American" concept of liberty and equality for all.

This is a timely, thought-provoking book for anyone interested in the issues facing the nation as we approach the Quincentennial of Columbus' encounter with the indigenous populations of this continent.

Meltzer, M. (1990). Crime in America. New York: William Morrow & Co., Inc.

In this volume Meltzer takes a sociological perspective and looks at the root causes of crime in America: unequal distribution of wealth, racism, injustice, and greed. He takes us on a journey through a variety of crimes and related topics: homicide, abuse of women, rape, child abuse, addiction, the Mob, white collar crime, corporate price-fixing, and the criminal cost overruns billed to the federal government by defense contractors.

Meltzer addresses the subject of social class. By ignoring white collar crime we get a distorted view of the relationship between social class and crime. The total cost of corporate white collar crime is 10 times greater than street crime. Between the years 1975-1985 over two-thirds of our 500 largest companies were involved in illegal behavior. He liberally cites data to support these statements. This is an enlightening book that will aid the juvenile reader in developing a critical sociological perspective.

Meltzer, M. (1990). The American promise: The voices of a changing nation 1945-present. New York: Bantam Books.

This is a thematic history of the major developments since World War II. Meltzer explains the changes in American life through the personal experiences of men and women who lived them, men and women from all ranks of life. People speak through their letters, diaries, memoirs, poems, speeches, songs, oral history interviews, newspaper reports, and testimony given at public hearings. Meltzer includes voices often intentionally omitted in mainstream student textbooks: we hear the voices of Paul Robeson, the testimonies from the Peekskill Riots of 1949, the religious protests of the Berrigan brothers, the words of Central American immigrants, the voices of the people in the Sanctuary movement, and those from the environmental movement. The provision of oppositional themes and voices provides the reader the opportunity to compare Meltzer's perspective to that represented by the selective tradition.

Meltzer, M. (1990). The Bill of Rights. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

In this volume Meltzer traces the concept of citizens' rights as far back as the Magna Carta. The concept appears

many times in English law, the charters of colonial America, and finally finds its place in our Bill of Rights. James Madison was the individual primarily responsible for the first 10 amendments to the Constitution known as the Bill of Rights.

Meltzer provides the readers with an annotated version of the Bill of Rights in the central part of the book. His explanatory notes help to place the amendments in a realistic, historical context.

The latter part of the book is devoted to explaining the different historical challenges to the Bill of Rights; this is an issue that is alive and well today.

Meltzer, M. (1991). Thomas Jefferson: The revolutionary aristocrat. New York: Franklin Watts.

Meltzer portrays Thomas Jefferson as a man of many contradictions. He was a gentleman farmer, aristocrat, follower of John Locke and the Enlightenment, scholar, inventor, minister to France, statesman, Governor of Virginia, Vice President, and President of the United States. He was a slave owner who was torn by his belief in human rights and the issue of slavery. As Governor of Virginia, and later as President, he tried to draft anti-slavery legislation. Yet he was a man utterly convinced that African-Americans were intellectually inferior to the white man. Full civil rights were restricted to white males who owned large tracts of land. Women, African-Americans, Native Americans, and the laboring classes were denied equal rights. Jefferson, who drafted the Bill of Rights, also spoke against women's suffrage.

With all his faults, Thomas Jefferson must be remembered as an enlightened man of his time, a man who felt that

. . . the spirit of resistance to government is so valuable on certain occasions, that I wish it to be always kept alive . . . a little rebellion now and then is a good thing. . . . It is medicine necessary for the sound health of government. . . . God forbid that we should ever be twenty years without a rebellion. (pp. 123-124)

This is truly a delightful narrative of Jefferson's life and many accomplishments.

## APPENDIX C

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

THEORY

Apple, M. W. (1990). Ideology and curriculum (2nd ed.).  
New York: Routledge.

Apple speaks to the issue of the linkage of education and the reproduction of existing social relations. Utilizing concepts from critical theory and sociology, he moves beyond economic determinism to focus on the role of culture and ideology in education. He questions the manner in which certain groups acquire cultural power (empowerment) within education, while others remain effectively voiceless and disenfranchised.

