ABSTRACT

This study explored the nature of and extent to which Canadian children’s authors were inviting school-age students into literacy. The most common forms of interaction between authors and readers were identified.

While essentially exploratory in nature this investigation provided some descriptive research to help uncover the parameters of the phenomenon of authors interacting with readers at literacy events.

A pilot study was conducted in 2004 to help inform the national survey given in 2007. Seventy-three Canadian children’s authors participated in the national survey. The email survey consisted of 15 items and asked a variety of questions ranging from how authors shared their craft with students to how beneficial authors found websites as a means of communicating with their readership.

From the 125 pages of transcription of responses the following general themes arose: authors in school environments, correspondence, websites, author roles, authors as literacy resources, engaging in the literacy process, and facilitating events and people. Two main research tools were used in this study. Atlas.ti was used to generate key categories from the authors’ comments. SPSS was used to generate frequencies.

Findings from this study suggested that authors were highly engaged in inviting students further into literacy by meeting and corresponding with readers. Authors identified elements of fiction, researching, reading, developing style, and generating ideas as central components of their dialogues and mentoring of school-aged children.

Authors also said that websites were significant for maintaining contact with their readership. Based on the findings of this research, a theoretical model was developed.
The Reader/Author Reciprocal Mediation Model considers how students’ literacy can improve when authors and readers of texts interact with a storyworld. This study provides a framework for understanding how authors are impacting student literacy.
# Table Of Contents

Abstract

Table Of Contents

List Of Tables

List Of Figures

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1: An Introduction To The Study

Authors, Readers, And Texts

Research Focus: Author Interactions With Children

Background To The Problem

Purpose Of The Study

Research Questions

Significance Of The Study

Definition Of Key Terms

Overview Of The Other Chapters

Chapter 2: A Review Of The Literature

Introduction

A Multiple Lens Approach

Reading As Writers

Literacy Apprentices

Research On Authors

The In-Text Relationship

Reader Response Theory And Research In Reader Response

Secondary Worlds

The Reader And Writer As Co-Participants

Intertextuality

Schema Theory And Scaffolding

Language Development And Story

Author Visits

Author Correspondence

Summary: Towards A Theoretical Framework: Invitations To Literacy

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction: Trust, Validity, And Bias

The Pilot Project

The Participants
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories Stemming From The Pilot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Of The Categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classrooms As An Interactive Space For Authors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications Of Education/ Educational Value Of Correspondence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators' Intentions Behind Author Visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channels Of Correspondence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Students Can Learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits Of Correspondence/Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Need For A National Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Analysis Of Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method Of Administering The Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire: Categories Of Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors In School Environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Talks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops For Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer In Residence Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding Of Questionnaire Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors In School Environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence (Including Means Of Correspondence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author Roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors As Literacy Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging In The Literacy Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements Of Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice/Style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating Events And People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5 Discussion And Call For Further Research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Participation in Reading, Residencies, and Workshops ........................................ 77
Table 2: Correspondence with Students ............................................................................. 81
Table 3: Terms Used by Authors to Describe the Writing Process ................................. 94
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Authors in Educational Environments .............................................. 77

Figure 2: E-mails Received Annually by Authors .......................................... 82

Figure 3: Letters Received Annually by Authors .......................................... 83

Figure 4: References to the Writing Process ................................................ 96
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Most large documents have a team of influence behind the words. After writing five novels I have come to appreciate deeply the friends, editors and colleagues who guide the process of writing. This dissertation is no exception. My wife, Ariana, has been tirelessly supportive and perhaps the best secret weapon for completing such a project with her technical and editing skills. Love guides all her work. My family has cheered and raised support flags through dark November days and endless editing nights. I hope we see this project as a family achievement. Lee Gunderson’s patience, mentorship, kindness, and competence have undergirded this entire project from start to finish. My thanks also to Carl Leggo for keeping the writer and researcher in me alive. Both Lee and Carl gave their time to support this project selflessly.

Ron Jobe and Theresa Rogers provided invaluable advice and their connectivity to and love of children’s literature helped keep the storyworld close to the project. My thanks to George Belliveau for his mentorship and support. Reg D’Silva, Mia Perry, and Keith McPherson, my friends and colleagues, helped with tireless hearts and hands.

The Children’s Writers and Illustrators of B.C. have been a tremendous inspiration to me over the last five years. Not only have authors been interested in this project but so many have been willing to help. My friends and fellow authors Art Slade and Shelley Hrdlitschka were my willing sounding boards. My thanks also to Steven Dreger, Phil Ward and Dan Heavenor for many long “walks of encouragement.”

If it were possible, I would write a letter of thanks to C.S. Lewis, an author who first invited me into the storyworld of Narnia and who so poignantly wielded the truth of fiction in children’s lives.
CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Authors, Readers, and Texts

...on a darkened stage I see the figures of the author and the reader, with the book - the text or the poem or play or novel- between them. The spotlight focuses on one of them so brightly that the others fade into practical invisibility. Throughout the centuries, it becomes apparent, usually either the book or the author has received major illumination. The reader has tended to remain in shadow, taken for granted, to all intents and purposes invisible (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 1).

Louise Rosenblatt’s introduction to *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* is an appropriate metaphor for this present investigation of the interactions between readers and writers of texts. Thirty years after the publication of Rosenblatt’s seminal work the image of the author, reader, and text on a stage together may again be used to examine the shifting emphasis placed on each of these “players” in current research.

Research Focus: Author Interactions with Children

The exchange of letters between children’s authors and young readers is a well known phenomenon in the history of Western children’s literature. Beatrix Potter, Lucy Maud Montgomery, Laura Ingalls Wilder, and C.S. Lewis, all received letters from their enthusiastic readership and made it a practice to write back (Bruce, 1992, Wilder, 1996; Dorsett & Lamp Mead, 1985). As one publisher remarked about Laura Ingalls Wilder “almost immediately after the publication of *Little House in the Big Woods* in 1932 and until her death in 1957, Laura received hundreds and hundreds of fan letters from children” (HarperCollins, 1996, p. v). The correspondence that has been published reveals a remarkable sampling of children’s unaided responses to stories and authors. The
letters provide ample evidence of authors mentoring young writers – sometimes for as many as twenty years, in the case of C.S. Lewis (p. 41). As publishers Dorsett and Mead note:

Most of the letters in this book were first sent to Lewis because the young correspondents had read one or more of the Narnian tales…Many of these children continued to write Lewis about a variety of matters as the pen relationship deepened, but the majority of their questions still centered on the Narnian books, the spiritual reality within these stories, and the craft of writing itself (p. 5).

While a sampling of author correspondence has been made public through books such as *C.S. Lewis: Letters to Children*, or in author biographies such as Beverly Gherman’s *E.B. White: Some Writer!* (1992), there has been scarce research conducted on what children and authors have been saying to one another. Further, as technology has improved access to authors via the internet and telecommunications, there is a growing, unexplored area of research, the interactions between current children’s authors and young readers and writers, which call for serious academic investigation.

In addition, as a Canadian children’s author I interact with my readership on a regular basis through emails, letters, and face to face school or conference engagements. My interactions with young readers have provided many rich conversations about stories, the writing process and reading. I am keenly interested in how other children’s authors talk about their craft with students and the kinds of conversations that support children’s literacy.
Background to the Problem

Literature for children, in addition to children’s fascination with stories and authors, has claimed the attention of many academics, particularly so in the last twenty years, and blossomed into a multidisciplinary field of study. In Volume III of the *Handbook of Reading Research*, Galda and Cullinan (2000) state:

This volume of the *Handbook of Reading Research* marks the first time that a chapter on children’s literature has been included; thus, there are no previous chapters on which to ground a current review. However, there is certainly not space enough for a review of all research on children’s literature. (p. 361)

In addition, Fletcher and Consultant (2005) found that “today many students have an awareness of authors’ lives, passions, even their awards. This may partly be a result of our celebrity culture, but it also reflects a genuine interest in story and the craft of writing” (p. 1).

Recently, researchers in children’s literature have explored many themes including: literature and power (Ching, 2005), critical literacy (Laman, 2006) as well as inquiry methodologies (Damico et. al, 2006) are also being applied to studies in children’s literature. The fact that there is more research being conducted in the field of children’s literature and readers’ interactions with literature indicates that scholars are acknowledging the significance of the relationship between readers, texts and authors.

Responding to stories, exploring texts and talking about authors has become a central component in many classrooms. Author studies (Jenkins, 1999) writing to authors (Vos, 2003), questioning the author (Beck, McKeown et al. 1997), and technology and
author studies (Wepner, 1993, Fletcher & Consultant, 2005) are all integral instructional activities.

While much attention has been given to the value of children's literature and many studies conducted on what children are saying about books (Enscico, 1992; Sipe, 2000; Maloch, 2002) there has been little research that investigates what readers of texts and writers of texts in general have been telling each other. Academic focus has continued to be on the relationship between children and texts and contexts. This focus has left a missing piece in the triangle of the child, the text, and the context. Research has explored the child (Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978, 1968; Rogoff, 1990). Research has explored the child and the text (Emig, 1983; Rosenblatt, 1995). There are many investigations that explore the context of children's literature as well as the child, the text and the context together as Galda and Cullinan (2000) report in their review of the literature. Integral, yet hidden from study so far has been the dialogue exchanged for at least a century between children and authors.

Further, the exponential growth of children's literature as an industry in the west coupled with the increased accessibility of authors through technology has resulted in author interactions with children becoming a world-wide phenomenon. Similarly, author talks in schools and writing workshops conducted by authors for children have increased significantly in the same period as children's literature has expanded as a research discipline (Jones & Lockwood, 1998).

With the convergence of children's interest in authors, publishers' investing in children's books, children's literature developing as a recognized discipline in the academy, and schools adopting literature-based curricula, the time has come for an
investigation that explores interactions between authors and students. Never before has
there been such a cumulative volume of unexamined correspondence between readers
and writers. Never before has there been the kind of virtual opportunities for
author/student interactions via the World Wide Web. Now is the time for research on
children, texts, and authors, an exploration of the silent conversations between authors
and students and their synergetic negotiation of texts.

Purpose of the Study

Author studies have been found to be of great value for enhancing student literacy
(Jenkins, 1999). So too, has the strategy of helping students examine particular styles and
methods and literary devices of professional writers (Fletcher, 2006). There is however,
little academic discussion regarding the constructions and implications of author and
student correspondence, face to face interactions or electronic dialogues.

The purpose of this study was to examine how and to what extent, are today’s
children’s authors inviting students into literacy. How are authors encouraging, shaping,
and guiding children’s writing and reading? In this exploratory and descriptive research I
have investigated the virtual, face to face and correspondence interactions between
children’s authors and school age children through a national survey given to a group of
over 300 Canadian children’s authors.

Research Questions

Based on the four themes emanating from a pilot study the following research
questions were addressed in this study:

1. How do children’s authors invite students into literacy? That is, how do author
   interactions with students as indicated by their letter correspondence, email,
author visits and workshops with school-age children impact students’ literacy?

2. How do authors contribute to literacy learning by mentoring children in literacy skills?

3. How is technology reshaping the relationship between authors and readers?

This study comes at a crossroads in children’s literature in education. The research questions were designed to explore how authors are inviting students into reading and writing at a time when issues such as access to literature and authors via technology, the uses of literature in the classroom, children’s responses to literature, genre, gender, multiculturalism and globalization are leading areas of discussion in schools, governments and academia.

**Significance of the Study**

Research on reading and writing connections continues to be a valid and important part of research in children’s acquisition of literacy (Yancey, 2004). Arts-based inquiry practices in educational research are abundant, particularly so with the expanding nature of the definition of literacy and attention being given to students’ personal literacies (Smithrim & Upitis, 2005; Wood Ray, 2006). There has also been more research conducted on the arts in schools. As researchers continue to investigate the arts as a means of inquiry and as a bridge for students to convey meaning it is important that the significance of artists in the literary arts – authors - also be explored.

There has also been research conducted on students’ personal literacies, those expressions of meaning students are engaging in through a variety of mediums, one of which is literature (Allen & Ingulsrud, 2005). The findings from this study will help
inform educators of the kinds of out-of-school literacy practices students are engaging in as they interact with authors.

Most significantly, some researchers and theorists have been extending the place of the author to the reader/text/context transaction, bringing attention to how professional writers may invite students into literacy. What do students struggle with as they write? How can authors inspire young writers to work through the challenges of writing and editing? How can young writers be inspired to examine their own writing by walking with authors through the complex processes of turning words into cultural tools?

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Arts-based Inquiry:** a form of research, under qualitative methodology, that utilizes the arts as a means of exploring a particular question or set of questions.

**Children’s authors:** Authors who have published at least one novel, picture book, book of poems or short stories by a recognized publishing house. This definition does not include self-published authors. This is the definition used by professional writers’ organizations such as CANSCAIP and CWILL. Members are professional authors although “Friends of CANSCAIP” may participate in events and receive publications.

**CANSCAIP:** Canadian Society of Children’s Authors Illustrators and Performers. A professional society which supports writers in Canada by providing services and information both to Canadian children’s writers and the writing community.
**Content Analysis:** Observing Stemler’s (2001) recommended procedures, content analysis in this study can be defined using Holst’s broader terminology. “Any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (p. 1).

**CWILL:** Children’s Writers and Illustrators of British Columbia. A membership of professional children’s writers in B.C.

**Purposive Sampling:** A non-probabilistic sampling procedure that intentionally seeks out a particular group for study.

**Literacy Events:** Describe those moments when a conveyance of personal meaning has occurred between authors and students during written or oral discussion of literature.

**Literacy Apprentices:** A descriptor for children learning the constructs of language from adults or older persons as explained from a socio-cognitive constructivist position.

**Literature-based Instruction:** “A major approach to reading that encourages students to select their own trade books, with the sessions followed by teacher-student conferences at which students may be asked to read aloud from their selections; used by teachers who want to provide for individual student differences in reading abilities while focusing on meaning, interest, and enjoyment” (Vacca et al., 2006, p. 585).
**Reader Response Theory:** is composed of a variety of critical positions from which critics and scholars investigate the terms, *reader*, *the reading process*, and *response* (Tompkins, 1980).

**Semi Structured Interview:** an interviewing technique which follows specifically organized questions but allows for the interviewer to move away from original questions or encourage further dialogue without being constrained by the original questions of the interview.

**Socio-cognitive Constructivist:** “The conception of learning as a constructive process that occurs through transactions between the individual and the community” (Chapman, 1997, p. 289).

**Overview of the Other Chapters**

Chapter two consists of a review of the literature, research, and contributing theories that have shaped this study. In particular, there is a focus made on past and present social constructivist approaches on viewing children as literacy apprentices and the role of adults in students’ acquisition of literacy. Considerable attention is given to research in reader response and reader response theory as this study examines not only the positions of authors but also how children are describing their own literary responses to the books of writing professionals.

Literary criticism likewise has contributed significantly to this study by examining the processes of how writers write, their intentions and purposes for their audiences. Finally, I have provided a review of research on authors as significant
contributors to literacy. The place of authors in supporting young writers is also discussed.

Chapter three describes the methodology of the research. The chapter begins with a detailed description of the pilot study and how the initial investigation helped to form the national survey for the central research of the dissertation. Further in the chapter the methodology used to conduct this investigation is described.

Chapter four presents the analysis of the data.

Chapter five presents the discussion and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

When students connect with the author and consider the intelligence behind the text, they begin to read in a more engaged and "dialogic" fashion... Who wrote this? Why did she write it? For whom did she write it? What is the point of the writing? What kind of thinking or social action is it intended to promote? Exploring questions such as these is central to critical reading (Wilhelm, 2004, p. 131).

The following literature review was conducted to discover the research and theoretical perspectives relating to author-mentorship. My intent in the review was to discover how researchers have examined authors in the past in educational settings and the theoretical models that have supported such investigations. In the first section I considered the concept of literacy apprenticeship as found in educational theories from a variety of contributing disciplines. A review of investigations that support young writers as apprentices follows.

A Multiple Lens Approach

A review of research and the theoretical models pertaining to author interactions with students made it quickly apparent that there was no single, comprehensive lens by which this topic could be explored. As with other approaches that examine the complex relationships between children and literature, research in author-mentorship requires multiple lenses and relies on research and theories from a variety of disciplines. Other researchers in children's literature studies have argued for a multiple lens approach. Laurence Sipe stated in his study on how young children understand and respond to
literature: “I argue for a multifaceted conception of literary understanding, considering theories of narrative representation and structuralist approaches, reader-response theory, and several other literary critical approaches” (2000, p. 252).

Similarly, Galda et al (2000) in their review of research in children’s literature called for “more studies that cross the boundaries among us, that allow us to speak to one another across schools of library science, colleges of education, and departments of English” (p. 375). In addition, Richard Beach suggested that literacy researchers needed to adopt a multiple stance approach to their research (1992).

Social constructivist theory and research, literary criticism, research in reader response and reader response theory, schema theory, and elements of research on intertextuality among others, all contributed to this present study which weaves together readers, texts, contexts and authors. Researchers and writers such as Meek (2002), Chambers (2001), Wilhelm (2004), Calkins & Hartman (2003), and Clark (2003) in particular, have drawn attention to children’s authors as mentors and provide a context and framework for facilitating authors in the classroom. In the following chapter I have described literature and research that have supported and shaped this study in author-mentorship.

Professional writers and school-age writers share many things in common. Research has supported the notion that professional and novice writers both engage in similar processes when writing although their approaches may be quite different (Dyson & Freedman, 2003; Crowhurst, 1993; Irwin & Doyle, 1992). The educational terminology for writing activities used in the classroom reflects the language used in the professional world of writing. When describing young writers’ activities, terms such as
composing, crafting, publishing, and editing (Olness, 2005; Holden & Schmit, 2002; Graves, 1983) were used frequently, just as they might be for professional or expert writers. Similarly, young writers have been referred to as “authors” (Graves, 1983; Calkins, 1994; Tierney & Shanahan, 1991).

Writers, then, experts and novices, can be described as falling somewhere along a writing continuum, belonging to a “scribal society” (Purves, 1990), and in a transactional process of learning to write that is always undergoing refinement (Galda & Cullinan, 2003; Dahl & Farnan, 1998). Further, Perl’s study found that:

Composing always involves some measure of both construction and discovery.
Writers construct their discourse in as much as they begin with a sense of what they want to write. This sense, as it remains implicit, is not equivalent to the explicit form it gives rise to. Writers know more fully what they mean only after they have written it. (p. 331)

If one considers novices and experts in writing as members engaged in similar processes yet at different places along a continuum, then there are some interesting research connections for further investigations on author-mentorship.

Thinking of published authors as expert writers on the same continuum as novice writers draws the two closer, allows for comparing and contrasting, and in the context of apprenticeship of young learners (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 1990; Meek & Watson, 2002) invites authors into the educational context.

**Reading as Writers**

In the early 1980s Frank Smith (1983) prompted a good deal of academic attention towards the significance of the relationship between readers and writers from a
psycholinguistic point of view. He suggested that readers “must read like a writer, in order to write like a writer” (p. 563). Further he added that “the author is in effect writing on our behalf, not showing how something is done but doing it with us” (p. 564). The language that Smith used was that of a live experience, an active, living author who was present with the reader in the story. Indeed, literary critic and children’s literature specialist Margaret Meek suggested that “anything but the simplest kind of reading puts the reader into an implicit relationship with an author” (2005, p. 133). A connected thought from author Ursula Le Guin described the act of reading as an “actual collaboration with the writer’s mind” (2008, p. 37). It is extremely significant that Smith, Meek, and Le Guin described the relationship between writers and readers using active verbs, living language, such as “doing it with us,” and “implicit relationship” and finally, “collaboration.”

Smith (1983) also proposed there was a parallel between language acquisition and writing acquisition, suggesting that just as children learn language from listening and participating in language with adults, so also young writers can learn from authors.

Tierney and Shanahan’s (1991) review of the literature on reading and writing explored the transactional and learning relationships between readers and writers. The review called for further studies in the role and importance of authorship: “Future work needs to consider sense of authorship as a basic outcome in a variety of reading and writing studies” (p. 262). The term “authorship” was used in a context that explored “writers” with references to both novices and experts, to published and unpublished texts. There is room here to interpret “authors” as part of the continuum of writers, including those who write professionally for children.
Tierney and Shanahan (1991) asked several key questions to guide further investigations regarding authorship:

Does better alignment with the author lead to better comprehension because it causes a communications-orientated stance (an issue of transactional theory), or because of a simple knowledge-information alignment (a schema-theory issue)? How does alignment with the author interface with a reader’s stance, including identification with story characters or perspective-taking? How does alignment with authors interface with a reader’s consideration of a narrator? How does a sense of authorship relate to a sense of one’s self as a reader? (p. 2).