The chapter on hegemony provides a comprehensive discussion of the issue in relation to education, critical theory, and the sociology of school knowledge. I found the references to Raymond Williams (Hegemony theory) and Antonio Gramsci (cultural power) particularly helpful.

Aronowitz, S., & Giroux, H. A. (Eds.). (1985). Education under siege: The conservative, liberal and radical debate over schooling. New York: Bergin & Garvey.

The seminal argument in this text is that progressive education not only provides us with the language in which to analyze relationships of power and knowledge in a critical manner, but also provides us with the language of possibility. It is this language of possibility that informs a critical pedagogy, a pedagogy which is linked to an empowering cultural politics. Teachers need to become transformative intellectuals in order to facilitate the critical analysis of power, knowledge, and cultural relations in the classroom.

Aronowitz, S., & Giroux, H. A. (1991). Textual authority, culture, and the politics of literacy. In M. W. Apple & L. K. Christian-Smith (Eds.), The politics of the textbook (pp. 213-241). New York: Routledge.

This is a radical critique of Allan Bloom's The Closing of the American Mind and E. D. Hirsch's Cultural Literacy. The authors contend that these works need to be viewed as part of a conservative cultural offensive. This cultural offensive represents a form of textual authority that legitimates the exclusion of all discourse except that which stems from the conservative viewpoint. Excluded would be all cultural or social discourses which are seen to threaten the hegemonic tradition; these voices are to be silenced. This notion of textual authority takes the conservative onslaught beyond issues of class; it seeks rather to focus now on the production of legitimation of knowledge. The authors conclude that this position represents a "public philosophy informed by a crippling ethnocentrism and a contempt for the language and social relations fundamental to the ideals of a democratic society."

Bahktin, M. (1981). Discourse in the novel. In M. Holquist (Ed.), The dialogic imagination, (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.) (pp. 259-422). New York: Routledge.

Bahktin's literary tract proffered a challenge for me. I have tried to glean from it some points that I find most meaningful. Language only exists in community. It is conceived of as ideologically, culturally, and socially saturated. It is seen as a world view which provides meaning and understanding through discourse. Bahktin's concept of dialogism is characteristic of the heteroglossic state of our world. There is no one unitary language. There is a constant interaction between meanings which in turn affects comprehension. Discourse undergoes dialogization when it becomes relative to other competing definitions. (This seems very much connected to intertextuality.) Undialogized discourse is seen as absolute or authoritative discourse.

Bahktin speaks of an internal dialogism which seems akin to Vygotsky's concept of inner speech. Again, it is another manifestation of humans using language to find meaning in the world. Bahktin's concepts, developed through his literary study, also find meaning in other contexts.

Coles, R. (1989). The call of stories: Teaching and the moral imagination. Boston, MA: The Houghton Mifflin Company.

This is a masterful book that speaks to the power of stories in the lives of Coles' patients, friends, and students. Coles' patients are simply people who come to tell him their stories. It is his job to aid them to learn from the stories of their lives. Coles tells stories as he relates various experiences from his early boyhood, medical school days, and life as a practicing medical doctor and psychiatrist. Stories serve to connect him to people from the past or literary works. All serve to focus on a common humanity, a humanity that expresses itself through story.

Dewey, J. (1916). Democracy and education. New York: MacMillan Publishing Co.

Dewey defines philosophy of education as: "the theory of education as a deliberate conducted practice." Within this volume he sets forth the rationale for education in a democratic society, a rationale that calls forth an anti-dualism, anti-positivist stance. This education allows for intellectual freedom and the celebration of human diversity. It is through democratic education that true individualism flourishes. This individualism represents the diversity of interests within the social milieu.

Dewey's education for democracy requires that students undertake genuine experiences, experiences which are meaningful to them. From these experiences arise problems (anomalies) which stimulate further reflection. Students then utilize the information, make observations, and work solutions. These solutions need to be tested by application (experience) which allows the student to fully comprehend and discover the validity of the solution. In the process they become active risk takers.