The questions are not an exhaustive list and variations of them continue to be asked by scholars (Gibbs, 2001; Wilhelm, 2005; Calkins, 2003). As Dyson and Freedman (2003) found in their literature review on writing: “In the past 2 decades researchers shifted their attention from studies of pieces of writing, the written product, to studies of “how do you do it,” of writers’ composing processes” (p. 947).

It is my intention to build and expand on the research investigating the writer-reader relationship by examining closely what authors and readers have been saying to each other, and particularly, what authors can tell us about children’s reading and writing connections through their interactions with students.

**Literacy Apprentices**

The concept of children as *literacy apprentices* (Rogoff, 1990; Chapman, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978) in the process of children’s acquisition of literacy has its origins in a long tradition of educational, psychological, and cultural studies to name a few. Thinking about children as apprentices in the educational setting has gained considerable attention
in recent years and to a great extent due to the writings of Bakhtin (1986) and Vygotsky (1978). As Chapman (1997) succinctly stated:

...the influences of Vygotsky and Bakhtin have led to a reconceptualization of literacy development as a social and cultural process in which a child learns about written language by internalizing social action...From this perspective, children are socialized into literacy through participation in a kind of social dialogue: a child processes the words of others (both spoken and written) dialogically into his/her own words with the help of other’s words. (p. 45)

In a sociocognitive constructivist paradigm children can be viewed as both individual and social learners who apprentice themselves to mentors within the culture or community. Rogoff (1990) suggested that:

Vygotsky’s model for the mechanism through which social interaction facilitates cognitive development resembles apprenticeship, in which a novice works closely with an expert in joint problem solving in the zone of proximal development. The novice is thereby able to participate in skills beyond those that he or she is independently capable of handling. (p. 141)

Other scholars have extended Vygotsky’s form of apprenticeship to the study of narrative and authorial intentions towards readers (Meek, 1988; Gibbs, 2001). Meek (1988) states: “We are talking about narrations, ways that the tellers of stories in books teach children how to read them” (p. 24 Italics in the original). She argues further that authors engage in the complex activity of playing with what readers know, do not know, and what might be. “Children who encounter such books learn many lessons that are
hidden for ever from those who move directly from the reading scheme to the worksheet” (p. 19).

Similarly, Yancey (2004), in support of readers’ understanding authors’ positions and intentions, identified significant problems in readers who cannot recognize what authors are trying to show them in texts. Yancey argued that children who are unable to identify an author’s intent to show them something read all texts the same way. In addition, Aidan Chambers (2001) stated:

Responsible writers and responsible readers…talk of how a book absorbs them, of how they can lose themselves in it, of how it takes them over, lives in them, changes them (however minutely each time), how it adds to their experience, knowledge, development, personality. They value most those books that transcend their ability to use language, present ideas, inquire into human behavior. The books that matter most to authors and readers are those that speak to them and speak for them, expressing better than they can express themselves that which they already know and that which they are glad to learn. (p. 162)

Based on his many experiences working with and interacting with school-age children Chambers (2001) stated:

no other form of verbal communication, in no other art than that we call literature, is the communicator as much in command of the medium as when composing a book; in no other is the recipient as much in control of the medium as a reader is when reading a book; in no other is the mind of the recipient in such direct and intimate touch with the mind of the communicator; in no other is there as much left for the recipient to do in the making of the experience as there is for a reader;
in no other is it as possible to achieve such a density, such subtlety, such
inexhaustible ambiguity, such multiplicity of meanings as in a book. (p. 164)

Similarly, Wilhelm (2004) stated: “I help students to see how authors use
particular techniques to help their audience see and experience what they are reading. In
turn, students learn how to craft their own writing to shape the experience of an
audience” (p. 63). There appears to be a place for authors as mentors in the larger concept of young learners apprenticed to more experienced ‘others.’ But what might research studies that include authors as mentors look like and what studies have already been conducted? A number of studies are presented in the next section which shed light on how authors are very much an important part of children’s literacy acquisition.

Research on Authors

Apprenticeship operates on many levels. On one level, a child learns language and
acquires knowledge through formal instruction, or modeling, or conversation as in a
classroom or home community – a novice learning from a mentor or expert. Studies on
authors in the classroom have demonstrated that children act as literacy apprentices.
Building on research and theory stemming from investigations into the reading/writing
connection, some scholars have recently focused on the significance of author studies in
the classroom and particularly, as discussed below, how studying the way authors use
their craft can enhance student literacy (Alber, Martin & Gammill, 2005; Damico, 2005;
Lewin, 2004; Garrigues, 2004; Kane, 1995; Sangirardi-Grey & Meltzer, 1993; Harwayne,
1992; Olness, 2005).

Working with students through grades 4 to 12 Terry Lewin (2004) developed a
questionnaire to help students create a critique of an author’s work and analyze his/her
writing style. The questionnaire focused on how the author treated the reader in any given piece of writing. Relying on a strategy put forward by Beck et. al. (1997), Questioning the Author research, Lewin stressed that writing and sending a critique to an author is a “powerful” and “inspirational” strategy that helps students critique their own writing styles (2004).

Damico (2005) researched and created a model of literacy that enabled children to consider how texts were authored and “illuminates the way students begin to see how entwined reading and writing are” (p.650). Damico’s investigation explored intertextual thinking and encouraged children to view several texts at one time.

Alber, Martin & Gammil (2005) considered how writing activities that “are embedded in the study of literature” (p. 51) could inspire written expression in gifted students. The researchers considered how studying authors’ writing, biographies and personal lives could impact a student’s “advanced perspective and original thought” (p. 51).

Jenkins’ (1999) study of thirty-two third graders and seventeen fifth graders titled, *The Allure of Authors: Author Studies in the Elementary School Classroom* is an important book that explores author studies. Jenkins developed a theoretical framework and worked closely with students, teachers and authors to discover the benefits of young people reading, responding to and writing about authors for children. She described four categories of student responses stemming from the surveys given to the student participants regarding the impact of authors on young people: “emotional sustenance, wisdom, delight with craft and intrigue with the author as person and writer” (p. 2).
Based on the four categories of student responses Jenkins further created five principles to build a theoretical framework for author studies with children:

1. Readers respond in multiple ways to author’s works
2. Aesthetic engagement must precede critical and biographical response
3. Critical response deepens and extends the literary experience
4. Biographical response heightens and intensifies the literary experience
5. Children are drawn to meaningful endeavors and learn best through interaction with more knowledgeable others. (p. iii)

Similar to Jenkins’s study, Kuhlman & Moutray (2003) found benefits to students’ literacy when fourth through sixth grade children wrote to authors as part of a national letter writing contest. The researchers looked for patterns of response among letters and used Sipe’s (1998) five categories of response to organize the correspondence: analytical, intertextual, personalizing, transparent, and performative. Children who demonstrated analytical responses to a novel, for instance, made references to elements of fiction such as plot, setting, character as well as authorial devices. The researchers stated that: “authors such as C.S. Lewis and Roald Dahl inspired students about learning to use similes, action verbs, and conversation words instead of ‘said’” (p. 121). The authors concluded the study by saying:

Clearly, writers to this contest expressed affect about and for the books they had read. They indicated their wonder, enjoyment, appreciation, and connections to characters and stories. By perceiving different perspectives and recognizing how models of authors supported their own growing literacy practices, students shared
cognition about more than aesthetic responses to story. They were noticing their own growth. (p. 123)

Routman (1991) advocated displaying paragraphs of stories for students to look at and highlighting effective literary devices in order to make students “privy to what authors do, so students may think about similar possibilities for their own writing” (p. 168), a notion that is supported by Galda, Ash, & Cullinan’s (2003) research. Exploring the impact of reading trade books on students’ written composition skills, Galda and Cullinan (2003) found that the “narrative structures found in trade books also help children become better writers” (p. 643).

Findings of these studies reveal a variety of ways in which authors have been included in educational activities. One of the most significant studies related to author studies and one that supports my own constructivist-based approach comes from Margaret Clark (2003). Clark, an accomplished children’s author, set out to investigate three folios or central questions in Victoria, Australia:

1. Do boys in single-sex schools read more fiction than boys in co-educational schools?
2. Why are authors invited into the classroom as part of school literacy programs?
3. What do authors have to say about their experiences in schools?

Clark’s dissertation and personal correspondence with me have been invaluable to my own investigation. While her first folio (project), adolescents and reading was of interest, it was the second of her three projects that was of greatest significance to my own work.
Clark’s investigation involved participants from five schools, fifteen English teachers, five teacher-librarians, and a total of sixty students. Of particular interest to me was that Clark found that author visits were an important component to the schools’ literacy programs as they supported the curriculum. Her findings included the following:

- Author visits inspire students to read more
- Authors challenge students to read more texts
- Authors inspire boys to read and understand stories
- Authors improve student writing skills
- Authors demonstrate how to generate ideas
- Authors demonstrate how to structure stories

She further summarized:

From the literature, and my two research projects which looked at the perspectives of English teachers, teacher-librarians and students (Research Project 2) and the authors’ narratives (Research Project 3) I contend that it is possible to compose guidelines for successful author visits. The success of a visit depends on many factors, some of which are ‘matching’ the author with the students’ needs, integrating the visit with the English curriculum, and careful preparation by a team or group of teachers prior to the visit. (p. 220)

The research reviewed above situates students in a form of apprenticeship, studying masters of a craft in order to improve their own literacy. Students learn to “read like writers” (Smith, 1983) and think like writers (Browning & McClintic, 2006).

The in-text relationship with an author, the ‘implicit relationship’ in Meek’s (2005) words, is considered next.
The In-Text Relationship

Many scholars have described apprenticeship as a phenomenon occurring as mentors and apprentices discourse with one another within a text. Mikhail Bahktin (1981) wrote extensively on how an individual’s language, written and spoken, is constantly shaped and changed by the community around her. Bahktin’s (1981) work extended the notion that no one’s literacy is excluded from apprenticeship to social community for “only the mythical Adam, who approached a virginal and as yet verbally unqualified world with the first word, could really have escaped from start to finish this dialogic inter-orientation with the alien word that occurs in the object” (p. 671). Similarly, Bahktin argues:

The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. (p. 670)

Echoing Bahktin’s reasoning, Lemke (1995) said: “We speak with the voices of our communities, and to the extent that we have individual voices, we fashion these out of the social voices already available to us, appropriating the words of others to speak a word of our own” (p. 24-25). Similarly, as Schultz (1997) contended: “Bahktin’s insistence that texts are embedded in social dialogue and his description of their multivocal qualities...is critical to an understanding of writing as a collaborative activity” (p.256).
Bahktin’s emphasis on the internal and external forces (centripetal and centrifugal) that shape any discourse or “utterance” is a central concept for my own focus on author/reader relationships. Just as children learn to use language, both written and oral, within cultural, social and historical “moments,” so they learn to interact with language as they read the writings of authors.

Regarding the novelist, Bahktin (1981) said:

The novelist working in prose...takes a completely different path [than the poet]. He welcomes the heteroglossia and language diversity of the literary and extraliterary language into his work not only not weakening them but even intensifying them...It is in fact out of this stratification of language, its speech diversity and even language diversity, that he constructs his style, while at the same time he maintains the unity of his own creative personality and unity ...of his own style. (p. 665)

Finding a writing voice or style is a difficult task for many children and, as Garrigues’s (2004) study demonstrated, authors can play an important role in students’ development of voice: “The deliberate act of analyzing and emulating another writer’s craft is the first step toward developing their own style” (1999, p. 62). Similarly, Calkins (1994) suggested that when students are provided the opportunity to know an author or book thoroughly there will be a significant impact on their writing. She said:

How much better it would have been had I invited each of my students to find a book that mattered enormously to him or her, and then to search for a second book by the same author, and finally, to put those two books together, asking,
‘What does this author tend to do?’ and ‘Can I borrow any of these techniques in my own writing?’ (p. 275)

As an author projects her meanings through the words on a page so the reader reaches out through the reading to meet the author’s created world. When students read an author’s work they interact internally with the use of another’s words. Discovering a sense of writing voice will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter four and five.

Thinking of how children respond to authors and their work is a major area of study. Elements of reader response theory and research on readers’ response to literature will be considered next.

Reader Response Theory and Research in Reader Response

Reader response theory and research in reader response to literature must figure greatly in any discussion of authors and students engaged in literacy events. Readers, more often than not, first meet an author in the words of a story, and how they engage with a story can be seen as a dialogue between persons, one of whom is the writer. In many ways the champion of the transactional theory of readers’ response to literature, Louise Rosenblatt (1995), described the intricate nature of reading and writing, the relationship of the author and reader:

No one would question that in the creation of the literary work the writer does more than passively reflect experiences as through a photographic lens. There has been a selective force at work. From the welter of impressions with which life bombards us, the writer chooses those particular elements that have significant relevance to his insights. He inscribes verbal signs that he hopes will enable
readers to perceive selected images, personalities and events in special relation to
one another...The reader, too, is creative. (p. 34)

Earlier she argued:

Perhaps because of preoccupation with the tie between the author and his
creation, or the fixation on the text itself, there has been resistance to, and
suspicion of, the idea of the reader’s creativity. Yet we must remember that once
the creative activity of the author has ended, what remains for others – for even
the author himself – is a text. To again bring a poem into being requires always a
reader, if only the author himself. (1978, p. 15)

In the last three decades Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reader response
(1978) has drawn profound attention to the reader/text relationship. Dias (1992)
explained that at the heart of reader response theory is the “view of the reader as actively
engaged in making meaning and of meaning as residing neither in the reader nor the text,
but constantly renewed in the transactions that occur between reader and text” (131).

For at least thirty years scholars have connected theory with research in readers’
responses to literature and a variety of approaches have developed that are important for
research on the relationship between authors and students. Several essential questions
have guided much of the research and are summarized in Literary Theory and Children’s
Literature: Interpreting Ourselves and Our Worlds (Rogers, 1999):

What in literature engages the imaginations of young readers? How do characters
come to life and speak to them? How do young readers see themselves and the
world in books, or not, and what do they resist or talk back to in those pages?
How do they express these responses in communities of readers? (p. 138)
Secondary Worlds

Central to my work as a children’s author is the concept of “Secondary Worlds,” a theme first defined by Tolkien (1964) and later developed by Benton (1992). The term secondary world refers to the believed world, the storyworld, the author has created for the reader. If the author has worked her craft well and the laws of the secondary world are consistent and enjoyable, the reader believes them to be true for that world. The moment something seems in disharmony or inconsistent the reader stops believing or at least suspends belief. Many children in the past have asked about points of detail or plot in my own stories that have caused them reason to doubt the secondary world I have presented.

Reader response researchers that examine the secondary world focus on the literacy event rather than simply choosing the reader or the writer. Bloome and Bailey (1992) argued that literacy research that is focused on the event considers people and language, “inherently social and otherwise oriented...meaning is located in the event rather than the head” (p. 183). By way of example, Bloome and Bailey suggested that a student sitting alone reading a book is socially interacting with an author (p. 186). The author, to some degree, is represented by the text and the text by the author.

Tolkien’s words provide a framework to evaluate the interspatial, the crossroads, or “no-man’s-land” (Benton, 1992) of the secondary world created between authors and readers:

Children are capable, of course, of literary belief, when the story-maker’s art is good enough to produce it. That state of mind has been called ‘willing suspension of disbelief’. But this does not seem to me a good description of what happens. What really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful ‘sub-creator’. He
makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is ‘true’: it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken: the magic, or rather art, has failed. You are then outside the Primary World again, looking in at the little abortive Secondary World from the outside. (1947)

Tolkien’s description of the Secondary World is reminiscent of Lucy Calkins’s (1994) comment that the number of literacy engagements (reading or writing) occurring between children and books around the world is inconceivably great. If engagement with texts involves entering a “Secondary World,” then at any given moment there are millions of children entering stories, reading their way into created worlds around the globe.

There are, of course, millions more who are being read to and enter the secondary world through the medium of a teacher’s or family member’s voice. There is a relationship formed between the author and reader, a shared experience, as both enter a created world in text – one during the act of creation itself, the other by invitation into the writer’s story through reading.

C.S. Lewis (1985) wrote an insightful comment on this theme in a letter to a reader in 1958:

It is always nice to hear of anyone really enjoying Perelandria [Lewis’s second book in a space trilogy]. I don’t think the pleasure on my part is merely vanity. I enjoyed that imaginary world so much myself that I’m glad to find anyone who has been there and liked it as much as I did – just like meeting someone who has been to a place one knows and likes in the real world. (p. 78)
Lewis is commenting here on the idea that both the reader and the writer were in the same place, enjoying a visit in a created world together. Benton (1992) supports this notion in his description of the Secondary World: “The virtual world of the text is thus central, created in the space between the writer’s inner self and the outer reality, re-created in the space between the reader’s inner self and the words on the page” (p. 24).

Benton further connects the author’s and reader’s experience by suggesting that both the reader and writer use a great deal of mental imaging – both conscious and subconscious – in order to form a Secondary World, an argument supported by many scholars and literary critics (Wilhelm, 2004; Fletcher, 1993).

However, as with Bakhtin’s (1981) heteroglossia, the reader’s Secondary World experience and the author’s cannot be identical:

Yet, while the secondary worlds of writer and reader may be similar in location and nature, they are never identical. This is obvious not only because of the idiosyncratic experience that they bring to their respective tasks but also because of the different psychic operations these tasks involve. For writing grows out of the fertility of the author’s unconscious into the conscious realization; reading words in the opposite direction, beginning with the conscious perception of the text which, in turn, leads to effects on the reader’s unconscious. (Benton, 1992, p. 25)

Although the Secondary World was not featured as one of the main findings in Broughton’s (2002) study of early adolescent girls in book club discussion groups, it was powerful to how students became such engaged participants in the storyworld. “From the earliest discussions of the text, the girls voluntarily projected themselves into the
storyworld of *Lupita Manana*, often envisioning themselves in the situations experienced by the characters” (p. 27).

Similarly, Enciso’s (1992) study of ‘Erica,’ a fifth-grade student, affirms Broughton’s investigation by showing the ways in which a reader can enter the Secondary World. “While engaged in the storyworld, Erica constructed images, built relationships with characters in a wide variety of ways, and critiqued and elaborated on the world she was experiencing” (p. 76).

The Reader and Writer as Co-Participants

Support for the concept of the secondary world also comes from literary criticism. In *Prospect and Retrospect: Selected Essays of James Britton* (1982), Britton explored the reading/writing relationship of school age children. He said: “My purpose then was to find common ground between much of the writing children do in school and the literature they read” (p. 49). Taking the point of view of a writer, Britton argued that he could position himself and the reader as either a participant or a spectator, both of which produce very different outcomes:

If, on the other hand, I merely want to interest him, (the reader) so that he savours with me the joys and sorrows and surprises of my past experiences and appreciates with me the intricate patterns of events, then not only do I invite him to be a spectator, but I am myself a spectator of my own experience. (p. 49)

In a review of the literature on research regarding connections between reading and writing, Tierney and Shanahan (1991) found that the writer is a reader of his or her own text:
Writers, as they produce text, consider their readers – or at least the transactions in which readers are likely to engage. In other words, this view presupposes that writers try to address and satisfy what they project as the response of the reader to that speech act that underlies the surface structure of the communication. This activity occurs notwithstanding the fact that a writer might be his or her own reader. Readers, as they read text, respond to what they perceive writers are trying to get them to think of, as well as what readers themselves perceive they need to do. (p. 259)

Jane Yolen (1977), award winning author, suggested something similar when she said “the first person I write for is myself” (p. 137). In agreement with Yolen, Benton (1992) stated that the writer “is his or her first audience, the most attentive, creative and critical audience of all” (p. 25).

The author/reader relationship in a storyworld or Secondary World is profoundly linked, connected and formed through the writer’s words and the reader’s interpretations and insertions of her own meanings and language community. Such a connectivity appears to echo Bakhtin’s use of heteroglossia, where a speech act, in this case a novel or text, becomes the elastic environment (Bakhtin, 1981), a place where the writer and reader both reach out and act/interact with the text. There are many examples of this kind of heteroglossia of the Secondary World and two are demonstrated below.

Lois Lowry (1994), a Newbery Award winning author, described a letter she once received from “Paula from Kentucky”:

I really like the book you wrote about Anastasia and her family because it made me laugh every time I read it. I especially liked it when it said she didn’t want to
have a baby brother in the house because she had to clean up after him every time and change his diaper when her mother and father aren’t home and she doesn’t like to give him a bath and watch him all the time and put him to sleep every night while her mother goes to work. (p. 420)

What appears to be a wonderful connection with Lowry’s story and a prime example of a child describing the parts of an author’s work she liked best is actually something deeper and resembles the internal and external forces in Bahktin’s heteroglossia. Lowry’s commentary explains: “Here’s the fascinating thing: Nothing that the child describes actually happens in the book. The child – as we all do – has brought her own life to a book,” (p. 42: italics in the original). Further, as described in ‘Indefinable Stirrings and Longings’: Research on Writing through Student Letters to Authors (2006):

Paula demonstrates how a child expresses her inner creativity, the “filling in gaps” of meaning through correspondence with an author. Paula reveals that not only has she sojourned in the story of Anastasia but she is also capable of adding to Anastasia’s world, fleshing out the character’s experience and circumstances from her own living. She acts as an author, taking conscious or subconscious ownership, and indeed authorship, of a work and reshaping it with her own intentionality. (Ward, p. 53.)

It is useful to think of Bahktin’s (1981) description of the tension-filled zone, the elastic environment, at this point:

The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and
out of the complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile. (p. 665)

If the writer’s work can be thought of as “the word,” in the above quotation, then all of the opposing, sometimes synergetic, complementary, even antagonistic merging and weaving of “alien words” can represent the reader meeting the author’s words in the Secondary World. By way of example, when “Paula from Kentucky” read Lowry’s story, the reader met the words and reconfigured a portion of the story into her own meaning, even to the point of changing events in the plot.

Katherine Paterson (1990), renowned children’s author and conference speaker has spoken about the elasticity of the reader-writer relationship in this way:

What I think I am doing when I write for the young is to articulate the glorious but fragile human condition for those whose hearts have heard but whose mouths, at the ages of five or ten or fourteen, can’t yet express. But the truth is that I can’t really express it either. So what happens is a reciprocal gift between writer and reader: one heart in hiding reaching out to another. We are trying to communicate that which lies in our deepest heart, which has no words, which can only be hinted at through the means of a story. And somehow, miraculously, a story that comes from deep in my heart calls from a reader that which is deepest in his or her heart, and together from our secret hidden selves we create a story that neither of us could have told. (pp. 152-153)
Paterson's comments reflect both the connectivity and separation that occurs in reading and writing a story. She is aware that as the writer she brings both forms and powerful ideas that cannot be fully expressed in a story alone. Further, the reader meets those forms and ideas and interacts with them, ultimately creating a story she or he makes for her or his own.

**Intertextuality**

Weaving in and out of studies in literary criticism, reader response to literature, and psychology, is the recurring concept of intertextuality. Originally put forward by Julia Kristeva (1969) in the 1960’s, and stemming from Bakhtin’s work (Duff, 2002), the term *intertextuality* has gained enormous popularity in language and literacy dialogues. As the concept has increased in popularity, so it has also been extended and inferred to other forms of meaning. As Duff (2002) explained:

> Now more than thirty years old, the term intertextuality seems permanently suspended between opposed meanings and uses. For many, it has come to serve as an umbrella word for any critical procedure or creative practice involving a relation between two or more texts. (p. 54)

The concept of intertextuality is important as a corollary consideration for my research as it is often used by authors and readers alike as a means of writing meaning and reading meaning (Fletcher, 1993). Meek (1988) suggested that readers, “who know how to recognize bits and pieces of other texts in what they read find it is like the discovery of old friends in new places” (p. 22). She argued that authors are well aware that readers are able to make intertextual connections and that expert writers for children
entice their readership into deeper meanings of their texts by “exploiting” intertextuality. Using *The Jolly Postman* (1986) as an example Meek (1988) said:

> Readers of about seven or eight enjoy it (*The Jolly Postman*) because they know that letters are good things to get, and other people’s letters have secrets you’re not supposed to read…Children enter the intertext of literature, oral and written, very early; as soon as they know some nursery rhymes, in fact, and later, when they have amassed the lore of the school playground, they are able to recognize in their reading what has been in their memories for some time. (p. 22)

Similarly, Sipe (2000) researched sixth graders use of intertextuality during storybook read alouds and found that intertext connections expanded students’ literacy development. Sipe stated that,

> …we (adults) understand stories partly in relationship to other narratives we have read or heard. We may also forge links to other “texts” in the broader sense, making connections to movies, plays, videos, television programs, or other texts of popular culture. Children do the same thing, resulting in a complex tissue of interrelated texts. (p. 73)

Intertextuality as a concept is well understood by children’s authors themselves. Jane Yolen’s (1997) comment that “Stories lean on stories” (p. 647) is an affirmation that stories come from some place and are recreated in new ways. *Inkheart* (2003) by Cornelia Funke may serve as another example of how authors are currently using intertextuality to entice readers into stories by relying on the known, a sense of the familiar.
Inkheart is the story of how characters from a famous book are read out of their own story and into the living world of the reader. The setting is Italy where real names and descriptions of places are used. The reader is told that the setting of the storyworld Inkheart is a very different place than our own. In that storyworld, ghosts, fairies, monsters of all sorts are commonplace, as is heroism, good and evil in the plainest black and white. Curiously enough, the reader is never brought to the world of Inkheart. Rather, the author simply relies on all the conventions of fairytales familiar to readers in order to provide a convincing sense of the storyworld.

To augment this technique, Funke (2003) begins each chapter with a quote from famous tales, ancient manuscripts, and proverbs such as Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings, The Princess Bride, The Wind in the Willows, or an Arab proverb. The effect is profound, for the reader constantly feels as if she is in a familiar place with all of the conventions neatly in order, and yet, walks in a story that has never been told.

Schema Theory and Scaffolding

Intertextuality can be linked to schema theory, a conceptual framework that suggests all knowledge is organized and built into blocks of prior experiences, previous knowledge, new experiences, abilities and thoughts (Rumelhart, 1982; Bloom & Bailey, 1992). Schemata in a story can be found in the text’s structure (Halliday & Hassan, 1989). As readers engage in a text they are reminded of the schema already existing in their experience and make intertextual jumps of thinking to other kinds of text they have experienced (Fischer, 2006). Again, Inkheart (2003) is an example.

“If you take a book with you on a journey,” Mo had said when he put the first one in her box, “an odd thing happens: The book begins collecting your memories.
And forever after you have only to open that book to be back where you first read it. It will all come into your mind with the very first words: the sights you saw in that place, what it smelled like, the ice cream you ate while you were reading it...yes, books are like flypaper – memories cling to the printed page better than anything else. (p. 15)

Authors are constantly drawing a reader’s attention to familiar things, schemata, in order to lead them to something new. Many of us, as readers, can relate to the experience that Mo tells Meggie in the scene portrayed above. We have read books that take us immediately back in time to a place, a situation, a time of life. The beauty of Mo’s words however is not just the experience we relate to them, but how the author Cornelia Funke is using the scene to build schemata for the further premises of the book. By reminding readers of how books trigger memory, Funke is able to take the reader into the next line of thinking, a new experience – that characters can be pulled in and out of a book because the words are always present on the pages to receive them.

Applebee (2003) suggested that supporting readers in their reading of texts by using their schemata to take steps into new knowledge can be regarded as scaffolding, a system of supporting cognition. Peter Elbow (2004) advocated that students should be encouraged to write their thinking before reading a text (novel study for example) in order to build intertextual ideas, and elevate their schema as a writing strategy.

Authors also use scaffolding to build a book, providing readers with information, building blocks of a story or theme that allows us to take in the story more completely. In Vacca and Vacca et al.’s (2006) text, Reading and Learning to Read for pre-service teachers we are reminded that:
Because stories are central to children’s reading development, much time and effort have been spent attempting to understand how stories are comprehended...There is an underlying structure that all simple stories appear to have in common. As children develop a story schema, they begin to sense what comes next. (p. 301)

Calkins (1994) referred to “touchstone books”: those books that have impacted students because of their ability to bring a reader deeply into a story. Calkins advocated that teachers keep touchstone books close at hand so that students can refer back to them, to stimulate their thinking of ways to write, particularly when writing parts with which they were struggling. Studying authors’ texts and relying on “touchstone” books can draw and build on students’ prior knowledge and help them construct their own writing. Scaffolding and schema theory may play a significant role in the development of a theoretical model for author-mentorship with school age children.

**Language Development and Story**

Citing Adams & Collins (1979) and Stein & Glenn (1979), Galda and Cullinan (2003) reported that “exposure to narrative patterns through extensive use of trade books increases knowledge about story structure, which in turn improves comprehension of narrative texts” (p.642). In the same review of the research Galda and Cullinan describe Harste, Woodward, and Burke’s (1984) research on stories and language skills. These researchers discovered that children built and relied upon a growing source of cognitive information which they gained from interacting with stories. The same review cites research that found a positive connection between vocabulary growth and syntax when
books are read aloud to students. Oral language was also found to be positively affected (p. 642).

Galda and Cullinan extended their research review to include reading achievement and narrative: “these schema begin to develop in young children as a result of exposure to stories (usually gained through interaction with adults around trade books) and continue to develop in complexity throughout the school years and into adulthood” (p. 642).

When authors discuss their stories and the processes of writing stories they are again drawing children’s attention to narrative and narrative structures. As children interact with an author they have the opportunity to discuss the linguistic and cognitive skills they gain through a reading. In a microscopic sense children can extend the language development skills they take from reading by engaging in specific discussions about the language of the storyworld. “Why did you choose the word mystery for your title?” a child might ask? Or, “Who are the Vikings?” I am asked these very questions frequently by my readers. The author can then describe why she or he chose a certain word, how words are important, and how just the right word can shift an entire mood of a reading. Or, equally, the author can develop children’s schema by describing Vikings. Author interactions with children hold great potential for developing students’ language.

**Author visits**

Thus far we have considered the value and contributions authors make to students’ literacy through the internal processes children experience in meeting an author in a text. In the words of Fletcher and Consultant (2005) “not only can the author’s books become ‘mentor texts’ but the author can truly inspire, instruct, and stretch the students to
become stronger writers and readers” (p. 1). There are further contributions to be made when authors and children interact at in-person events or in correspondence.

Teachers and teacher-librarians are well aware that author interactions with students promote literacy (Vos, 2003; Kline & Grimes, 2002; Jobe & Naslund, 2005). In The Writer: Another Agent in the Development of Literacy (1993) Beuchat (1994) described how her author visits to classes of 7 to 9 year olds supported and helped develop students’ literacy as they discussed and wrote about her stories and their own. Similarly, Bloem & Manna (1999) found in their investigation of one hundred second and fourth graders that talking with an author helped the students connect profoundly with the author’s work, asked questions that allowed them to enter deeply into the storyworld of the book and encouraged “aesthetic engagement” (p. 804).

Based on extensive interactions with children’s authors in a variety of educational and literary settings, Jobe and Naslund identified ten ways that author visits impact students:

1. Support a love of books
2. Promote reading
3. Foster family literacy
4. Encourage young writers
5. Foster the writing and research process
6. Initiate info connections
7. Develop critical literacy
8. Promote Canadian culture
9. Connect libraries and literacy
10. Celebrate the gift of words through differing genres. (2005)

Clark's (2003) dissertation described earlier, *Turning the Pages: Adolescents, Schools, and Reading*, on how author visits impacted student literacy, supports the validity of author visits. Author visits and requests for author workshops abound. There are currently over two hundred children's authors listed on the CANSCAIP (Canadian Society of Authors, Illustrators, and Performers) home page, the majority of whom offer author visits or workshops for elementary and secondary schools (CANSCAIP, 2006). Other significant examples of author visits include annual invitations by the International Reading Association (Reading Today, 23, 3, IRA) to have children's authors speak at conventions, the International Writers Festival which hosts children's authors and invites community school participation (Writers Festival, 2006), Authorfest, and Serendipity (Jobe & Naslund, 2006). Seeing, hearing, and talking to authors has become an inspirational component of today’s literature based classroom (Ward, 2006).

The proliferation of author visits to schools and professional writers providing writing workshops is a relatively new phenomenon (Jones & Lockwood, 1998). Unlike written correspondence which has a much longer history, students’ accessibility to authors has grown dramatically in the last thirty years.

**Author Correspondence**

Chapter one of this dissertation introduced the concept of author correspondence with school age children as a phenomenon that has not received much academic attention. The little research that has been done has focused on the volume of children’s letters to authors (Rosen, 1998), classroom teaching strategies (Vos, 2003; Weiss, 1986; Olmann, 1991; Rosen, 1998), and authors writing to children (Rosen, 1998).
Rosen’s article in *Publishers Weekly* reported the sheer volume of letters that authors receive. Rosen interviewed representatives of large children’s publishers in the USA to find out what kind of mail their authors were receiving. “Scholastic, Stines publisher (R.L. Stine, *Goosebump* series) receives 1500 letters a month (or 78 000 letters a year) to him” (p. 124). Further Rosen says “Other favorite authors on the children’s mail circuit include Gary Paulsen, Eric Carle, Jan Brett and Judy Blume, who, in addition to 200 letters a week, averages 4000 to 5000 emails each month” (p. 124). The article also contains a part devoted to authors’ responses to children. Valerie Trip, author for the immensely popular *American Girl* series “makes a point of answering every single letter” (p. 124). Brian Jacques, Jon Scieszka, Robert Cormier and Ann Martin are also popular authors who respond to letters from their readership (p. 125). There is scant information given as to what the authors say in their letters although Brian Jacques’ comment is insightful: “I always tell them...If you want to be a writer, you must learn to draw pictures with words...read all you can” (p. 125).

Vos (2003) encouraged one of her grade four students to write a letter to Kate DiCamillo, the popular author of *The Tiger Rising* (2001). When DiCamillo wrote back to the student, Vos and her class were delighted. She encouraged all of her students to write to the authors of their books. Many received replies. Vos summarized by saying: “Writing to authors made a lasting impression on my students. They used their new knowledge of authors to help them choose books from the school and classroom libraries...they asked more questions about the authors of the books in the reading curriculum” (p. 342).
In *The voice behind the print: letters to an author* (1992), Ollmann described how she used letters to authors to motivate reluctant readers. With the help of her school librarian, Ollman tracked down addresses of living authors that she felt might be willing to write back to her students. She reported that students were excited to receive the letters and that all of the authors provided advice on how to write.

Weiss (1986) asked five children’s authors to write a letter explaining why they write. Students wrote back, posing questions and describing their connections to the authors’ work. While the article presents pieces of the students’ responses to the authors’ letters there is no analysis or any sense of a cohesive experience. The article focuses more on making the point that only authors have the right to explain “the reasons for writing” (p. 763).

These articles are representative of the scattering of bits and pieces of information regarding authors’ and readers’ correspondence. No theoretical models have been developed nor has any research project, qualitative or quantitative in nature, analyzed the correspondence between authors and children for their educational significance. Based on the consistent testimonials of authors and their publishers (Baum, 1999; Dorsett & Mead, 1985; Rosen, 1998; Blume, 1986; Gherman, 1992; Lloyd, 1987; Cooper, 1996) and the limited amount of literature on the topic of author correspondence with children as described above, there needs to be more investigative research on what young readers and writers are learning from authors. I have attempted to establish through this review of theoretical and research-based work that it is imperative that the place of the author in the reader-text-context transaction, be included as an integral component in educational dialogues and research on readers and writers.
Summary: Towards a Theoretical Framework: Invitations to Literacy

Apprenticeship, the concept of mentors working with novices has found its place in the current educational setting through the works of Vygotsky and Bakhtin. Recognizing the value of a community of learners, and that writing and reading are social in nature, educators have encouraged an apprenticeship model as students turn to stories and texts to gain insights that will improve their literacy. Author studies have blossomed in the last thirty years which suggests they are gaining popularity in literature-based classrooms and on the World Wide Web.

Reader response theory and research in reader response have supported classroom strategies that focus on authors. Teachers encourage students to think about how writers write, to question the author, and to find writing voices similar to their own in the texts they read. In the last thirty years there has been a rise in the number of author visits to schools and communities, providing children with more exposure to authors and their works.

Lucy Calkins (1994, 2003), Margaret Meek (1988, 2003), Aidan Chambers (2001), and Raymond Gibbs (2001) have shown through research and theory that authors act as teachers, intentionally and unintentionally mentoring readers through their texts and writing lives. Recognizing the integral role that authors play some researchers have explored author-mentorship through letter correspondence, author biography, or in-person interactions (Kane, 1995; Garrigues, 2004; Alber, Martin & Gammill, 2005; Jenkins, 1999; Vos, 2003).

Still lacking are larger studies that can focus on how authors are inviting students into literacy. Further research is needed to discover how students’ writing and reading are
impacted by such interactions, and a theoretical model to inform the kinds of best practices educators and authors can use to support the next generation of young authors in the classroom.

The model I present and which will be discussed more completely in chapter five will reflect the interactive nature of reading and writing as described in the theories and research presented above. Central to my model is the concept of students as apprentices of literacy. As literacy apprentices, children interact with more experienced helpers such as peers, teachers, parents or authors in order to develop as young readers and writers. My model will show how authors contribute to literacy learning by mentoring young apprentices in literacy skills.

In the model I am advocating, I support the notion of the active creativity of readers when interacting with texts. For as readers make their own meaning through transactional interactions with texts they form their own understandings of the story world. When authors and readers discuss a text they have the opportunity of presenting their own understandings and beliefs about the storyworld of a book. Authors and readers together can think deeply about characters, settings, or events of a story. Authors and readers can also describe to one another what they “see” in a text through conversation.

My model will also show that as authors and readers together interact with a text the participants’ schema (including the author’s schema) is further developed through discussion. As students question the storyworld authors can develop scaffolding to support students’ understanding of a book.

Finally, in the model I present I consider how interactions with authors support intertextual jumps between texts and specifically to generating ideas around stories.
Scholars and writers such as Meek (1988), Chambers (2001) and Calkins (2003) remind us that behind texts there are authors. The value of this reminder is not in returning to an authoritative view of authors that removes the positions of text and context that literary criticism and reader response have brought to literacy but rather, thinking of the author as an indispensable, integral member of the reader-writer transaction. Based on a framework that places authors within the discussion of readers-writers and texts and contexts I will view authors as agents of literacy.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Chapter three begins with an explanation of the research methodology and specifically why I chose particular procedures in an effort to conduct and substantiate trustworthy research. While more thorough descriptions of the research tools come later in the chapter, the introduction considers how I conducted the research and reflects on my personal bias as a researcher. An overview of the pilot project conducted in 2004 follows. Research questions and methodology stemming from the pilot will be discussed next in the context of the central investigation, the national survey for Canadian children’s authors.

This study was designed to explore: how author interactions with students impact literacy, how authors contribute to literacy learning by mentoring children in literacy skills, and how technology is reshaping the relationship between authors and readers. In addition, this study was designed to formulate a theoretical model by which a framework for better understanding how authors are impacting students’ literacy is provided.

Introduction: Trust, Validity, and Bias

At several points in this dissertation I have stated that I have a predisposition towards constructivist or socio-cognitive constructivist paradigms in teaching and research in education. Among social constructivist researchers there is a general conception that there exists within participants and researchers multiple realities, coexisting, shifting and changing over time. Thinking of the participants in this study from a constructivist position it was important for me to realize that authors’ responses were likely being constructed throughout the survey. A particular question at the start of
the survey for example might stimulate a “reality” for an author that is toned and refined further in later responses due to another trigger or thought process.

Nahid Golafshani’s (2003) discussion of reliability and validity in qualitative research is useful here. She states “Constructivism values multiple realities that people have in their minds. Therefore, to acquire valid and reliable multiple and diverse realities, multiple methods of searching or gathering data are in order” (p. 604). Following the research procedures of B.R. Johnson (1997), Golafshani further suggests that “engaging multiple methods, such as, observation, interviews and recordings will lead to more valid, reliable and diverse construction of realities” (p. 604).

In an attempt to conduct trustworthy, valid research I approached the research question in different ways and with several research tools. I also enlisted the help of other researchers to examine the data and create their own categories and descriptions of the topic in order to establish reliability and validity.

From the outset of this project I have used my own experience as an author interacting with students and schools to help formulate the question “what is the nature and extent of authors inviting students into literacy?” Indeed, my constant interactions with students led me to believe there could be other authors experiencing the same phenomenon and prompted the dissertation. As a teacher and university instructor for years I have participated in countless discussions regarding children’s connectivity to books, authors, and their own literacy practices. From a research point of view, I recognize that as the central investigator I believe and want to believe that children’s authors can make an impact on student’s literacy. I have a great interest at stake in this research.
Reading through Margaret Clark’s (2003) dissertation was again useful and is noted here. As a children’s author, Clark was highly aware that she was also a researcher. She describes below her central issues concerning bias as a researcher and children’s author in school environments:

My own concern was that I would start adopting the role of educator and get sidetracked by teaching methods, theories and theorists’ influences, students’ resistance and all the other facets that could surface to bedazzle me. In my role as an author, I believed that assumptions about the selection of set texts and the promotion of literature by teachers to students would colour my judgement. I needed to visit schools in the role of interviewer, remain ‘distanced’ and ask structured questions. I also realised that it would be extremely difficult for me to become ‘an objective, authoritative, politically neutral observer, standing outside, and above the text.’ Thus I was aware of many of my biases and knew that I had to formulate my interview questions so that I appeared to be impartial. (p. 95)

Aware of my own bias as a researching children’s author it was important to build into the research methodology other points of perspective and collection tools in order to seek a deeper, growing knowledge of the phenomenon.