For Dewey the subject matter is just as important as the process. Mind and self are not isolated from society. Subject matter does not foster the esoteric accumulation of "knowledge." Rather, as thinking is the "direct movement of subject matter to completing issue," all subject matter is directly related to both personally meaningful and socially useful considerations. Through the process of experience, risk taking, and reflection, subject matter gains in meaning in terms of personal and social reality.

Dewey demonstrates that he truly understands the concept of culture. The social semiotic that we internalize as members of society determines the course of society. Dewey's philosophy of education fosters democratic society by providing an education that is a lived democratic experience.

Dewey, J. (1938). Experience and education. New York: Collier Books.

In this volume Dewey analyzes traditional and progressive education of his time (1930s); he finds both at fault. Educators need to look towards a philosophy of experience. Through experience the child comes to know the world. Knowledge of the world enables the child to act upon and transform herself and the world. Dewey's philosophy of experience contains two inseparable principles: continuity and interaction. Continuity implies that the experience is educationally significant, i.e., that it is meaningful. Interaction refers to the transaction, the experience the individual undertakes between herself and the environment. It is the educator's role to facilitate and provide the "objective conditions" needed to support these two principles. It is also the teacher's role to guide the learner towards the direction of free inquiry, rather than put any restriction upon the learner's capabilities. Through intelligent social dialogue, educators and learners come to discover the purpose of their inquiry within the framework of an atmosphere conducive to a lived experience of freedom and democracy.

Farrell, E. J., & Squire, J. R. (Eds.). Transactions with literature: A fifty year perspective. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

This volume of essays was published in honor of the 50th anniversary of Louise Rosenblatt's Literature as Exploration. The essays focus on the meaning of reader response to today's classrooms. Her transactional theory of reading has led to the extension of the idea to all areas of the language arts: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

In one essay Rudine Sims Bishop explores the meaning of reader response within the context of looking at the past 50 years of children's literature. Others discuss the concepts of evoking the poem and intertextuality. Perhaps two themes transcend this volume: (1) the search for

meaning within reader response and (2) that reader response theory is inherently democratic. It is through the transaction between reader and text that the work of art, the poem, is evoked. Once the poem is evoked the door is open to reflection and analysis. There is no one correct response to a text. Each reader creates her own meaning based upon previous reading (intertextuality) and experience.

Freire, P. (1970). The pedagogy of the oppressed. New York: Herder and Herder.

Freire presents the rationale and justification for a pedagogy of the oppressed. It arose out of his belief that the illiterate peasantry of Brazil could, through critical liberating dialogue and practice, become literate while simultaneously coming to understand their subjective social reality. Through dialogue and social praxis, the oppressed thus become self empowered and committed to social and personal transformation. Freire's dialogics (dialogue) is the essence of education as the practice of freedom. The "curriculum" content is the "organized, systematized, and developed representation to individuals of things about which they want to know more." The starting point in this process is the concrete existential situation of the people. Through dialogue generative themes arise: the dominant theme of this generation is domination. This implies that liberation is an objective to be achieved. It is through critical liberatory dialogue focused on these generative themes that a critical form of thinking about the world is developed. Thus through the growth of a critical, liberatory literacy, individuals learn to read both the word and their world. Freire's pedagogy is a pedagogy forged with, rather than for, the oppressed.

Giroux, H. A. (1983). Theory and resistance in education: A pedagogy for the opposition. New York: Begin & Garvey.

In the first half of this volume Giroux deals with the issue of theory and critical discourse. Within these scant 100 pages he provides the reader with an excellent historical/theoretical overview of critical theory. He touches upon the issues of schooling and the politics of the hidden curriculum, and the theoretical stances behind the issues of cultural reproduction and resistance in the schooling process. He sets the basis for the creation of a "public sphere informed by the critical mediations of

social groups that examine and act on the nature of their existence" (p. 117). Giroux goes beyond structural determinism to bring in the concepts of ideology and culture in this formation of a critical, radical theory and pedagogy. He includes Freire's concept of literacy to inform the notion of citizenship education and thus create opportunities for positive action in the realm of social change.