The pilot project was one method used to balance my bias and provide perspective at the early stages of the research. Three researchers compiled the questions for the pilot interviews, none of them being a children’s author. All of the researchers who contributed to the pilot called for open-ended questions that would allow authors to explore the phenomenon themselves and provide more details for a better sense of the
interactions between authors and students. While I conducted the interviews, it was the questions created by the three researchers which framed the discussions.

The transcripts (see appendix I) from the author interviews were organized into categories and codes using Atlas.ti, a program which will be discussed further in the chapter. One of the benefits of using a research tool such as Atlas.ti is that the program allows the researcher to interact with the data in a manner somewhat different than reading transcripts. There are multiple options with a program like Atlas.ti including selecting codes, quotations, family codes, and supercodes. As the program presents the data in output codes or categories and family categories, the researcher can think about patterns and commonalities of language among the participants in a systematic fashion. This provided yet another means of thinking differently about the data.

Further, another rater independently coded the data. Through discussion, a common set of categories was created.

For the national survey I used SPSS, a highly recognized analysis tool in addition to Atlas.ti. SPSS was useful for many reasons including the ability to look at data in terms of percentages and numbers. For example, I was able to calculate the percentage of authors who stated that they discussed elements of fiction with students in face to face and/or virtual literacy events.

As with the pilot study another rater independently coded the transcripts in Atlas.ti, although this time, the codes and categories were reviewed and changed by an additional two researchers.

Using Cresswell and Miller’s (2000) definition, I have tried to use a form of triangulation for this qualitative study. They describe triangulation as “a validity
procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (p. 126). I have attempted to secure multiple perspectives from the research tools, researchers, and pilot study to provide a greater understanding of the data and a step towards more trustworthy, valid qualitative research concerning authors inviting students into literacy.

The Pilot Project

Rosen’s (1998) investigation established that some of today’s children’s authors are regularly engaged in correspondence, both electronic and post, with their readership. Famous authors such as Katherine Paterson and J.K. Rowling (Paterson, 2003; Rowling, 2003) confirm that they receive a great deal of letters from children.

But what about less famous authors of children’s books? What about Canadian children’s authors? A pilot study seemed the appropriate method of discovering the kinds of engagements occurring between less well known Canadian authors and young readers for two main reasons. While interviews are advocated by many researchers who use qualitative, quantitative, and/or mixed methodologies, using interviews to shape the questionnaire best fit the particular participants involved. Children’s authors are often interviewed in many public forums. Newspapers, children’s literature advocates such as the International Board on Books for Young People, Canadian Children’s Book Centre, as well as educational bodies such as NCTE and IRA have all conducted interviews with children’s authors. There are a number of books that consist entirely of interviews with children’s authors including, *Behind the Story: The People Who Create Our Best Children’s Books…and How They Do It!* (Greenwood, 1995).
As noted by Palys (2003), interviews can be highly effective for allowing participants to describe their responses, explain themselves directly without the researcher having to guess about their motivations. Recognizing that many children’s authors have been interviewed before, it seemed appropriate to use a research tool with which the participants would be familiar.

From a research perspective, using interviews in a pilot project to form a survey or questionnaire in the larger, central investigation is a valid methodological approach (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). This notion was firmly supported through multiple conversations with Dr. Lesley Andres (personal communication).

The Participants

There are comparatively few Children’s writer’s organizations in Canada. Larger umbrella organizations such as CANSCAIP (Canadian Society of Children’s Authors Illustrators and Performers) provide their membership with national exposure and industry news. Provincial organizations such as CWILL (Children’s Writers and Illustrators of B.C.), Saskatchewan Writers Guild, Manitoba Writers Guild and the Nova Scotia Writers Federation provide opportunities for membership to gather and discuss issues face to face.

CWILL has over 100 members, some of whom have won awards or writing grants, and provide a good representative sample of Canadian authors (CWILL, 2006). The criteria for CWILL membership is listed in Appendix A. Essentially, members must be professional writers who have had a trade book published by a recognized trade or scholastic publisher, or, four short stories or poems, or, one full length play produced.
The member must be a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant or have lived in B.C. for the last two years.

The criteria for membership ensured that the participants would be authors of at least one published work by a recognized publisher and potentially in correspondence with their readership. Once permission was gained from the Webmaster of CWILL, I sent a call for participants via email attachment to the CWILL listserve. A copy of the call for participation in the research project is in Appendix B.

Over thirty respondents were counted within forty-eight hours of the advertisement. Ten participants were randomly selected and stratified to allow for gender, genre, and readership balance. In-person interviews were conducted with seven of the participants. One participant was unable to be interviewed due to a family emergency late in the project. Another participant requested the interview be conducted online via email. A third participant had to cancel the interview at the last moment and requested an online interview via email. Both interviews were conducted via email using the same questions posed to the other participants.

**Interview Questions**

The questions for the pilot were created with the help of three children’s literature experts: Don Gallo, originator of Authors4teens and a regular interviewer of children’s authors, Karen Moni, Assistant Professor at Queensland University, and Dr. Ron Jobe, from the University of British Columbia. The questions were posed as follows and in the order presented below:

1. Can you tell me how you interact with students as a children’s author?
2. What kinds of things do readers comment about to you?
3. Can you tell me about your role in these interactions? What kinds of advice do you give readers when you respond to them?

4. I am interested to hear about the kinds of responses that you might receive from children. Can you tell me about that?

5. What value does corresponding or speaking with children have for you?

6. What are some of the most remarkable experiences you may have had interacting with students?

7. Do you see yourself fitting in to the process of education in some way?

8. What is it like to interact with children about your books and about the craft of writing?

The interviews were semi-structured to allow the interviewer the ability to develop the questions and allow the participants to expand their answers. For six of the interviews I used a voice recognition program (Dragon: Naturally Speaking, Standard) to allow faster transcription. One participant declined to use the voice recognition technology as it was considered distracting. In all of the interviews I took field notes.

**Categories Stemming from the Pilot**

Once the field notes and voice recognition transcripts were transcribed into Microsoft Word, two researchers independently created categories in order to provide some inter-rater reliability. The categories were reviewed by both researchers and a final list of common themes was made. The program Atlas was used to organize authors’ comments into categories. An example of the Atlas coding has been included in Appendix F. The following categories emerged:

1. Classrooms as an Interactive Space for Authors and Young Writers
2. Implications to Education/ Educational Value of Correspondence
   a) Authors Supporting Education
   b) Providing Pedagogical Support (Being in a teaching/mentoring Role)
   c) Writers as Role Models

3. Educators’ Intentions behind Authors’ Visits

4. Channels of Correspondences/Interactions
   a) Interaction by Email
   b) Interaction by Letters
   c) Interaction by Phone Calls
   d) Interaction through Lectures/Workshops

5. Children’s Comments (Types of Comments and Examples)
   a) Examples of Children’s Comments
   b) Kinds of Comments
   c) Honesty in Responses
   d) Personal Connections Made

6. What Students Can Learn through Interactions/Correspondence
   a) Aspects of Book Writing/Publishing
   b) Process of Writing
   c) Knowledge of What it Means to be a Writer

7. Results/Benefits of such Correspondence/Interactions
   a) Mutual Inspiration (Author and Child, both are motivated/Inspired)
   b) Provides Life Altering Experiences
   c) Remarkable Experiences of Authors
   d) Providing Opportunities for Kids

8. Misc. Themes/Topics/Points

The next section examines the categories in more detail and considers the implications for the national survey.

Discussion of the Categories

Each of the categories summarized intriguing aspects of author/student interactions. Participants’ responses provided useful information on the frequency and method of interaction (Channels of Correspondence) as well as the kinds of interactions, personal literacy practices of children (Lessons Learned and Results/Benefits).
Participants also revealed their intent to mentor and their methods of mentorship as well as the literacy tools they attempted to teach young writers (Implications to Education/Providing pedagogical support and What Students Can Learn/Processes of writing). There are also examples of authors providing intertextual tools and authors seeing themselves as agents of literacy (Implications to Education and Lessons Learned).

Classrooms as an Interactive Space for Authors

One hundred percent of the participants described interacting with students in the classroom and indicated that visiting schools was part of what they do as authors. Physical layout of the room, preparation for a classroom visit, and age ranges of children were mentioned. The authors also made distinctions between, author visits, writing workshops, and writer in residencies, although they considered these as part of their work in schools. One author said that occasionally taking a manuscript and testing it on students was part of connecting with schools.

Considering that the participants were all engaged with schools the national survey contains questions that ask about authors’ school visitations.

Implications of Education/ Educational Value of Correspondence

Six of the nine interviewees showed visible excitement and elevated voice levels to the questions: do you see yourself fitting into the process of education, and what value does corresponding have? The other three respondents used exclamation points or in one case wrote: “I feel strongly...” (P:9). Viewing themselves as part of education was clearly important to each of them. A few quotes are useful at this point. All of the participants have been coded and are referred to as P:1 = participant 1, P:2= participant 2, and so forth.
P:3: That’s the most important thing an author can tell children. It’s a kind of truth. I think, I’ll always be a teacher in a kind of way. As writers we perform a really important role here. When you go to a school as a writer you are so passionate about what you say. And it is transferred to the kids automatically.

P:3: We teach them how to write and how to enjoy it [writing]. And who can teach them better than someone who loves it.

P:4: Absolutely! Education is such a formal expression of what can be such an amazing journey. And I think that writers, the author, has a huge role to play because what you do is you introduce new alleyways. The kid might be traveling down a street, you know with a goal in mind and while their walking down it you can open up new by-ways for them to travel. Then I think you’ve done your job as the writer and as a teacher.

P:6: Yes. Being able to share with kids: how I write, my own experiences. Many children have said they want to be writers. I encourage them to be writers and illustrators. I feel that I can’t help but help you.

P:7: I was just thinking about when we were working with the children, getting them to write and illustrate their own books. One of the things that we did early early on was recruit authors and illustrators to come into the school so that the children would have a sense immediately of, “I could do this. This person is like my mother or a father or these are real people and this is an attainable goal for me to have.”

Thinking of themselves as part of the education system elicited not only strong responses but thoughtful considerations of what authors provide students and how they invite students into literacy. The author’s place in education became an important item for the national survey.

**Educators’ Intentions Behind Author Visits**

Referring to teachers or teacher-librarians having expectations for them as visiting authors, P:10 said: “And I also have to satisfy the teacher or library in some way which isn’t always easy as they have a different agenda.”

Clark’s (2003) findings support the notion that sometimes authors and teachers have different expectations of presentations.
Channels of Correspondence

Five of the participants mentioned corresponding with their readership via email. Seven acknowledged corresponding through regular post. Two participants (P:10 and P:11) stated that all of their correspondence with students is via email. Further, P:1 said that she/he did not respond to emails from children and only answered post. In addition, P:1 said: “I find that with regular mail only the ones [children] who are genuinely interested will make the effort of writing me.”

While there is a discrepancy in that four of the authors described using email as a normal, appropriate form of correspondence and one author did not, it is important for email interactions to remain a feature on the survey. The four authors who used email describe rich literacy connections with their readership, almost entirely via email correspondence. P:11 said, “It used to be letter mail and now it’s pretty much all email.” Further, P:10 said, “But I think it’s almost always emails.”

The participants talked extensively about letter correspondence with their readership. When they received letters, writing back, and their feelings about writing letters figured prominently in the seven participants who referred to regular post correspondence. Examples are provided below:

P:6: Many letters come after being nominated for an Award. Silver Birch. I sometimes spend $50 on stamps. 100 letters to kids! Personal letters to each child. When students write to me on their own accord it is extraordinary!

P:8: I handwrite a letter to every child that writes me. No two letters are ever the same. I am honest with them. Honest in writing and dealing with them.

P:8: I love writing and receiving letters...It is almost like touching the person who reads my book. It is amazing to read their insights. There is a subtext in the book that not many adults would get. Their insights are huge. I get very good advice.
Only one author mentioned corresponding by the telephone. This was not featured on the survey as the comment appeared to be restricted to the culture and characteristics of the author’s rural community and not a significant means of correspondence by most writers.

Seven authors referred specifically to writing workshops. One author provided some insight on how workshops might be different than a classroom author visit. P:10: said, “I was doing a workshop for the Vancouver Public Library this summer where I was doing hands on…you know roundtable discussions with about half a dozen kids at a time – teaching metaphors, giving them examples, giving them exercises, and telling them stories…”

The survey provided authors the opportunity to differentiate between the channels of correspondence/interaction and provide some definition of the kind of mentorship that occurs in each.

**Children’s Comments**

Six of the participants provided quoted children’s comments from letters the authors had received. P:8 read from seven letters during the interview quoting pieces and chunks of the children’s writing. Several samples of these letters are recorded below:

**Letter 2:** Thank you for writing the book. What was your favorite part? I’m interested in becoming an author.

**Letter 3:** I hate reading. But your book had everything in it. Happy, sad, all in one book.

**Letter 4:** I write a lot of books too. I could send you one of my books if you want.

**Letter 7:** I sort of enjoy writing.
Five participants referred to the kinds of comments they received from children in letters or email. The comments mentioned by the participants resemble the categories listed in Dorsett and Mead’s (1985) compilation of C.S. Lewis’ letters which include, among others, questions and comments regarding the world of the book and questions and observations regarding the processes of writing. Inferences to the mentoring in the processes of writing will be looked at again under category six, “lessons learned”. Questions or comments regarding the writing process are summarized below:

- Where do you get your ideas?
- Where and when do you write?
- How do you think of character names?
- Where does your inspiration come from?
- What is it like to be a writer?
- I can’t believe how much editing you have to do!

Seven of the nine participants also referred to students making personal connections to stories. The intertextual references often regarded connections to specific characters or themes in a story. Examples of intertextual referencing by students include such things as referring to a main character (“I am like...”), pets or animals (“My dog likes to do that too,”), or students continuing or writing new versions of the author’s story. One author commented, “Kids often love to tell me about things that are similar in their lives...” (P:1).
**What Students Can Learn**

Under this category, authors spoke about their lives as writers, the publishing world, what it means to be a writer, and the writing process. 100% authors contributed to this category. Several author responses are recorded below:

**P:1:** The students are always amazed about the amount of editing that goes on with a published book. They can't believe that we as writers change and change and change words and sentences and whole chapters. Often after a presentation the teachers are incredibly thankful for pointing this out to kids and they tell me the students go back and edit their own work more.

**P:10:** I also slip in some calm discussion about how long it takes to get published and how I have to rework my stories even after they've been accepted by a publisher. I think that comes as a surprise to some kids and I emphasize that rewriting is not only part of writing but it's the most important part of writing in that that's the hardest lesson.

**P:4:** And they really want to talk about being writers, and so we've talked back and forth about the process of getting a manuscript published, reading and writing because of the smaller classes. The teacher will often make a book together, and they will generate something that resembles a book.

**P:11:** There's a sort of educational goal - aspect too about writers, through which kids learn. That is... They learn that authors are real people, and I mostly talk about the writing process. My writing process - I want them to know that. It's not easy. It takes a lot of work, and it's great fun.

**P:4:** 50% of the questions that kids ask me is about craft. They ask me where I get my ideas. They ask me how I finish the story. How do I know when I'm done? They ask how long it takes to write a story. They ask me if I'm a good speller and their so reassured. I think, by hearing that you don't have to be good speller is encouraging. I tell them that...I explain to them, you know what I think the good thing is for kids talking to adults who write books is that it puts a really human face on a process that seems very mysterious. So I'm, when it comes to craft, they all have lots of stories going through their heads at the time – But that story has to have structure to it. They have an idea but they often don’t know where to go with it from there. They get stuck. It's like running into brick wall. So I tell them to pick a part of a character and describe it. Get the character to look in a mirror. Put the character into a year.

With all nine authors contributing to this category it remains a significant item for the national survey.
Benefits of Correspondence/Interactions

Building on the previous category the themes raised below focus on mutual inspiration, life altering experiences, remarkable experiences (specific examples) and providing opportunities for children. Six authors stated that they were motivated and moved by students just as they sensed that children were impacted by them as writers. These authors found that encouragement from their readership gave them reason to keep writing. P:9 said, “It’s wonderful, energizing, thought-provoking, creative, and probably one of the major reasons I write books at all.” P:3 echoed this comment by saying, “Connecting with kids is a battery charger.”

Miscellaneous Themes

Participants raised several other themes on topics and points that will only briefly be mentioned here.

One participant, P:4 stated that she/he had been invited to a classroom electronically via the net. The author was quite excited by this prospect and was looking forward to interacting with a group of students in a remote area via an internet program. This raises questions about the number and nature of virtual author visits and the future of author interactions with students.

Another author, P:9 said “Not having a website, I receive a lot less correspondence than many other kids’ authors.” This author recognized that having a website correlated with the volume of correspondence a writer receives.

A further topic raised by P:7 was the concept of “paying back to the community.” Authors have been given encouragement from children and parents and teachers and should therefore provide encouragement back.
A final topic concerned the number of people authors present to at schools, workshops or conferences. One author, P:9 commented “With large numbers, 1000 at a conference, the interaction is lost and it becomes a performance.”

**The Need for a National Survey**

As expected, the pilot study proved of great value in shaping the questions and items on the national survey. All of the first seven categories derived from the pilot were used to form the survey. Three researchers independently reviewed my initial survey and made suggested changes. One of the changes recommended was that I include an item that asked about the gender of the participants. This became item fifteen. While gender does not play a large role in the discussion of chapter five, it was an important item to include in view of further research generated from this study.

Other suggested changes by researchers included: adding the option of saying, “I don’t know” in question one; making item 1 and 5 a “yes” or “no” answer in order to provide more statistical data; and providing a percentage for item 8 regarding correspondence. The researchers who reviewed the survey also recommended putting the comment requesting “specific examples” in boldface. In total, fifteen items were included and agreed upon for the survey as shown below.

**Research Design**

The process of designing this research has included both exploratory and to a much lesser degree, descriptive analyses. Given the relatively unknown phenomenon of author mentorship it was important to allow participants to describe and define for themselves terms such as “literacy” and “mentorship” and to provide authors a degree of flexibility in their wording of what they do with students in their own terms. That is,
although the pilot was meant to act as an exploratory tool to help identify and define author mentorship there was still a great deal of further exploratory research in the central study as well.

There were and indeed there still remain pieces of the puzzle to discover: the extent of author participation in Canadian schools, the kinds of activities authors were engaging in with students or the scope of correspondence across Canada, being only a few.

As the study was intended to be a national survey and given that the pilot study had such a high response rate for participation it was expected that there would be a large number of participants. In order to analyze data such as, the number of authors who use email, the data analysis tool SPSS was used and frequency tables were generated.

In order to better organize responses to open ended questions I used the qualitative research tool, Atlas.ti, a program that helps researchers categorize large amounts of data such as transcripts or in this case, survey responses.

It was decided that an email survey would be appropriate to gain the kind of data needed for this project. Further, based on my experiences with fellow children’s authors across the country I was able to affirm that authors spend a considerable amount of time using the internet as a means of communication.

As a member of two large author listserv I have witnessed countless discussions on topics ranging from arts based initiatives in schools to how much one should charge for an all day presentation. In the last year I have seen calls for participants for two research projects regarding authors on the listserv and have been a participant on one of them.
Since the pilot project received such a high response to the call for participation it was concluded that the survey would likely be similar. Based on Canadian children’s authors’ active participation on the listserv and the large number of responses to the request for participation on the pilot project it was agreed that an email questionnaire would likely be successful in securing enough participants.

Canadian children’s authors are easily identified by titles of books, last names, publishers, or even awards. A combination of any of the above could breach the confidentiality promised in this research. Due to the unique nature of the participants and the increased possibility of identifying respondents because of their publications, identifiers were kept to a minimum.

The target audience for the questionnaire was Canadian children’s authors who were accessible by email. Criteria for participants came from CANSCAIP (Canadian Society of Children’s Authors, Illustrators and Performers) a writers’ organization which limits membership to those who have at least one novel, picture book, volume of poetry, or chapter book published by a recognized publisher. Authors also had to be Canadian citizens although the publisher could be outside Canada. A second website, the Canadian Children’s Book Centre (CCBC) was used for additional addresses of authors not listed with CANSCAIP.

The Questionnaire

Dear Authors:

In answering the following questions, specific examples, where applicable, would be greatly appreciated.

Section 1: Authors in School Environments
Authors involved in my pilot study identified author readings, writing workshops and author in residencies, as the most common ways they interact with students in the school environment.
1. Please answer “yes”, “no”, or “I don’t know” to the following questions. Have you participated in:
   
   a). Author Readings (talking to students about your work or reading from your own books)?
   
   b). Writing Workshops (writing workshops for schools or libraries)?
   
   c). Author Residencies (usually 2-5 consecutive days at the same school)?

2. If you answered yes to one or more of the above, do you talk about the process or craft of writing at these events? Can you describe what kinds of writing skills, techniques or “tricks of the trade” you share with the students?

3. Conversely, what do students ask you about your writing processes? Has there been unexpected or surprise comments that you still reflect on?

4. What do students share with you about their own writing processes?

**Section II Correspondence**

5. Please answer yes or no to the following questions. Do you correspond with students/readers via:
   
   a). email?
   
   b). letters?

6. Approximately how many emails do you receive from students/readers per year?

7. Approximately how many letters do you receive from students/readers per year?

8. As a percentage, how often do you reply to the correspondence you receive? (0-100%). Do you reply to email and regular mail equally?

9. When you receive letters or email what do students ask you about the writing process?

10. Do you recall specific comments you like to make to students who write to you regarding the writing process? What do you feel students really want to know about writing?

11. C.S. Lewis records that he mentored particular students through correspondence over a lengthy period of time. Have you ever maintained correspondence with students for more than several exchanges? Can you estimate how long in months or years these exchanges have lasted?

   How was it successful?

12. Currently, websites have proved to be important for some authors. What has been your experience with websites and how does it impact on your relationship with readers?
13. What, for you, have been the benefits of corresponding with students/readers?

14. Please make any further comments or observations below about authors in school environments that you find important to interesting.

15. For statistical purposes would you please indicate your gender below as either, “F” for female or “M” for male.

**Research Tools**

Both SPSS and Atlas.ti were extremely advantageous tools for this investigation. It was expected that the participants would have a wide variety of responses, some of them with lengthy answers, and would require programs that could organize over a hundred pages of transcript with ease.

The design and analysis of my data including the use of an email survey, closely followed the research procedures used in the *CSSHE: Graduate Student Membership Survey* (Bouchard, Pidgeon & Andres, 2005). The CSSHE survey used email to contact and deliver questionnaires to a target group, used both SPSS and Atlas.ti, and applied a mixed methods approach for designing and analyzing the investigation. Transcripts of participants’ responses were loaded into Atlas.ti and into SPSS for analysis.

For this present investigation I cut and pasted all of the authors’ comments from the surveys into a word document. Since Atlas.ti organizes data based on assigned codes to participants’ comments I loaded the comments into WORD based on the date I received the emails. In other words, I did not load the comments or organized the comments in any pre ordered fashion other than by the date I received them. The document was then uploaded into Atlas.ti, and ready to begin the analysis stage.

The next chapter focuses on the findings of the analysis of the national survey.
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF DATA

Method of Administering the Questionnaire

Authors were sent the questionnaire via email and within the body of the main text, not as an attachment. A copy of the advertisement and questionnaire can be found in Appendix D. It is not certain that all authors listed received the email. Thirteen of the 333 were returned as “Undeliverable.” Also, four authors indicated that their computers did not allow the questionnaire to be downloaded in its entirety. It is unknown how many other authors did not receive or had difficulty downloading the questionnaire. The four authors who had difficulty receiving the complete questionnaire indicated they were operating Macintosh computers, which may account for an incompatibility of the attachments.

The emails were sent between March 29, 2007 and April 4, 2007. No completion date was suggested on the questionnaire, only that they were to be returned to David Ward. The purpose of not assigning a completion date was to allow for as many responses as possible to be included. By April 30, 2007, 74 questionnaires were returned. The response rate was 22%.

Demographics

Of the 74 respondents 70% were female and 30% were male. Eighteen percent of respondents mentioned as part of their answers that they had been nominated for awards. All awards mentioned by authors were referred to as “Tree Awards” (Silver Birch, Green Willow, etc) or as Choice awards. The “Tree Awards” are highly used by schools across the country and are based on children’s votes or “choices”. The awards are generally
affiliated with a province (Red cedar – British Columbia) although the author may be from or live elsewhere. Authors were not asked on the survey if they had been nominated for awards, rather the comments were offered freely as part of their responses.

**Questionnaire: Categories of Responses**

The questionnaire covered three main areas: **Authors in School Environments**, **Correspondence**, and **Websites**. Although it encompassed only one question on the questionnaire, the purpose of asking authors about their websites was to explore how technology was impacting author/student interactions.

**Authors in School Environments**

The first section, authors in school environments, examined the kinds of face to face interactions between authors and students, specifically at author readings, writing workshops, and author residencies. Descriptions of author readings vary from author to author but typical summaries on the CANSCAIP web pages suggest readings involve a writer visiting a school or library and sharing from her work. Similarly a workshop usually entails more specific attention to the creative writing process and students actively engaged in writing. An author residency generally refers to an author providing multiple sessions at a school or library over the course of several days. Below is an example of one author’s description of work in schools:

**Writing Talks**

If you want a presentation focusing on various aspects of the publishing industry, allow me to lure your students into my books and then share my experiences as a writer. They will learn things like how a book gets published, where writers get their ideas, what an editor does, and who
draws the book covers. I also have talks geared for specific novels -- for example I share an heirloom chest of ideas when I talk about The Gramma War, while my presentation for Zee's Way is built around graffiti.

For audiences wishing a talk on specific aspects of writing, I offer a presentation that looks at books as mirrors, in as much as their content reflects the author, the act of writing itself is a reflective process, and the reader's reaction to the finished product reflects their own life experiences. Sometimes I am asked to gear a talk to a specific topic, and that is fine too. Click here to find out how to prepare for an author visit.

Workshops for Students

The range of topics is endless: writing conversation; the all-purpose essay; the art of oral storytelling; recipe for a short story; writing effective description; narrative -- how to show and not tell; point of view and voice; choosing words, creating realistic characters ...

And the list goes on. I've taught English and language arts to grades 4 through 12. What do you need?

Writer in Residence Program

Workshops are great for addressing a particular writing skill, but sometimes teachers want to tackle larger writing projects. Planning on publishing a class set of stories? Hoping to write and produce a class play? Want to explore the fable/folklore genre? Your students can write their own and use the product to perfect the art of story-telling.
If so, you might want to take advantage of the Writer in Residence package. In this program I visit your classroom at scheduled times throughout the project to guide students through each stage of the writing process. I introduce a step, allow the necessary time for teachers to guide students through it, then return to show them what comes next. This continues until the project is complete and students have a finished product. Students learn, teachers learn, and everybody has fun (CANSCAIP, 2007).

Correspondence

The second section of the survey considered the correspondence between authors and students via regular post and email.

Using email addresses of authors listed on the CANSCAIP website as well as those listed with the Canadian Children’s Book Centre, 333 author names were gathered. Illustrators who were also authors were included. Performers were not included unless they had published at least one book.

Websites

The third section regarding websites, asked authors about how having a site impacted their relationship with their readership. The question was constructed from author comments made during the pilot study and suggested that some authors find websites useful to connect with their readership. Participants were encouraged to express what their experiences have been with websites and how it impacts their relationship with readers.
Coding of Questionnaire Responses

Reading through the author transcripts, I began to assign codes to participant’s comments. A “code” is an associated name to an idea or group of ideas. For example, one of the codes created was named “awards.” Below are examples of three comments that were assigned this code. As with all comments from the national survey data individual participant comments are separated by the code assigned to each author (AO1, for example) and by ellipses at the start of a new paragraph. I did not correct authors’ spelling or grammar.

AO49: Sometimes none. When nominated for a ‘tree award’ – maybe 30-100.

AO53: …A dozen at most. This is starting to pick up a little because of current nominations for one of my books.

AO60: …300 (more if I have a book up for readers choice award).

Once codes have been assigned, the program can be instructed to bring all the comments assigned to a particular code together. To think of this another way, loose codes are collapsed under an umbrella or representative code. Under the code, “awards” for example, there were nine comments from the transcripts that referred to awards or nominations. In the three author comments above, the participants were referring to the number of letters they typically received in a year. Although not requested to explain their response, at least nine authors decided to mention that they received more mail when they had been nominated for an award. These references were collapsed under the code title of “awards.”

One of my original codes, “benefits of correspondence” and later collapsed under, “contents of correspondence”, had 65 comments assigned to it. The code, “elements of
fiction” had 41 comments, and “ideas” later collapsed under, “contents of correspondence” had the highest number of comments associated with it at 96. In total I assigned 48 codes to the document which consisted of 128 pages of transcript. The list of original codes can be seen in Appendix E.

My original set of 46 codes was further collapsed into the five main categories shown below with examples of their corollaries. The categories are described in considerable detail with examples for each coming from the transcripts. It is also important to mention here that the original three sections (Authors in School Environments, Correspondence, and Websites) used to frame the national survey have been retained in this chapter to provide consistency. This will be described with greater detail in the following pages. As categories emerged from the data, however, the following categories became more efficient and representative of the authors’ comments:

1. **Author Roles**: as literacy resource, encourager, mentor, impacting literacy practices

2. **Student Responses and Questions**: publishing, beginnings/middles/end, request for author help, responding to characters

3. **Means of Correspondence**: email, snail mail, telephone

4. **Content of Correspondence**: writing process – drafting, editing, revising, ideas, fact versus fiction, research, reading as a strategy, publishing, style and voice.

5. **Facilitating Events or People**: teacher preparation of author visits, whole class letters as a response to a visit, successful author visits
Choosing which frequencies to explore came from a variety of sources. The closed ended questions were fairly simple to include as frequencies. Questions such as, “Have you participated in author readings?” (item 1) were loaded into SPSS as follows:

1 = Yes

2 = No

3 = I Don’t Know.

Similarly, item 2 asked if authors talked about the writing process. These frequencies were simple to display and provided an excellent opportunity to discern the extent of authors participating in readings, workshops, and residencies or whether or not participants viewed themselves as sharing the writing process with students.

Determining other frequencies, however, was more difficult. For example, in item two the authors were asked to describe the types of skills and tricks of the trade they discuss with students. Choosing which frequencies to run in SPSS required careful reading of the authors’ responses to the more open ended questions. Authors who said “yes” to item two used many terms in their descriptions of the writing process and below are examples of a number of common terms the participants used: ideas, elements of story, editing, voice, plot, setting, how to write dialogue, character, pace, timelines, style, rewriting, painting pictures with words, research, drafts, language choices, building stories in scenes, and publishing.

In some cases, a participant would break into a description of what was meant by certain terms:

Ao60: …How to make a satisfactory ending, tying up all the loose ends.
AO50:....I speak to the students as writers, which of course they all are, and I provide examples of how we frequently play “what if” when a potential story idea intrigues us.

AO44:....I talk a lot about the process of revision, how nothing the students see on their library shelves was just written and published.

AO48:....We also talk about ideas and where ideas come from and what to do with a great idea.

As mentioned earlier, where possible I collapsed similar references under a central term. The two largest examples of collapsed categories can be seen with elements of literature and editing. Elements of literature is a title of a collapsed category that I used to describe the following terms based on Russel’s (2005) Literature for Children. Authors’ comments that made mention of: character, setting, point of view, conflict, theme, style, and plot, were included in the code, elements of fiction. By collapsing the category I was able to take at least seven terms and bring them under one unifying or defining term.

Similarly, I also collapsed the terms, revision, re-writing, drafting, revise, correcting, and making changes in the term, Editing. Authors used editing terms interchangeably and below are a few examples.

AO2:....they (students) are reluctant in their own work to rewrite and the enormity of what that task really means only confirms their reluctance.

AO11:....they (students) don’t like to revise/rewrite/toss/edit, they don’t think they could ever do something that long.

AO14:....I talk a lot about the writing process, especially the need for revising their work. I tell kids to set their finished work aside and look at it the next day with fresh eyes.
In addition, the categories *style* and *voice* were collapsed into the single category, *Voice*. Of the nine instances found in the transcripts, the authors used the terms, style and voice interchangeably.

An example of a frequency output, encompassing all of the variables included can be seen in Appendix F. Two researchers independently read and agreed on the frequencies to be used.

As mentioned above, the questionnaire itself contained 15 items. These items represented a variety of closed and open ended questions. All narrative responses were transcribed and loaded into the *Atlas* program where answers were further categorized. The creation of categories using the *Atlas* program as well as SPSS was done in conjunction with instructions provided in EDST 508. Representative author comments are included below to provide examples of the kinds of comments authors made to more open ended questions. Participants’ comments are all separated by ellipses at the beginning of each paragraph.

**Findings**

For the sake of consistency and, I hope clarity, I have used the three categories which were used to organize the questionnaire (Authors in School Environments, Correspondence, and Websites) to provide a framework for the findings. I have included Means of Correspondence in the first part of Chapter Four in order to provide a better sense of the phenomenon. A closer look at the four remaining categories stemming from the analysis (Author Roles, Content of Correspondence, Students’ responses and Questions, and Facilitating Events and People) follows next.
**Authors in School Environments**

All of the authors stated that they engaged in author readings at schools or libraries. Seventy-seven percent of respondents indicated that they gave writing workshops and 48% said they had been an author in residence. A total of 43% of authors indicated that they engaged in readings, workshops, and residencies.

**Figure 1: Authors in Educational Environments**

Table 1: Participation in Reading, Residencies, and Workshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Yes&quot; to all three</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;No&quot; to one or more</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Respondents were not asked to differentiate what they shared with students at readings, workshops, or residencies. Rather, my intent was to allow authors the opportunity to expand on their own terms and meanings, to write freely about the interactions they felt were the most significant. In the pilot project authors tended to gravitate to particular questions or themes which resonated with their experience in schools, or with correspondence. The questionnaire was designed to allow authors to write as freely and expansively from their own experiences as possible.

In a few instances participants differentiated between readings, workshops, and residencies and provided descriptions of what they did at each of these events. Two examples are presented below:

The following author differentiated between readings, workshops and residencies:

**AO44:** In ordinary author visits, I talk a lot about the process of revision, how nothing the students see on their library shelves was just written and published. In workshops and residencies, I concentrate on different technical skills, character development, point of view, descriptive writing for example.

In the next instance, another participant provided details regarding readings and workshops:

**AO28:** I've been doing author visits for several decades, so my author readings have changed over the years. Key things I always present are how revision is necessary to make your writing the best it can be. I used to show a hand written document all crossed out in red, so they could see how little of the first draft ended up in a published story. Now, one of the things I stress is that writing is more than sitting at a computer—it's also about research and that it can be on any topic that interests you.

The author concluded by saying:
Many of my publications are in sports fields and travel writing, so I talk about how much fun writing can be. In terms of writing workshops, I use a lot of powerpoint to show students how I get my ideas and where I draw my research from. Specifically, I use things like photos in my historical fiction, to help me fill in the details to make stories come to life. The hands-on workshops I've done use things like pictures or artifacts to help kids see how to make their stories more than a series of events, by developing how to show, not tell techniques.

Authors also described themselves in school environments in a variety of ways.

At times, participants made comments that presented authors in schools in a general sense, that is, authors’ overall impact in school settings for readings, workshops, or residencies:

**AO2**:...Authors visiting schools should be an essential part of the curriculum. All children benefit, even if they haven’t read the author’s books - though of course the visit is FAR more rewarding if the kids are familiar with the work under discussion. But any expert (policeman, chef, meteorologist...) is a resource to a classroom, and authors happen to be experts in what a classroom is about - becoming literate.

**AO10**:...There’s no question but that authors in schools encourage reading and writing, especially when the experience for the students is a good one. I have been told this again and again by teachers and students alike...In Canada I have gone into schools and libraries through publisher-sponsored reading tours and also on CCBC tours. In the USA, I went into schools and bookstores through a publisher-sponsored reading tour. The reactions have always been the same.

**AO70**:...I think it’s important for authors to go into schools so that students can see that books are written by people; that authors are just men and women doing their jobs.

**AO28**:...I think authors are very important in school environments, because students can see that they can also become writers. Meeting an author often opens a new genre or type of novel or writing to readers, so their reading experience is enriched.
Six authors made comments regarding the importance of authors in school environments and mentioned such benefits as: improving student literacy, meeting a literacy expert, increased student interest in reading, supports the belief that authors are real people and becoming a published author is possible. Below are several representative comments regarding the benefits of authors in schools:

**AO40:** ...I think the value of authors in schools (for the general student population rather than the elite writers) is in creating a broad awareness of the writing process and the background (in my case often the research background) to telling a story. It makes books more accessible to the less enthusiastic reader if they know something about it and if they see that the author is just a regular person who tells stories.

**AO5:** ...I love it when a child turns to a teacher with that look of “you said that too” when I share something. The teacher may say it, but coming from a visitor it just seems more real.

**AO66:** ...In addition to workshops and readings, I also speak at many Young Author Conferences. I know that being selected to participate in a Young Authors Conference has a big impact on students’ attitude towards writing. In Kamloops I can tell a definite difference in the quality of students’ writing. They had held their conference for over 20 years. Some who attended as children are now published authors! Teachers/Librarians tell me that, following a school visit, my books won’t be on the shelf for the next two years. That’s the impact of an author visit on readers as well as writers.

One author did not feel that authors in school environments were as useful as the book itself and reading. The participant (AO74) said “As a whole I think the importance of authors in schools has been overemphasized. It’s the book and the reading of it that is important.”

**Interpretation**

The findings suggest that the relationship between authors and students is reciprocal: that profession writers and children are sharing their experiences with the craft and processes of writing in educational environments.
Similarly and equally connected to the theoretical model introduced in chapter 5, the findings also suggest that there is an extraordinary amount of mediation occurring between authors and students. The findings demonstrate that authors and students discuss and dialogue profoundly about writing processes and about the reading and research needed to create a text.

**Correspondence (Including Means of Correspondence)**

Of the 72 respondents who chose to answer the question, 80% said that they corresponded with students via regular ground or air mail. Similarly, 81% of authors corresponded with students via email. Eighteen percent said that they did not correspond with students using email and again, twenty-one percent said they did not correspond with students using letters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-mails</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2: E-mails Received Annually by Authors
It was also interesting to see the responses to item six on the survey which looked at the number of emails/letters participants received each year. While 14% of authors received over 100 emails per year, the percentage was slightly less (11%, see figure 2) for those receiving the same number of regular post letters. Nineteen percent of participants said that they did not receive any letters from students and 18% said they did not receive emails.

Authors described correspondence with children in a variety of ways and added interesting insights into the communication they have with students away from schools. Below are listed some general participant comments regarding email and/or letter correspondence.
AO46:...I reply %100 percent to both e-mail and regular mail. If a teacher makes a class project out of writing letters I sometimes send a single response to the whole class rather than one to each student as the questions students ask tend to be repeated.

AO43:...I answer their questions and depending on the seriousness of their query may impart more writing wisdoms on them.

AO46:...I grew up in an era where writers kept to themselves and the whole process was one of mystery. I had misconceptions about writers and the processes they used, and, having never met a professional writer or corresponded with one, thought they way I wrote was the exception rather than the norm, and the material I produced was hardly worth the effort. I know differently now, but it’s taken years of experience and many false starts to get where I am. I think putting kids in touch with writers humanizes the process, and informs them that not only are there many different kinds of writing, but different ways of accomplishing it. I wish I’d had such contact when I was in school.

AO58:...100% Always! I am fanatical about answering students who have taken the time to write.

AO73:...I aim for 100%, though I know I have missed a couple over the years, like when the volume was huge following a Silver Birch nomination. That onslaught coincided with a tour and though I tried valiantly to keep up, I know a few slipped through the cracks. I generally compose a lengthy group letter to classroom letter packages – Unusual questions are referred to specifically within the body of the more general letter.

Participants also made general comments regarding the benefits of correspondence with students. One recurring theme was the mutual benefit between authors and their readership. Authors commented:

AO8:...It [correspondence] keeps me in touch with my readers. It gives me insight into how kids think. Also, kids are honest and I find out what works in my books and what doesn’t.

AO19:...Both presenting to and corresponding with students has given me a better handle on my target audience.

AO36:...This is where I greedily get all my good bits, my details, watching eaves dropping, stealing.
Regarding how corresponding with students provides authors with fuel for stories, participants commented:

AO16:...getting feedback on my books and also knowing what people would like me to write about next. I have also ended up writing about some of the people I meet this way.