Giroux concludes with a discussion of the role of teachers and schools in the radical transformation of society and the relations of everyday life. He posits that this transformation may come about through the creation of a radical public sphere. A radical public sphere signifies the need for an enlightened citizenry able to rationalize power through the medium of public discussion under conditions free from domination. Schools will be one site of struggle in this process to reconstruct more emancipatory relations and to reveal the concrete reality of the dominant, non-democratic culture. For this to succeed we will need radical teachers.

Giroux, H. A. (1988). Schooling and the struggle for public life: Critical pedagogy in the modern age. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

In this volume Giroux expands upon and refines the work begun in Theory and Resistance in Education. He calls for radical citizenship education, education based upon a pedagogy of empowerment, a pedagogy of possibility. The notions of struggle, student voice, and critical dialogue are essential elements of his theory. He draws heavily upon the works of Bahktin and Freire. The teacher's role in all of this is as a transformative intellectual. Teachers who assume this role treat students as critical agents, question how knowledge is produced and distributed, utilize dialogue, and make knowledge meaningful, critical, and ultimately emancipatory. Giroux believes that schools need to be redefined as democratic public spheres, sites dedicated to self and social empowerment. For this to come about, teacher education will also have to undergo a radical transformation.

Goodman, K. (1986). What's whole in whole language?. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

In this small, but powerful volume, Ken Goodman explains the meaning of Whole Language. Whole Language has direct

ties to Dewey's philosophy of education. It is real, natural, democratic, meaningful, purposeful, and has social utility. Whole Language provides for the celebration of diversity, democracy, and empowerment within the school setting.

Hooks, B. (1989). Talking back--thinking feminist, thinking black. Boston, MA: South End Press.

Hooks discusses anger, power, knowledge, voice, and the meaning of being a black woman in America. Her chapters on feminist theory, feminist research, and radical pedagogy further emphasize the need for a body of oppositional literature to support radical pedagogy.

Langer, S. (1942). Philosophy in a new key: A study in the symbolism of reason, rite and art. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Langer presents a general theory of symbolic analysis which helps to further elucidate the concept of culture. She develops this theory through a study of the functions of myth, ritual, and the arts. Her concepts are helpful in understanding the myriad ways in which we become enculturated; the ways in which the symbols of our world interpenetrate our consciousness and total being. It is this we need to understand in order to work within the context of a critical pedagogy of possibility.

Lee, D. (1987). Freedom and culture. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Lee's basic theme is that culture is a symbolic system which transforms physical reality into experienced reality. Each culture has its own distinct experienced reality. I found Lee's discussion of the meaning of freedom across cultures particularly meaningful in providing insights into the meaning of American culture and the quest for a critical democratic pedagogy. I believe that an understanding of culture and the mechanisms of culture change has influenced the writings of John Dewey, Louise Rosenblatt, and the critical theorists.

Meek, M. (1988). How texts teach what readers learn. South Woodchester, Stroud., Glos., England: The Thimble Press.

Meek makes the point that children come to learn to read by reading. It is real texts, complete with illustration, metaphor, awareness of audience, and a multitude of other literary devices that they need. Meek explains how children come to be members of the reading club. Her explanatory mode is replete with supporting anecdotes. Children come to reading through an understanding of authorship, audience, illustration, and iconic interpretation. As they interact with books, they connect story and illustrations to past experiences, to early literacy experiences such as songs, nursery rhymes and other forms of oral tradition (intertextuality). They connect them to their own cultural and social experiences.

The role of illustration in storybooks provides meaning. Children soon come to understand that the printed text holds meaning. Thus learning to read is a process of discovery. Children demonstrate the lessons they have learned from the texts in their writing.

This book is truly an indictment of the forms of instrumental reading instruction that have plagued our schools. At the same time it is a delightful, instructive celebration of the powerful use of real texts.

Rosen, H. (1987). Stories and meanings. Sheffield, England: National Association for the Teaching of English.

This slight volume consists of two articles by Rosen: "The Nurture of Narrative" and "Narratology and the Teacher." Narrative, according to Barbara Hardy is a "primary act of mind" (p. 4). In this first article Rosen ruminates upon the role of narrative in our lives. It is our human propensity to place our histories and daily lives within the narrative context. This is one way in which we, as humans, make sense of the world.

Rosen suggests that teachers take advantage of this human propensity for narrative. They need to reflect upon their present classroom practices and take the measure of the role of narrative within classroom life.

In the second article Rosen discusses ways in which teachers may use the classification of narrative as a

heuristic device in order to learn more about the nature of narrative itself.

Rosenblatt, L. (1976). Literature as exploration (4th ed.). New York: Modern Language Association of America.

In this volume Rosenblatt recapitulates and elaborates upon her transactional theory of reader response. She draws primarily upon examples from high school classrooms as she stresses the importance of the relationship between students and teachers. The teacher does not have answers to all questions. Her role is to aid in the creation of a community of learners through facilitation of the free expression of responses to the text. Readers take an active part in the transactional process; they live through, reflect upon, and learn to criticize their own response to the text. Each reader has a unique and individual relationship with the text which is fostered by the social, cultural, and individual differences amongst students.

Rosenblatt views this transactional process as a partnership with the wisdom of the past, a partnership which aids in the creation of aspirations for the future of both readers and their society.

Rosenblatt, L. (1978). The reader, the text and the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Rosenblatt sets forth her transactional reader response theory in this well written text. She provides a theoretical background as she cites the influences of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. The centrality of the reader in the reading process is emphasized. She explains her concepts: the meaning of text, poem, evoking the poem, efferent and aesthetic reading. Text "designates a set or series of signs interpretable as linguistic symbols" (p. 12). The text is the stimulus which activates the reader's attention. Meanings emerge from a network of relationships that arise as the reader becomes aware of or senses the symbols in the text. For Rosenblatt the poem "comes into being in the live circuit set up between reader and text" (p. 14). Structured, meaningful responses to the text constitute the poem. Evoking the poem refers to the "lived through"

process of building up the work under the guidance of the text.

Readers assume an efferent stance when their intent is to take something away from the text; they assume an aesthetic stance when their primary concern is with what happened during the reading process. The reader's attention is centered on the "lived through" experience with the text. The same text may be read either efferently or aesthetically. Rosenblatt notes that most reading is done somewhere in the middle of the continuum.

The transactional theory of reader response puts to rest other theories which emphasize the reader or the text as the central component in the reading process.

Rosenblatt views the process as a natural move towards a liberatory education, one in which diverse viewpoints emerge in a never ending dialogue to find truth and to make a reality of our democratic principles.

Short, K. (1986). Literacy as a collaborative experience: The role of intertextuality. In J. Niles & R. Lalik (Eds.), Issues in literacy: A research perspective, 35th Yearbook of the National Reading Conference (pp. 227-332). Rochester, NY: National Reading Conference.

The theoretical underpinnings of this collaborative study have influenced the way in which I have come to look at literacy, children's literature, the classroom experience, and narrative. Short sets forth many valuable concepts: intertextuality, the social nature of literacy, literacy as a collaborative experience, Charles Peirce's concept of the critical thinking cycle, the role of anomalies in the reading process, Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory the importance of narrative to aid us in finding meaning in the world, and the role of transmediation in the learning process. All of these serve as part of the foundation of her collaborative classroom study.

Solomon, J. (1988). The signs of our time: The secret meanings of everyday life. New York: Harper & Row.

Solomon presents us with a clear, easily readable explanation of semiotics (the science of the sign). He introduces us to the terminology of semiotics: semiotic systems, frames, and myths. Conceptually based sign systems intervene between our perception and the object of

our perception. A sign system forms a kind of frame that determines the shape of our knowledge in advance. These frames are referred to as myths, i.e., codes that inform an entire belief structure.

There are also exemplary chapters on the meaning of semiotics in the human landscape, the semiotics of television, the languages of food, gender, and culture, and on semiotics and the postmodern world view.

Taxel, J. (1981). The outsiders of the American revolution: The selective tradition in children's fiction. Interchange, 12(2-3), 202-227.