AO19:...Having first hand contact with the exact audience I am writing for has made me think about future stories in a different way.

AO51:...I am using the information I gain from the correspondence for a future series.

Several authors commented generally on how correspondence benefits students. Authors mentioned: mentorship, providing information, improving writing abilities and encouraging students to see that they can be published:

AO50:...I seek out, on an ongoing basis, opportunities to network with and listen to the concerns and methods of other writers. Invariably I come away with even a small tidbit here or there that helps me while on the road to becoming a better writer. I similarly believe that students, as writers themselves, benefit from contact with a wide range of writers as this will hopefully increase the likelihood of them connecting with the work of one or several individuals. I feel this can only help them in their own writing and creative pursuits.

AO10:...I have mentored young writers who are friends of mine through the early years of career even as older writers have mentored me. Some of the young writers I have mentored are now published. Some have agents – through my introduction – but are not yet published.

AO4:...I encourage that they too can actually be published now in numerous ways.
Children’s authors in this study corresponded with children both via email and regular post. The participants indicated that they responded to all mail they received although in the cases of a whole class send-out would respond to the group as a whole and distinguish some key points. Participants also described how correspondence was of mutual benefit both to themselves and to their readers, citing examples such as learning about their target audience, gaining ideas for future books and students improving their literacy skills.

**Interpretation**

We live in a day and age when professional writers have the opportunity to use more than one means of efficient communication with their readership. The findings present compelling evidence that email and letter correspondence are deepening the reciprocal benefits for authors and students. Email and letter correspondence allow authors to learn more about their readership while at the same time provide students the opportunity to improve their literacy skills.

**Websites**

Authors were asked about their use of a website and how it impacted their relationship with readers. Sixty-nine percent of authors who responded said that they used a website and found it advantageous. Examples of authors’ comments about websites include:

**AO49:** …[websites] extend the reading experience.

**AO60:** …Definitely have a website. Mine gets lots of hits. Writers need to think more about the promotional part of their business.

**AO73:** …my website offers opportunities for writers to find me easily…
Further, one author said “Websites, blogs, facebook, Flicker, etc. are a
great way to disseminate information, provide additional support materials for
teachers, and make it easy for students to find me and correspond...they
(students) enjoy being able to get to know me ‘virtually’ prior to a school visit
and it is so helpful for teachers who are preparing for a visit.”

Five participants stated that starting a website or maintaining a website was an
obstacle for them:

AO15:...I simply do not have the time to maintain it myself and haven’t
got around to finding someone to do it for me.

AO57:...I’m a Luddite who wishes someone would set a website up for me and
update it regularly and not charge me a thing.

AO71:...can’t justify spending piles of money to pay someone to design web site
for me. however, I haven’t yet figured out how to make my own.

Twenty-two authors commented on how websites could be used to build
relationships with their readers:

AO1:...A website is an important means of building a relationship with readers.

AO4:...If I didn’t have a website where readers could contact me I can only
surmise that I would have no contact and no interaction with any readers as I have
only received emails from my website and have never received any other kind of
contact.

AO10:...Websites are extremely important for children's authors, I would even
say essential. Not only for the contact with readers but also with librarians and
teachers. I think websites are not as important for writers of adult work. (I do not
mention my adult work on my site as it is geared towards YA literature.) Young
people use the Internet to a huge degree.e.g. Myspaceand Bebo etc. They expect
their favourite writers to have a website. Also they use the website as a research
tool when doing projects and book reports. I find that my blogs in particular allow
for interaction between myself and my readers, both kids and adults.
Authors further identified the following benefits of websites: means of finding authors for contact information, information source for teachers/teacher-librarians/parents/ and students, provides an interactive source for students (publishing stories on the site, blogs, etc), allows a forum for students to express their feelings about characters, a place to post interviews/study guides, and provides connectivity to international readers.

**Interpretation**

The findings indicate that authors are using websites in ways that support a reciprocal, give and take relationship with their readership. The evidence suggests that authors are using their websites to extend the reading experience with their readership: that is, to further develop current or future dialogues regarding stories and the processes of writing. Authors are using websites in ways that mediate a sense of understanding between writers and readers of text.

**Author Roles**

For this category I identified several key subcategories which described the kinds of roles authors assumed when interacting with school-age children. At times, the participants described themselves as literacy resources, or experts who impacted literacy practices. They also described themselves as mentors and encouragers of literacy.
Authors as Literacy Resources

Reflecting on my own experiences as an author interacting with children there have been many times that I have felt like a living information book. In these instances I have found that the discussion with students surrounding one of my stories has shifted to questions or comments regarding writing or reading. In other words, students’ questions which started in the context of one of my stories suddenly extend beyond to the writing process, to publishing, or to simply how one can get a book finished. The questions often come in a flurry, seemingly spurred on by the scaffolding and ideas of the peers around them. Frequently, it is the students who initiate the change in discussion.

In these moments I have realized that my books are no longer the focus of the discussion. Rather, the act and art of writing has become central and I am the experienced expert in the topic regardless of how the children may feel about my stories.

As one participant (AO2) concisely said: “...any expert is a resource to a classroom, and authors happen to be experts in what a classroom is all about – becoming literate.”

Concerning author roles as literacy resources or impacting literacy authors made comments such as:

AO29:...Hearing an author gives them a boost in their own budding writing abilities, as well as a boost in their school work, as they get to understand that writing well is more than just putting words on paper. They see that it takes dedication and many revisions and the dreaded editing to come up with a finished piece. Increases literacy and reading in general Increases enthusiasm for using libraries and the printed word, and opens new worlds for the readers.

AO73:... I am not a teacher, but the feedback I get from teachers is that the impact of an author visit or workshop lasts for months. Student interest in the author's books obviously improves, but so does interest in books and authors in general. The whole process of writing is desmystified and students tackle writing projects with a whole new mindset. They are no longer afraid of messy-looking
first drafts (how could they be after they’ve seen my disastrous notebooks?), they understand how important (and frustrating and satisfying) the rewriting and editing process is, they think more critically about what they are reading and are aware of the decisions the author makes when writing a book.

**AO28**: I think authors are very important in school environments, because students can see that they can also become writers. Meeting an authors often opens a new genre or type of novel or writing to readers, so their reading experience is enriched.

Similarly, another author (AO68) said “I don’t think I can overestimate the powerful influence an author visit has on students’ own writing as well as their reading. An author visit opens a whole new door for students, the door that says, ‘I can do it too.’”

Authors also provided concrete examples of how they impacted students as literacy resources. One participant (AO12) said:

One teacher wrote to me once and said that a child who never reads was seen with her head tucked tightly into my book after I left, and that child wrote a lovely review of it for the school paper. Another teacher said that the two boys who spent half their recess talking to me after my presentation were the two most unmotivated boys in the school.

Another area of significant interest was authors thinking of themselves as mentors. There were some 99 quotations generated on this topic in Atlas.ti. I have further broken this subcategory down into: the length of time an author has mentored a student, and the types of mentoring participants described as author roles.
Authors mentioned a number of different lengths of time spent on mentoring school age children. The table below demonstrates the periods of time authors stated they had spent mentoring. Participants’ comments included a time span of mentoring a particular student or group of students from 0 – 20 years. Authors used different descriptors to measure the time they spent mentoring students. Some simply provided specific examples such as mentoring a particular child from the time the child was 8 until she was 14 years of age. Others measured time in the number of exchanges of correspondences, the number of weeks, months or years.

The following are a few representative comments:

AO37: There are a few people that I have maintained correspondence with and commented on their work in a mentoring capacity. I am still friends with most of them, so the correspondence is still ongoing - over a 2-3 year period. How was it successful? Depends on how you define success. If it's in professional sales then it hasn't been successful yet. But if it's in writing improvement then I would say it's been relatively successful.

AO47: I maintained contact with one student from the time she was in grade seven and into her second or third year of university - first through regular mail and then through email. How was it successful? She gained terrific confidence in herself and the power of her writing and used it for social good.

AO56: 6-8 months. How was it successful? Student didn’t kill herself., continued with her writing.

Considering that item 12 on the survey specifically places mentorship at the centre of the question I have assumed that author responses regarding duration of correspondence with students to be of a mentoring nature.

Authors provided numerous examples of what they meant by mentoring roles. At times, participants simply described what they said or did with students but did not mention the term, mentoring. Other times, they simply stated that they mentored students.
Some participants both used the term, mentorship and described it. Several examples follow below:

AO37:...Mostly I show them what has worked best for me. I like to find inspiration in art and music and bring some samples to show the kids. Using art, I like to show how writers create pictures using words instead of paint. And with music, I like to show how different lyrics and arrangements can help writers add emotional depth to their scenes.

AO17:...In workshops I make it a practice to write along with students for at least part of the time. That way we can share how we felt tackling a particular assignment.

AO10:...Some of the young writers I have mentored are now published.

AO16:...I have mentored one student for twelve years very successfully.

AO69:...mentoring young writers is one of my life’s passions having been mentored myself.

Thinking about how authors mentor students in the literacy process is considered next.

**Engaging in the Literacy Process.**

Recently I returned from an author tour in the Shuswap/North Okanagan School district. I visited nine schools in four days and interacted with just over 2000 students from grades K-8. The presentations were approximately 45 minutes long and consisted generally of sharing favorite children’s titles, thinking about how reading other writers’ books can help us write better and reading from my own stories both published and unpublished. Students also frequently shared their own stories they had written with me.
After each day I would return to the hotel to rest up and prepare for the next. By the afternoon of the second day I was receiving emails from students I had visited 24 hours earlier. One student asked for a list of good books to read while another wanted to know more about a book I had read to her class that was not yet published. I responded to both students.

What struck me about these two brief interactions, among others, was how quickly and closely our literacy worlds had come together. Before the author visit the literacy connection was limited to (although not insignificant by any means) the students reading my work or simply knowing that an “author” was coming to visit their school. Yet after the visit a much deeper connection had been made. We had shared books, shared stories, and talked about the common experiences we shared as writers.

The findings in this dissertation reflect a multiplicity of ways in which authors share the writing process. Ninety-nine percent of the respondents stated that they shared in the craft of writing or the writing process with students. Authors used a variety of terms when answering this question and in many cases their responses were quite descriptive. Typically, authors indicated “yes,” they engaged in sharing the writing process, and then referred to something they associated with the process. For example, one participant (AO6) said: “Yes, I talk about the process of mapping out a story, character development, and incorporating your personal life experiences into the story.”
A complete list of the terms authors used in association with “the writing process” can be found in Table 3. A brief review of Table 3 demonstrates the extensive variety of words and phrases that authors used to describe the writing process. The list of terms used in conjunction with “character,” for example, is quite interesting. Authors identified the following: character development, narrative description of characters, character traits, character thoughts and feelings, experience the story through characters and “Characters count so count your characters.”

Table 3: Terms Used by Authors to Describe the Writing Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. a writer's perspective on writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. basic story book pattern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. beginnings/middles/ends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. brevity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. building scenes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. character development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. character thoughts and feelings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. character traits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. characters count so count your characters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. clarity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. connect with curriculum goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. creative non-fiction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. creative process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. dialogue, writing descriptively</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. discipline of writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. discussing the story behind the story (back story)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. draft</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. drafting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. editing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. everyone is a writer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. experience the story through characters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. genres</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. handout – “how to become a superstar writer”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. how a book is born</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. how to build conflict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. how to look inside yourself for true feelings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. illustrations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. inspiration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. journaling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. language choices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. metaphor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. narrative description of characters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. never set out to say something</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. never tell when you can show</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. only god gets things right the first time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. paint pictures with words in the reader's head</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. persistence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. plot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. poetry structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. point of view</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. publishing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. reaching out to experts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. reading books to support literacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. real events inspire fiction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. revision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. re-writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. rough drafts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. sharpening your instincts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. simile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. staying motivated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. storyboard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. style</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. techniques</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. the 5 w's (who, what, when, where, how)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. theme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60. timelines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. tying up loose ends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. using antiques</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. using dialogue and action instead of narrative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. using drama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65. using images</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66. using personal experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67. using tense</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68. visualizing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69. vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70. workshopping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71. writer's block</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72. writing cycle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73. writing using your senses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74. writing what intrigues you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most frequently used terms to describe the craft of writing with students are presented below along with their percentages. It should also be noted that authors’ responses have been collected from all of the items on the survey. In other words, should an author have omitted sharing *elements of story* in question 2 but mention sharing character development in question 14, their response to “do you share the process of writing with students” was considered an affirmative. The author’s comment was then added to the cell of responses regarding sharing the writing process in the *SPSS* program.

The next section will address the specific aspects of the writing process that authors shared with students. The categories of elements of story, editing, reading, ideas, research and voice are shown in figure 4 as percentages.

**Figure 4: References to the Writing Process**

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>% of Respondents who referred</th>
<th>% of Respondents who did not refer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ideas</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>editing</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elements of a story</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reading</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>research</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voice</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

**Elements of Story**

Fifty-two percent of respondents expressed that they shared skills or “tricks of the trade” in developing elements of story (characters, setting, plot, theme, etc) with students. Authors commented:
we explore word choice, poetry structure, character development, how to build conflict within a story, story structure, how to write your life as a story, writing using your senses, use of scenes to build stories, using dialogue and action versus narrative...

I talk about the elements of fiction, plot, setting, character and theme and that it is in setting and character that writers make their stories believable and draw readers into them.

I describe timelines, character development, setting, plotlines and endings.

We discuss different aspects of character and what kinds of details we can add to make the character more interesting.

The participants also provided colorful examples of how they encouraged students to develop elements of story.

I usually enter the classroom in role as a one of my characters.

I provide examples from my own and other people’s writing, and then interactive story building.

for the younger grades I have them create their own little books...they write a story then transcribe it to folded paper that has been stapled on the side.

I talk about ‘painting word pictures’, ‘showing, not just telling’ and being aware that most of our readers and most of our characters have five senses thus it is not enough to describe only what can be seen.

Editing

Sixty-six percent of authors said that they discussed editing or revising practices with students.

Participants used the following words to describe editing processes: drafting, rewrite, revision, “do it over”, self-editing, correcting, peer editing and polishing.

Authors made over fifty comments regarding this topic and representative statements are provided below:
AO2: I talk about writing without censoring myself for a first draft, and encourage writing a first draft in longhand. I suggest not looking at what you’ve written for several days and ten settling into the rewrite by reading what you’ve written aloud.

AO13: Mostly I tell them that writing is really about re-writing, and on occasion I’ve shown them the various messy, marked-up drafts of my own work. I tell them I sometimes go through nine or ten drafts to get the work to read the way I want it to.

AO26: If I’m critiquing their work, I tell them what I like about their story and ways it could be stronger. I do this by asking questions about character motivation and plot- not by pointing out what is “wrong.” This leaves them inspired. And I make sure they understand how in-depth the revisions and re-writing process must be. We focus on how to revise to make a story richer. The often don’t realize how extensive the revision process must be.

AO30: In some cases the classes have read one of my books so I use examples of how the various characters were developed, what kind of research was required and why I chose the points of view I did as well as using examples from earlier drafts to indicate polishing.

Connected to authors’ comments regarding editing/drafting was their descriptions regarding what children said to them about their own writing. Authors provided other insights into students’ personal literacy habits as well. Almost half of the respondents (48%) stated that students frequently mentioned having troubles with their own writing and gave instances such as:

AO38: finding a writing style...

AO46: don’t like having to rewrite...

AO47: Finding ideas...

AO7: beginnings to stories...

AO69: writers’ block...

AO20: afraid of grammar and spelling...

AO2: They speak of having a good idea but running out of steam as they get part way into the story...
Similarly one author (AO23) said:

Students have trouble finishing stories. It's fun to write beginnings and even middles but endings are hard work which may be why we see contrived and 'cop-out' endings..."He woke up...it was all a dream." and the like.

Another author described the tension of supporting students with their stories without encroaching on the child’s work.

AO24:...For the past three or four years I have mentored a student at our local school----a different student each year, once a week over a twelve week period. I find it LOTS of work...I carry the story around in my head during those weeks and am often trying to think of ways to jog the student into producing a better story...while not imposing myself on their work. On the other hand the students have always been talented, hard-working and totally delightful personally...so it has worked out very well.

Still another author (AO32) said: “I give them examples of famous writers who were rejected yet were published because they persisted. I stress the magic rule – that persistence always pays.”

Seventy-eight percent of respondents indicated that students shared their own stories with authors. Respondents provided a variety of comments describing what they said in return to students or provided an author’s opinion of why children said what they said. The following are examples of author responses:

AO50:...They [students] sometimes comment that writing is hard and suggest that perhaps they’re therefore not good at it. I am always eager and happy to disclose that those are my experiences as well and that each story takes its toll on me in different ways, yet is rewarding in different ways.

AO59:...Mostly they are pleased at how hard they worked and how sure I will like their new story. ‘I made my opening sentence just like yours,’ one student said.

AO61:...Two grade 8 girls...are working on a novel. One of them is writing from her own life experience involving her horse and the loss of her mother. I am presently [away] and I promised to keep our discourse going once I return home.
Another author described a more general approach to student struggles with writing:

AO21...I try to keep most of my comments simple and straightforward. I tell them the best method to write is BIC (butt in chair). In other words don't worry about all the other stuff, just worry about writing down your story. You can correct and make it better in the rewriting stages. I think students want to know whether what they are experiencing as they write is similar to what a "real" writer experiences.

Concerning the basic structure of stories, particularly a sense of beginning middle and end, participants indicated that it was important for students to know how to construct a story. Participants provided various explanations of how they supported students in constructing stories.

AO7...In my residencies, I focus on building a story in scenes, visualizing a scene prior to writing, the tools of scene writing- narrative description of character, setting and action, dialogue and character thoughts and feelings. I also use drama and storyboarding as tools for understanding how scenes are written.

AO19: I tell students to draw and reflect on their own experiences .... things that happen to them in their real lives everyday. I suggest to them that there are stories all around them.

Reading

Thirty-seven percent of respondents stated that they encouraged students to read as a means of supporting their writing processes.

Examples of author comments include:

AO52:...Like most writers, I encourage students to read: all the BEST books they can get their hands on.

AO58:...The one thing I most try to impress on students who want to write is the importance of reading. It’s surprising how many fail to see the relation between the two!

AO10:...If you want battle scenes, read books in which there are battle scenes. Note how the professional writer works. Use of poetic images to enhance your
text, as Ray Bradbury says, ‘feed your Muse, read poetry weekly.’ Read books about writing by writers.

AO14:…I talk about the need to develop their own voice, and to do that they have to listen to the voices of other writers.

Another interesting comment referred to the author’s own use of reading as strategy:

AO19:…I talk about these jobs and how I am always reading wonderful books by other authors and tell them that I think all this reading helps to make me a better writer because I am constantly exposed to great stories and words … it’s like exercise for my brain.

Ideas

Another topic raised by a majority of respondents (73%) was the concept of where ideas come from or, how authors come up with ideas for their stories and books.

Again, authors provided a wide range of comments regarding this question:

AO71:…Students ask me how I got my idea (the story is based on a folk tale, so I tell them I was interested in folk tales and did research in libraries and also asked people for their favorite folk tale.

AO69:…The most frequently asked question is ‘where did you get your ideas?’ Certainly, when students are moved to ask about the real issues behind my [books], I am surprised and delighted (ie: questions like ‘are children used as slaves, today in this world?)

Respondents also provided multiple examples of how they support students in generating ideas:

AO50:…we play ‘what if’ when a potential idea intrigues…

AO48:…I play a game called hot seat, where a volunteer takes the chair in front of the class. The other students ask questions. On chart paper we describe the answers and responses and that’s how we can develop a character.

AO28:…I incorporate a powerpoint presentation which shows the process I use to write…from the idea phase, through research…
Research

Research skills are an important component in the elementary and secondary school curriculum. Thirty-three percent of respondents said that they talk about researching with students. Authors made comments such as:

AO63: ...I usually talk about research techniques...

AO45: ...Sometimes I discuss how I use research to create factual elements in my fiction...

AO46: ...Since I largely write non-fiction and incorporate true stories, students are often interested in how I find the material for my books, how I do research.

Voice/Style

Nine authors (15%) mentioned that they helped students find their own writing voice or style. Participants stated that they supported young writers in specific skills or activities to help them discover their own voices and styles. Participants commented:

AO14: ...I talk about the need to develop their own "voice", and to do that they have to listen to the voices of other writers. Sometimes I'll have them do exercises where they try to write like Dr. Suess or another author that they're familiar with so they can see how hard it is to have a unique voice.

AO35: ...I think that anything an author can do to speak to the importance of developing authentic voices of students is a move in the right direction.

AO40: ...I tell them that, rather than focusing on one aspect of the writing process, they should read voraciously and absorb all the different ways authors have expressed themselves. This means that they go through phases of being derivative and trying to write in a particular style, but that is okay. It's all practice and will lead eventually to finding their own voice...

AO67: ...And I encourage them to listen to their own inner voice, to find the creative style that's right for them.

Connected to the concepts of voice and style was the interesting discovery that participants frequently referred to and described students as writers, young writers and in instances, fellow writers. Participants acknowledged that young and experienced authors
were engaged in the same activity, the same process yet on a continuum. One of the authors below described how she encouraged students to compare their writing lives with her own. Other participants simply referred to students as “young writers” throughout their questionnaire.

AO18: … I encourage students to compare their experiences with mine. Do they find it easy or hard to know how to finish a story? How do they come up with a title? Do they like to use lots of words or just a few? We enter into dialogue, a dialogue of fellow writers, if it goes well.

AO21: … But recently one young writer asked how I could remember what it was like to be young? She was worried that she would forget as she grew older and not be able to write about being young. I told her that's where imagination, memory, and rewriting all work together.

AO34: … We are all writers.

AO50: … I speak to the students as writers, which of course they all are.

Similarly, authors also inferred that they viewed students as young writers in their comments. For example, one author (AO11) said:

They are interested when I tell them that I started with short stories and contests, and that they can do the same right now with things like the Toronto Star Short Story Contest for kids.

Thinking of students as fellow writers will be looked at more closely in the discussion in Chapter five.

Facilitating Events and People

Twenty-six (35%) participants mentioned the importance of the role of teachers, teacher librarians or other school facilitators, in making the school visit a success. The authors suggested that it was important for facilitators to prepare students for author visits in order for children to gain the most from the experience. One participant said:
School librarians are essential to school literacy, and they typically understand the value of an author visit to a school. They also plan well for an author visit, with preliminary and follow-up activities. I would hope that the value of author visits be highlighted and encouraged in the future – not just for young kids but for teens as well, who tend to have less author visits.

Four authors said that school facilitators prepare children for visits by helping them think about the visit, the author’s work, or to prepare questions that will make the time spent with the author more worthwhile. One author suggested:

A018: ...A really crucial element in a school visit or in correspondence with children who have read a book as a class project is the involvement of the teacher. If the teacher helps children think about my books before I speak with them (or write to them) the session will be much more valuable and enjoyable for me and for them.

Another author stated:

A034: ...It is important for schools to know that author visits are productive only if the students are aware of the writer and his work, and have read at least one or more books, and come prepared for some specific questions about the work.

Similarly, one participant said:

A04: ...Where there is a wonderful adult educator present...and when the students have had guidance or have prepared questions or even have learned a little background...the value of my visit and what they and myself take away is a billion fold.

Several authors expressed surprise or frustration that some teachers did not teach the writing process accurately or well:
As a writer in residence, I find it fascinating that most of the students are not taught writing from a writer's perspective on process but from a teacher's process with their eyes to assessment. Over 80% of teachers I've worked with require their students to fill in story organizers that define character, setting, problem, two main events and solution. Stories aren't necessarily about solving problems, sometimes we don't know an end before we begin. I see so many kids who struggle to understand how to translate a plan into a story. I encounter kids who hate story writing because of the planning involved that they say they were never successful at doing. I think many teachers just simply don't know. They believe it is hard to teach, hard to assess and hard to do. My goal as a writing teacher is to help the non-writing teacher of writing understand a different way is out there.

These were tougher presentations because the teachers weren't really committed to the importance of what I was doing -- they weren't prepared and it almost came across that they felt they were doing me a favour by having me there.

It is interesting to note that the authors in this study who spoke about the school environment appear to agree with Clark's (2003) findings in the Australian context: the more prepared a school/educators/students are for the visit, the better the educational value of the experience.

This investigation began with three guiding research questions:

1. How do children’s authors invite students into literacy? That is, how do author interactions with students as indicated by their letter correspondences, email, author visits and workshops with school-age children impact students' literacy?

2. How do authors contribute to literacy learning by mentoring children in literacy skills?

3. How is technology reshaping the relationship between authors and readers?

The findings of this investigation have implications for all three questions. In response to the first question the participants described in detail how their interactions
with students through letter correspondence, email, author visits and workshops impacted students’ literacy. Some of the author examples of impacting student literacy included: students benefit from interacting with an expert resource (A02), authors encourage reading and writing (A010), students learn about different genres of reading and writing (A028), students learn about different ways of accomplishing writing tasks (A046), and students gain confidence in their literacy tasks (A029).

The second question considered how authors contributed to literacy learning as mentors to children in literacy skills. The participants’ descriptions of how they engaged in the literacy process with students provided one of the larger responses to the question. Among the many examples in the findings the list of terms presented in Table 3 demonstrated convincingly how authors mentored in specific literacy skills. Authors engaged students in concepts and practical writing skills such as: building character traits for stories, writing dialogue or description, how to build conflict within a story, finding style or voice, tying up loose ends, and using images in writing. Authors also mentored students in literacy skills by demonstrating how they used reading, research, and the generation of ideas to form stories.

The last research question was intended to explore how technology was impacting the relationship between writers and readers. This question was addressed in part by the authors’ descriptions of how they used their websites to connect with students, teachers, and librarians. Participants also identified how websites could be used to build relationships with their readership. The participants identified how such relationships allowed authors to see how their stories impacted readers. Websites were also identified as a means to communicate information about authors to schools and students.
In the next chapter I present a discussion of the findings and implications for further research. I also introduce a theoretical model by which educators may think of the relationship between living authors, readers and texts in a new light.
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CALL FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation was to discover the nature of and extent to which today’s authors are inviting school age children into literacy. Through a pilot investigation and a national survey I explored the interactions occurring between school age children in Canada and children’s authors through the perspectives of 73 participants. The analyses of the survey found Canadian children’s authors engaging their readership and connecting with them through correspondence and in public forums.

The Extent of Authors’ Literacy Interactions with Students

With 80% or more of authors engaging students through letters or email it is clear from this study that the participating authors are continuing the correspondence tradition of children’s authors such as C. S. Lewis and Lucy Montgomery.

Indeed, with the number of Canadian children’s authors being well into the hundreds compared with the relatively few writers for children at the time Anne of Green Gables was introduced to Canadian children it could be projected that the occurrences of author mentorship have greatly surpassed what they once were. As one author said poignantly:

AO4:...Students comment with surprise on every single school-visit I’ve made about the fact that I’m “not boring”. They seem to have a pre-conception about authors—that we’re aloof and unapproachable, intellectual and eccentric weirdoes. I have the sneaky suspicion they get this from television and movies... and envision authors holed up in their creepy mansions surrounded by dusty leather bound books and of course always using a manual type-writer or feathered quill. I donate the time to visit schools because when I was a child I was told that being an author was a ridiculous dream. I’ve had teachers at a couple of high schools say to me that some of their colleagues are giving out a similar message.
In a similar vein of thought another author said:

**AO46:**...I grew up in an era where writers kept to themselves and the whole process was one of mystery. I had misconceptions about writers and the processes they used, and, having never met a professional writer or corresponded with one, thought the way I wrote was the exception rather than the norm, and the material I produced was hardly worth the effort. I know differently now, but it's taken years of experience and many false starts to get where I am. I think putting kids in touch with writers humanizes the process, and informs them that not only are there many different kinds of writing, but just as many different ways of accomplishing it. I wish I'd had such contact when I was in school.

Further, that 99% of authors are engaged in sharing the writing process with students suggests that the participating authors are actively seeking to support students' literacy. One of the clearest findings of the questionnaire was that 100% of the respondents engaged in readings to elementary school children. At least 43% of the respondents participated in readings, workshops and residencies, a fact that reveals authors as active literacy agents right in the heart, the hub, of student learning.

It is important to state at this point the significance of time expenditure when considering the extent of authors inviting students into literacy. In 2003 I submitted an author's name to a school for consideration of a residency. The author was accepted and spent one week at the school which enrolled students from Kindergarten to grade four. After the author residency I heard back from the school principal, the school librarian, and from the author herself. All three described the experience as energizing, invigorating for all aspects of the literacy programs of the school. The author was exhausted. It took tremendous energy to engage with the literacy needs, desires and hopes of teachers and students from Kindergarten to grade four over five days. She read hundreds of story fragments and supported young writers in their poetry and creative writing endeavors.

The author is an award-winning prolific writer in Canada. Based on the analysis of the
national survey it appears that she is not alone in engaging students in highly intensive, literacy inspiring residencies.

It was also intriguing to discover how authors explained their mentorship practices with students over time. The participants described mentoring students anywhere between 0 and 20 years. In several cases there was a sense given in the participants’ comments that a considerable rapport had been built between author and student. Two authors described students as “friends” after many years of mentoring. Other participants expressed a feeling of satisfaction of passing along their skills to the next generation.

Correspondence with students appears to be a common phenomenon amongst children’s authors. The majority (82%), by a margin, indicated that they corresponded with students via email whereas 79% used regular post. It is important to recognize that participants were asked about using both email and regular mail so the percentages above reflect those authors who use both forms of communication as well. A majority of authors (69%) found their websites advantageous and provided multiple examples such as access to readership and providing information to teachers for the necessity of author websites.

In all of the events described by participants, authors can be seen as literacy mentors, a theme which will be looked at next in the context of a theoretical model involving authors and children.

The Nature of Author’s Literacy Interactions with Students

Authors were also clear about the kinds of skills, strategies and concepts they shared with students. With 73% of authors mentioning the topic of “where ideas come
from” it was evident from their responses that supporting students in the generation of ideas for their stories was a frequent and valuable exercise.

Of the thousands of interactions with students I have had over the years as an author the question of where ideas come from is an inevitable component of every sharing. I am reminded of Aidan Chambers’ words and his rendering of the intricate relationship, the reliance that exists between authors, readers and texts. Clearly children are telling us something about their lived experience with books: they want to know how and, in many cases, where an idea came from in the formation of a story.

One might be tempted to pass this over as simple curiosity or a “natural” question when one is presented with something new. As someone who interacts with children and the storyworld on a regular basis however, I have found that there seems to be a connection to their questions about ideas and their own stories or intertextual experiences.

Recently, a child from a school group asked about where the idea for a wooden puck came from in *The Hockey Tree* (Ward, 2006). As I related how my brother-in-law had grown up with wooden hockey pucks on the farm I was interrupted two or three times as the child began inserting his own experiences with hockey and how he was busy writing a hockey story. This is a regular occurrence. Whenever I begin to explain the origin of a story children start to share their own ideas and stories. Writers are all on a continuum of writing and both young and experienced writers recognize the significance that ideas and the formation of ideas play in the art of writing. Stories must come from somewhere and thinking about ideas is an extremely important part of story writing. Authors in this study engaged with students about ideas for stories.
Editing/revising (66%) and developing elements of story (52%) were also seen as significant skills for authors to share with students. I appreciated one participant’s comment regarding editing as it has certainly applied in my own experience: “I tell them (students) writing is really about re-writing.” Editing, revision, drafting are such key components of the writing process regardless of where one fits on the writing continuum from novice to experienced writer. That authors cited editing/revision as a place of concern, perhaps even contention for many students confirms my own experience as teacher. While there may be a percentage of students who enjoy revision my experience has been that most are willing to be satisfied with an early draft. At least twelve authors stated that students did not like editing or revising. One author remembered “a boy who said that he would have thrown the manuscript away rather than revising it one more time.”

Seeing, hearing, or corresponding with authors who describe their own revision practices and affirm revision as essential for strong writing may encourage young writers to make further attempts at improving their own editing habits. At least two participants in the national survey stated that teachers had commented how much they appreciated authors talking about the revision process as it provided examples for their students to follow.

Although they figured as smaller percentages, it is interesting to note that some authors talked about reading (37%) and researching (33%) as strategies to support student writing.

Towards the end of 2007 I was offered a contract for a junior novel I had written titled Archipelago. The book takes place among the islands of the Queen Charlottes off
the west coast of British Columbia. I was delighted to receive a contract for all the usual reasons. Yet, above the industry and career purposes I was greatly relieved that my research was about to be honored. My wife and I spent ten days kayaking the Charlottes. For three hours I interviewed a professor whose central research consisted of the geological formation of the islands. I read fishing guides, climate books, and coffee table photo journals on the Queen Charlottes. When I visit schools or write to students I remind them of the necessity of research and reading when creating a story.

The fact that a combined percentage of 70% of participants talked about research and reading indicates that the authors participating in the national survey feel similar about sharing these particular writing tools as I do. Writers of historical fiction or contemporary realistic fiction with settings in international countries often spend an enormous amount of time and effort on research (Hodge, 2007).

Summary of Major Findings

The following is an introductory summary of the major findings.

- 100% of participants engaged in author readings in schools
- 43% of participants engaged in readings, workshops and residencies
- 81% used email, 80% used letters as a means of corresponding
- 77% talked about ideas with students
- 66% discussed the process of editing
- 52% discussed elements of story
- 37% talked about using reading as a tool for writing improvement
- 33% discussed using research
- 15% talked about mentoring students in finding a voice or style
I have reserved discussing the topic of Voice/Style for this final section in order to use it for introducing a theoretical model of authors as mentors of literacy.

**Framing a Theoretical Model**

It is useful at this point to frame the following discussion of authors inviting students into literacy with how scholars have approached the concept of learning. Barbara Rogoff et al. (1996) identified three major, often competing approaches to learning which Wilhelm (2004) has summarized below:

- **The Curriculum-Centered Model:** an approach which is generally seen as more teacher-centered and information based. A metaphor frequently used to describe this method of instruction is viewing children as empty vessels which the teacher fills with knowledge.

- **The Student-Centered Model:** in this approach students are seen as active learners, all learning begins with the student, natural development, and learning is constructing one’s own understandings. If students are provided stimulating environments they will learn naturally.

- **The Learning-Centered Model:** an approach supported by socioculturalism and co-constructivism. Learning is seen as cultural and therefore better facilitated by the assistance of more knowledgeable practitioners. In this model, attention is given to the relationship between the teacher and learner, the community, and the text and the reader. Both Reader Response Theory and Authorial theories support this model (p. 22-28).

It is into this third approach that the concept of authors as literacy mentors primarily falls. I have attempted from the outset of this research to place the phenomenon
of author-mentorship within the social constructivist paradigm. Viewing novice writers and experienced writers on a continuum of learning where a more advanced or skilled writer supports the development of a novice fits well into the learning centered approach.

Thinking back to Lucy Calkins' “touchstone books” in the writing classroom as well as Aidan Chambers’ description of the writer/reader/text relationship, or Rebecca Olness’ call for an awareness of authors as mentors, it is clear that the author has a place in the social construct of knowledge within the educational community.

From a learning-centred approach, the apprenticeship model, there is a deeper connection to be made between young writers and experienced writers yet to be formulated into a theoretical model: authors drawing apprentices into a deeper understanding of voice or style in writing. There are of course, many other ways in which authors draw students into literacy other than helping students discover or develop a sense of voice. Discovering voice or style is simply a useful example of how authors support students’ literacy.

Bakhtin’s (1981) discussion of the heteroglossic nature of speech and the elastic environment are useful concepts to consider at this point. If we think of all the books in print for children or the stories that they have access to, we could generate a tremendous list of voices and styles. Indeed, Bakhtin (1981) wrote that language was formed and transformed by dialogue, in the purposes and uses of authors and speakers:

The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of the complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may
leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile (p. 665).

The authors participating in this study who mentioned style or voice were aware of the complexity and personal nature of securing a writing style. The language of the participants when discussing voice is very interesting. They talk about the need for students to “listen to the voices of other writers” (AO14), and to discover their own “unique” (AO61), “authentic” (AO35) voices.

Two fascinating components can be drawn from the participants’ comments. In the first instance, students are called upon to read and listen to the voices of authors. The participants recognize that there is a significant connection between listening to the voices of other writers on the continuum of writing and discovering your own voice and style.

One of the discussion points I have observed through author list-serves with hundreds of authors across Canada is the value many of them place on sharing the work of other authors at their literacy events or in dialogue with children. Sharing titles and favorite books becomes a common element of the literacy event.

At my own presentations I have made it a habit to arrive early, meet the teacher-librarian (if there is one) and pull twenty to fifty books from the school library. As part of my presentation I take a few minutes to highlight particular books that I have read and enjoyed. Students participate by sharing their own favorites. I encourage students to keep their favorite books close at hand just as Lucy Calkins has reminded us, for within our favorite books are likely held the tones and nuances of voice that we will use to shape our own stories and poems.
Connected with reading is the invitation to students that authors bring to enter the "tension-filled environment," and not wait apprehensively behind their pens. While Bakhtin (1981) recognized the potentially hostile nature of heteroglossia he also suggested that the novelist does not hide or back away from the tension-filled environment but rather engages it.

Participants’ responses demonstrated that some authors are doing likewise, encouraging young writers to "discover" their own voices by courageously entering a place where their voices will be determined by how they react and interact with the internal and external voices of speech. Such specific mentoring lends itself well to the model delineated below.

**The Reader/Author Reciprocal Mediation Model: An Interactive Approach to the Storyworld**

With the rise of digital literacies and the exposure of authors to students via television, movies, radio, the internet and multimedia, the place of the living author in the reading experience is more of a phenomenon than in years past. In light of the findings of this present investigation I have created a model currently titled the reciprocal mediation model. The term *reciprocal* was chosen because I wanted to convey the participants’ sense of themselves and their readers giving and taking from one another through dialoguing about stories. The term *mediation* was appropriate because it is active, it conveys a sense of agency of the text, the author, and the reader. This view allowed me to think of living authors and readers engaged in an active relationship that was formed and supported by a common foundation or starting point, the text itself.
Within the reciprocal mediation model the author is seen as a living, active participant in literacy events, an impacting mentor and agent of the reading and writing processes of school-age children. I draw attention to the author in two, linked domains: within the text during a reading, and outside the text when engaging with children in mentorship.

Authors are active in the transactional experience of reading between readers and texts as the inherent first reader and writer of a created piece of literary art. For in the act of writing the author enters her own story, seeing and believing the world her words have created. The deeper the author enters the storyworld the more vivid the images, the smells and sounds produced. A second, third or fourth reading of the work initiates a different experience. In the process of editing, the author has begun to refine the established images, the believed story, just as a painter dabs bits of snow-white paint on a background of mountains in order to produce an authentic image. Further, the author deepens characters by revisiting their physical, personal, and spiritual elements even as we may come to know friends more intimately through successive engagements.

Throughout a story the author walks beside, behind, and inside her characters sensing each attitude and reaction intuitively.

In a similar way, the reader sojourns in the storyworld, at deeper and deeper levels, believing the environment, characters and forming relationships with them. This kind of sojourning in the same storyworld is reminiscent of Le Guin’s comment that reading is collaborating with a writer’s mind (2008) or Meek’s description (2005) of readers and writers in dialogue. When an author meets with students who have read her
or his work there is a profound shared connection from having sojourned in the same storyworld.

An example of this kind of reading/writing connection can be found in the last days before the release of the seventh book of J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series. In July 2007 the children’s literature world and some of the adult reading world waited with baited breath for the release of the final story. Newspapers were filled with speculation and predictions of the outcome of this extraordinary world. What is significant for the purposes of this paper is the idea that we were all waiting. As readers we could not begin the final journey until our guide took us once again into the storyworld and sojourned with us.

The words of one reader pronounced this relationship succinctly: “Make sure you say hello to Harry, Ron, and Hermione for me!” (Hannock, 2004, p. 1). The familiarity expressed is extraordinary. The reader knew the characters and author well enough to ask her to give greetings. Yet, there was an understanding that the author, Rowling, would be seeing the characters sooner than the reader.

In order to examine the reciprocal mediation model in a different way I have revisited and elaborated on Rosenblatt’s metaphor of the stage. As with Rosenblatt’s original stage, the Reader, Author, and Text are representative titles. In the metaphor I present below I maintain Rosenblatt’s Reader, Author, and Text, yet also provide a more living, interactive feature to their participation in the example. For in the reciprocal mediation model the three not only theoretically meet, as in the author inherent indwelling the text, but rather the three are physically present together in a literacy event.
Elaborating on Rosenblatt’s image I now imagine a literacy event, the Author present by the Reader’s invitation, to meet and talk about the Text. The metaphor is still representative in that just as the findings of this study demonstrate, authors and readers meet in a variety of ways, not only face to face. Further, the metaphor of the stage comes alive with a living dialogue.

In Rosenblatt’s image the Author, Reader and Text, remained static for the purposes of demonstrating their role throughout literary history. In the reciprocal mediation model however, the reader initiates a dialogue not unlike the hundreds of exchanges I have experienced myself or the millions of interactions that have taken place over the years between readers and writers of stories.