Taxel presents the problem of symbolic violence: the granting of cultural legitimacy to only certain groups' culture. He uses the approach of the sociology of school knowledge in order to look at the "interconnections between the knowledge selected, preserved, and transmitted by schools and by the culture at large and the wider nexus of power and control in society" (p. 207). His detailed study of children's literature, based on the theme of the American Revolution, is revealing. Although few books have been printed which do not draw upon the selective tradition in children's literature, the majority do provide only one perspective on the era. Those groups who lack legitimacy and cultural power in society are the groups whose perspectives and voices are lacking. One might paraphrase the saying that "freedom is a constant struggle;" opposition to the selective tradition must also be constant. For it is only through this opposition that the diverse multiple voices of all peoples will be heard.

Taxel, J. (1989). Children's literature: A research proposal from the perspective of the sociology of school knowledge. In S. de Castile & A. Luke (Eds.), Language, authority and criticism: Readings on the school textbook (pp.32-45). Philadelphia, PA: The Falmer Press.

Taxel speaks to many of the concerns I have held about research and pedagogy which do not take into account the reader and her cultural/socio/historical and ideological background. Taxel sets forth his proposal after a discussion of current theories of research, the sociology of school knowledge, William's concept of the "selective tradition" and resistance theories. He calls for the joining of reader response theory, textual analysis, and

critical theory. He seeks to create a cycle of research that would take into account the cultural/socio/historical, and ideological backgrounds of author, publisher, and reader. Issues of class, gender, ethnicity, power, and knowledge will all come under scrutiny.

His proposal should facilitate better insight into reader response. Taxel provides the groundwork for a better understanding of the pedagogical work that is needed for the creation of a democratic culture and state by bringing together the language of critique with the language of possibility.

Taxel, J. (1991). Reclaiming the voice of resistance: The fiction of Mildred Taylor. In L. Christian-Smith & A. Luke (Eds.), The politics of the textbook (pp. 111-134). New York: Routledge.

Taxel addresses the issue of oppositional African-American children's literature through an analysis of the fiction of Mildred Taylor. Oppositional texts are ones that conflict or oppose the dominant selective tradition. Mildred Taylor is explicitly concerned with resistance and those who resist. She deals with themes related to the intersection of race, class, and gender. It is this theme of resistance that makes her works stand out amongst others. She presents both the language of social critique and possibility to the reader.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Vygotsky deals with the importance of semiotic mediation, the dialectical relationship between humans and the environment (the social nature of learning), and the importance of play, and the Zone of Proximal Development. The excellent forward and afterward by Michael Cole, Vera John-Steiner, Sylvia Scribner, and Ellen Souberman help to make Vygotsky more comprehensible to the modern reader. The effects of Marxism and early anthropology on Vygotsky's thinking are evident.

Vygotsky, L. (1989). Thought and language (rev. ed.). (A. Kozulin, Ed. & Trans.). Cambridge, MA: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.

Vygotsky, in this seminal work, deals with the relationship of his theories to those of Piaget, his theory of spontaneous and scientific concepts, and the Zone of Proximal Development. Alex Kozulin, in his forward to the book, places Vygotsky in socio/historical context.

Wexler, P. (Ed.). (1991). Critical theory now. New York: The Falmer Press.

Wexler presents what he calls a new voice in critical theory; the voice that has arisen from the struggles of the student movement, of feminism, and of anti-racist and ecological social movements. The topics covered range from an analysis of critical theory vis-à-vis the informational society, an analysis of critical theory and its relationship to cultural studies to issues of French feminist discourse studies. I found Raymond Morrow's article on "Critical Theory and Cultural Studies" to be most relevant to my topic. He discusses the Frankfurt school, Antonio Gramsci, structuralism, poststructuralism, and the merger of critical theory and cultural studies. This chapter provided some valuable, though at times heady, background material on the history of critical theory.

Zinsser, W. (Ed.). (1987). Inventing the truth: The art and craft of memoir. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

In this small volume six American writers discuss the craft of memoir and the struggles they undergo as they try to reinvent the past. Memoir is simply a window on one portion of the author's life. As such, it suffers from the reliability or unreliability of the author's memories. The past as presented may contain fictitious accounts of history mediated by time and mind.

Authors represented in this volume are: William Zinsser, Russel Baker, Annie Dillard, Alfred Kazan, Toni Morrison, and Lewis Thomas. I found most fascinating Toni Morrison's account of her use of slave narratives as the entryway into the lives of African-Americans.

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