Once again I see a darkened stage where sit the Author, the Reader, and the Text. The spotlight, which for ages past has focused on one of the three now sheds more equitable light. For here, the Author, Reader and Text exchange spotlight time so quickly the only light possible is a general, encompassing light that acknowledges the importance of all the players at any given moment. In the reciprocal mediation model it is the reader who initiates interaction and a dialogue ensues.

“I enjoyed this book,” the Reader says tentatively. “I could really see it, the ocean, the grasses, the mountains.”

The Author nods. “It was very real for me as well.”

The Reader runs her finger over several lines and smiles. “It reminded me of Tofino and Long Beach.”
Sucking in a breath, the Author leans forward. “Tofino! I didn’t think of that. But yes, I see what you mean. The water goes out so far and the beaches are extraordinary. I was picturing something like the Bay of Fundy.”

“There are long grasses in Tofino,” the Reader adds.

Squeezing his eyes shut, the Author says, “You’re right. I’d forgotten. I was there for a wedding some time ago. The sand gathers around the roots.”

“Just like the world in here,” says the Reader tapping the Text.

“Just like that world,” the Author agrees. Then he adds, “Colder in winter though.”

“Yes,” the Reader says. “Not the same. It looks the same, but there are differences like temperature.”

“And the mountain doesn’t rise so quickly above the bay in Tofino,” the Author comments.

The Reader thinks for a moment. “True. And when you just said that I had to take a memory of the mountain in the book and stick it on to the Tofino image in my head. That works pretty good.”

“Clever,” said the Author. “You should use that technique when you write. It will make wonderful description. It is always nice to meet someone who has been to the same world and walked in it.

Flipping several pages the Reader asks, “Who do you think is stronger, the boy or the girl?”

“Well,” the Author starts. “The boy is taller...”
"No, he’s not," counters the Reader. She lifts the open book so the Author can see. "It says so in the Text. Right there. 'Almost the same height...' she read.

The Author squints at the Text. "It says, almost. So, the boy is taller."

"Almost means barely," replies the Reader.

"Fair enough," says the Author. "The height difference between the two should not affect their ability in a fight. In my mind however, I somehow see the boy as bigger."

The Reader nods. "I know what you mean. I think of the boy as less wiry than the girl. The boy is thicker."

"But not too thick," says the Author.

"No," agrees the Reader.

In the reciprocal mediation model there is a profound sense of collaboration between the Author, the Reader, and the Text. Both the Author and Reader have their own mental images of the setting of the story yet through sharing are able to acknowledge the strengths of each other’s image by relating it to the Text. The Text is the common ground, the starting place, the shared storyworld for the Author and Reader to formulate their discussion. Similarly, when a discrepancy arose regarding the height of one of the main characters, they referred to the Text in order to build on their positions.

It is not as if the Text provides all the answers or is the final authority on visualization, however. A story can be only the framework of its pieces. Imagination is the glory of both the Reader and the Writer, and each one who comes to the Text must add flesh to the skeletons no matter how gracefully they are described. What the Reader and Author enjoyed on stage was how their differing images brought their own
understandings of the story into a more completed picture. It was also an affirmation that they had sojourned in the same storyworld.

The dialogue between the Author and Reader also offered some rather interesting reading/writing connections. In sharing their mental images of the storyworld, the participants were affirming each other as readers and writers. The Author was affirmed as a writer by hearing how the Reader's image of Tofino was similar to the storyworld, a telling compliment to the Author’s skill as a writer. The Reader was affirmed by the Author as being a skillful reader and for her abilities as a writer for using such advantageous writing tools such as pasting a memory into another image to create a whole new picture in words.

The model I am advocating calls for readers and writers to enter into collaborative spaces, dialogues and letters, workshops and question periods where they can delve deeper into stories, create personal meaning and develop as readers and writers.

Living conversations between authors and readers open opportunities to pursue the very things raised by authors in the national survey: characters, setting, themes, engagement in the literacy process, ideas, research, among many. One of the most significant benefits of the collaborative model is that the literacy event in which the interaction takes place strongly supports the connections between reading and writing. It is natural for an author to talk about her writing process when answering a question regarding a character in her story. Authors often make comments such as “When I was writing this part I sensed the character needed a strong voice in order to stand up to his father.” The dialogue of process and product flows back and forth providing readers and
authors an exceptional framework in which to think about the completed story and the
creation of stories.

**Conclusion**

Many students across Canada have adult guests visit their classrooms and schools. Over 11 years of teaching in elementary and middle schools I witnessed numerous guest speakers in schools. Firefighters and police officers tend to be at the top of the list although I have also seen mountaineers, WWII veterans, Olympic athletes, professional sports athletes, and politicians. What separates the guest speakers listed above from children’s authors who make school appearances, however, can be found in the purposes and content of the visit. Indeed, as one participant (AO2) said: “...any expert is a resource to a classroom, and authors happen to be experts in what a classroom is all about becoming literate.”

As demonstrated in the findings of this dissertation, children’s authors intentionally share the writing process with students both virtually and through in-person interactions such as school visits, writing workshops, and conferences. Authors were clear that they shared significant elements of the writing craft such as constructing stories, character development, and shaping ideas. The content of school visits centred on literacy, reading or writing, or both, an activity that is given the most amount of minutes in the curriculum by provincial governments across Canada. Students and children’s writers share a common thread: they are all on a continuum of writing with the intent of becoming better.

While the firefighters, mountaineers, and police officers I have witnessed as guest speakers have been both educational and entertaining, I have yet to see any who intended
to recruit the majority of the listeners to their particular force. Society simply does not need a majority of the citizens to be firefighters. Rather, most school guests come to share their expertise, broaden students’ thinking about a particular occupation or inform students of a societal danger such as house fires, or internet bullying. There is more telling than sharing at school guest appearances.

Author visits, however, are made to enrich a shared profession, the skills and passion needed to communicate words through language. Literacy is a goal of Canadian society. There is an immediate connection between authors and readers for both have traveled in the storyworld, explored universes and space within the confines of pages. Society does indeed need its citizens to be literate and educators work endlessly towards this goal.

Authors as mentors of school age children’s literacy fit well within the social constructivist paradigm. Authors, teachers, students, at times parents, come together in a single place, for a moment in time, a focused time on a literacy event. As more knowledgeable experts in literacy, authors can draw students deeper into literacy by sharing skills, how to generate ideas, developing characters, setting and encouraging reading and research when writing.

On November 7, 2005, four award-winning authors presented a readers theatre selection to a large theatre audience of children. Sharon Creech, Avi, Sarah Weeks, and Walter Dean Myers, read selected pieces from their work in the form of a readers theatre with each author participating in the reading of each others’ work (Glass, 2007). Each author was interviewed and described how valuable they felt the experience was for themselves and for the audience.
An interesting component to the above anecdote is that I watched portions of this performance via a link from *School Library Journal* under the heading of Curriculum Connections (*SLJ*, retrieved December 13, 2007). While these four writers are not Canadian they do represent some of the findings of this present study: authors on a stage, sharing, interacting with the audience and their texts, for the purposes of deepening the literacy experiences of children. Further, that the internet is being used by schools, young writers, and experienced writers to share their literacy.

I conclude this section with the final words of the author/narrator in Adrienne Kress’s *Alex and the Ironic Gentleman* (2007) as she “sits” with her fellow sojourner of the storyworld, the reader:

> So that, I am sad to say, is the end, my friend, but let’s not finish just yet. Let us take a last moment to enjoy the view of the two ships sailing away over calm seas. The blue and gold of the frigate, the HMS *Valiant*, with the orange of the water wings, and the red and black of the brig infamously known as, or I suppose now it will simply be famously known as, the *Ironic Gentleman*. Let’s watch as they sail further and further away toward the horizon. There they go, my friend, right into the sunset. And even though it happens to be overcast at the moment, let’s pretend it isn’t, because it’s just that much nicer” (pp. 386-387).

**Limitations**

This study has focused on the point of view of Canadian children’s authors. Still missing from the larger picture is what students have to say about their interactions with authors. While authors made mention of students’ comments it is important to hear from students themselves how their experiences with authors have impacted their literacies. In
addition this research is limited in that it does not contain the direct comments of teacher librarians and educators who organize and sponsor author events in schools.

While I have argued that children’s authors frequently use the internet and so chose to conduct a survey via email, it may be the case that there is an underrepresented group of Canadian children’s authors who do not use email whose opinions remain unknown. This research is limited to those authors who responded via email. It is unknown how the results may have changed if the survey had been conducted via regular post.

It may also be considered a limitation that various genres of writers (fiction/non fiction and readership range) were grouped together in the call for participation. It is not clear how writers of juvenile children’s fiction, for example, may interact differently with their readership than writers of young adult information books.

**Educational Implications**

**For Educators**

This study is the only one of its kind to date that explores the nature and extent of Canadian children’s authors’ interactions with students. While authors visit schools and engage in school environments almost any given month of the school year across the country, there has been little collective knowledge about the contributions of Canadian authors to literacy as mentors. Educators may use this study to view authors as members of the educational community and within the theoretical framework of literacy mentors, encouraging students further into their respective zones of proximal development.

Arts based programs exist throughout Canada. For those school environments that seek to incorporate meaningful arts interactions for their students, this dissertation
provides some useful data on what authors are capable of bringing to a school’s literacy program.

In addition, based on the findings of this study educators will be well advised to research the author base in Canada in order to choose an appropriate specialist for their school. With almost 70% of the respondents making use of websites, educators will likely be able to start their research on authors for their schools with webpages.

For Researchers

This research presents some initial clues and provides scaffolding for further work on the millions of raw data communications between young writers and experienced writers. At a time when scholarship takes seriously the personal literacies and multiliteracies of children, this research draws attention to the out of school and in school personal writing and reading habits of school age children.

Further, by using interviews and a national survey this research provides multiple approaches to thinking about authors’ interactions with students in Canada. This research can be used as a support document for further studies of children’s authors in Canada.

Recommendations for Further Research

Increasingly, North American schools are becoming culturally and linguistically diversified (Gunderson, 2007). One area of research that deserves further attention is the mentorship possibilities between First Nations and other minority children’s authors and their readership. Currently, we have a growing number of authors who represent a minority group and who write on topics related to their culture. Paul Yee comes to mind, an author who writes extensively about the Chinese and Canadian-Chinese experience in Canada. *The Bone Collector’s Son* (2003) tells the tale of a Chinese family living in
Vancouver in the early 1900's. Further research is necessary to explore how minority authors are mentoring young writers in Canada. Providing literacy mentorship to the next generation of young minority writers could potentially empower and provide a greater voice for cultures represented in our classrooms.

More research is necessary to discover how authors can effectively support literacy learning in schools. Author readings, workshops and residencies have been investigated. Yet there is little or no research being conducted on the effects of writing initiatives such as the Vancouver Public Library Book Camp.


Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association.


Rowling, J.K. (2003). There are books: And then there is Harry Potter. Interview with Jeremy Paxman. BBC News.


Spencer, Margaret Meek. (1986). Nourishing and sustaining reading. In, Tovey, D.R., & Kerber, J.E. (Eds) *Roles in literacy learning*. Newark, DE. International Reading Association. (pp.62-63).


APPENDIX A: MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA FOR CANSCAIP

2.1 Membership shall be open to all professional writers and illustrators who satisfy the Membership Committee of their compliance with the following requirements:

(a) that the writer or illustrator has had a trade book for children published by a commercial or a university press or in such a form as recognized as legitimate by the book trade; and/or has had one full length play or script or two short plays or scripts for children published or produced; and/or has had published at least four short stories, articles or poems for children; and/or has illustrated at least four book covers or chapter books,
(b) that the writer or illustrator is a Canadian citizen or a landed immigrant and is a resident of B.C. or has been within the last two years. E-books must be professionally edited and the author must have been paid for e-publication. Self-published authors may be admitted for membership under exceptional circumstances such as considerable peer recognition or professional status.

2.2 The Membership Committee shall:
(a) accept or reject all applications for membership by a majority vote;
(b) make recommendations to the Executive concerning rescission of the membership of any person; and
(c) be empowered to waive any of the above criteria by unanimous vote.

2.3 Following a decision by the Membership Committee:
(a) a rejected applicant may appeal the decision of the Membership Committee to the Executive, whose ruling shall be final;
(b) a rejected applicant may re-apply for admission to CWILL-B.C. each or any year thereafter;
(c) a member of the Membership Committee itself may request a review by the Executive of an acceptance or rejection. (CWILL, 2006).
APPENDIX B: CALL FOR PARTICIPATION FOR THE PILOT STUDY

Dear Children’s Authors:

I am conducting research on Canadian children’s authors as a part of my doctoral thesis. Dr. Lee Gunderson from the Language and Literacy Department of the University of British Columbia is the principal investigator. The title of the project is, Author Interactions with Children and Young People. The purpose of the research is to identify the nature and extent of author interactions with students. It is the expectation of the investigators that this initial study will provide the background material for a survey to be given to a larger group of Canadian children’s authors. The Children’s Writers and Illustrators of British Columbia (CWILL) organization was chosen as a representative sample of Canadian children’s authors. Ten authors will be randomly selected from those who respond to this email. The selection process will be stratified to ensure gender, genre, and readership balance. Participation in the study will include and interview with me, no more than one hour in length. The place and time of the interview can be negotiated depending on your needs. The responses that you make in the interview may be reported according to the age group for which you typically write but your name will not be included in the analysis. Your published or unpublished titles will not be reported nor will you be identified with a publisher. The interview will be audio-taped. Data gained from this investigation will be reported in my Ph.D thesis and may also be reported in academic or educational journals or conferences. You may refuse to answer any question or to stop the interview at any time. Withdrawing from the project will not result in any negative consequences for you. There is no persona risk for you by participating in this research. If you are interested and willing to participate, please respond directly to this email (Ward, 2004).
1) Classrooms as an Interactive Space for Authors

P 1: .doc - 1:1 [I have some contact still thro..] (11:11)
Codes: [Classrooms as Interactive Space]

I have some contact still through teachers who are my friends. (I used to be a teacher.) Sometimes I help out or I have a group of students critique a new manuscript. So I mostly work with young people in a school environment.

P 3: .doc - 3:1 [I visit them in the schools. W..] (8:8)
Codes: [Classrooms as Interactive Space]

I visit them in the schools. Writers workshops, and that’s the most fun is doing workshops. And what I have done, is sometimes the kids have emailed me with other pieces of writing they have done and asked for my feedback and suggestions. It’s mostly the keen sort, and we email back and forth a few times.

P 4: .doc - 4:1 [Some children will...children al..] (7:9)
Codes: [Classrooms as Interactive Space]

Some children will...children always read up on my books, and so I’m often asked to go speak with a class that’s perhaps younger than the book was aimed at. And yet there they are. Of course, I’ll go and do it.

And so how I interact with children, is... I interact with children on a face-to-face basis

P 4: .doc - 4:7 [I also speak to kids within th..] (21:21)
Codes: [Classrooms as Interactive Space]

I also speak to kids within the classroom. And that tends to be weighed more attractive or calm. We have to physically set up in the classroom.
APPENDIX D: CALL FOR PARTICIPATION AND CONSENT FOR THE NATIONAL SURVEY

[email sent to all authors]

Dear fellow Canadian children’s authors.

After an enormous amount of work I’m excited to invite you to participate in my doctoral thesis on Canadian children’s authors. Please find the questionnaire below. For those who choose to participate, there is no attachment. Simply hit “reply” and fill in your answers. One of our members from CWILL (Children’s Writers and Illustrators of BC) has graciously tested this for me already. As an added note, I used members listed on the Canadian Children’s Book Centre as well as CANSCAIP.

Best, and thanks to all who choose to do the questionnaire. It should take 20 minutes of your time.

I have already found a tremendous amount of interest in this work from educators at Universities, schools, libraries, and government. I sincerely hope it that it benefits us as Canadian Children’s Authors.

David Ward (The Hockey Tree, Scholastic Canada 2006)

David Ward (Co-Investigator)
Dr. Lee Gunderson (Principal Investigator)
Title of Research: Authors as Mentors: Supporting the Next Generation of Writers

Call for Participation

Dear Colleague:

I invite you to take part in a study of Canadian authors of children’s books and their interactions with students and schools by completing and returning the questionnaire contained within the body of this email. The questionnaire is part of my doctoral studies program at UBC. I am conducting research on Canadian Children’s authors as part of my thesis. The purpose of the research is to identify the nature and extent of author interactions with students and how authors are contributing to children’s literacy. A pilot study conducted in 2005 revealed that the participating authors engaged in supporting student literacy in a variety of forms. Using the data gained from the pilot, the investigators created a questionnaire for a much larger group of Canadian children’s authors to observe the phenomenon of author mentorship on a national scale.

Participants
Authors publicly listed on the Canadian Society of Authors, Illustrators and Performers (CANSCAIP) website were chosen as a representative sample of Canadian children’s
authors. We are looking for authors of children’s fiction, creative non-fiction, biography, non fiction, and poetry who write for children in pre school to grade 12. Participation in the study will include completing a questionnaire.

**Time Commitment**
The questionnaire takes approximately 20 minutes to complete and has been placed in the body of this email as seen below for your convenience and so that you do not have to open an attachment. An attachment of the questionnaire has been included should you want to print it. I would also be happy to mail you a hard copy with a self addressed stamped envelope should you wish to complete the questionnaire with a pen on paper. Simply reply to this email requesting a hard copy in the subject box and your mailing address.

**Confidentiality and Misuse of Data**
The questionnaire is anonymous and you are asked not to place your name on any part of it. A code will be assigned to your questionnaire until the publication of results for statistical purposes. We will not report any information which could single out any individuals. We guarantee that we will not use any of the data in such a way that they will stereotype or disadvantage any group or present the data in a way that could allow others to misuse them.

**Availability of Results**
As soon as our preliminary results are available in the form of an article, we will post them on our website: www.davidward.ca. We also plan to post a revised copy of the questionnaire on this website.

**Consent**
If you complete and submit the questionnaire, we will assume that you consent to your questionnaire becoming part of our data set. You are, of course, free not to complete the questionnaire or to withdraw your permission before your data become part of the computer file.

**Risks**
We believe that there are no risks associated with this project. The questions have no right or wrong answers. They merely reflect different beliefs and experiences of Canadian children’s authors and their literary interactions with students. Individuals will not be identifiable, even to the UBC research team.

**Inquiries and Concerns**
If you have any concerns about your rights or treatment as a research subject you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-**. Questions about the completing the questionnaire may be directed to David Ward at: ** or to Dr. Lee Gunderson. **
Thank you for your time. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

David Ward (PhD Candidate)
Department of Language and Literacy, UBC.
Vancouver BC. V6T 1Z4
APPENDIX E: LIST OF ORIGINAL CODES CREATED IN ATLAS.TI
(NATIONAL SURVEY)

Code-Filter: All

HU: authorcomments
File: [C:\Documents and Settings\Owner\My Documents\Scientific
Software\ATLAS\TextB...\authorcomments.hpr5]
Edited by: Super
Date/Time: 13/02/08 09:43:44 AM

- audience
- author as creator
- authors in schools
- awards
- benefits of correspondence
- building student confidence
- classroom teacher involvement
- comments regarding the next book
- connecting with famous person
- creativity
- drafting/rewriting/editing
- elements of fiction
- encouragement
- fact versus fiction
- gender
- ideas
- impacting literacy
- mentorship
- money
- number of letters
- organizing and prewriting
- passion for writing
- plans/outlines
- practice writing
- publishing
- reading as a strategy
- research
- story beginnings/middles/ends
- storyworld
- student lack of knowledge of literacy
- student request for author help
- student responses to a book
- student? on becoming a writer
- style and voice
- teaching how to write stories
- time commitment
- tricks of the trade
- website- help sales
- website-an informational tool
- website-starting
- website difficulty
- websites-building relationship with readers
- writers block
- writing exercises and activities
- writing from personal life
- writing is work
- writing life
APPENDIX F: EXAMPLE OF OUTPUT FROM ATLAS CODES

A01: AS I MOST OFTEN TALK ABOUT PICTUREBOOKS I GENERALLY BEGIN BY DEFINING THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF ILLUSTRATED BOOKS AND BY DEFINING WHAT WORDS DO AND WHAT PICTURES DO. NEXT I TALK ABOUT LEVELS OF CONCEPTS AND PLOTS FOR THE DIFFERENT FORMS AND DIFFERENT AUDIENCES. I DO SOME EXERCISES IN CLOSE READINGS OF SOME PICTUREBOOKS, EXERCISES IN MAKING A TEXT DUMMY WITH PREVIOUSLY WRITTEN MATERIALS, THEN SOME STORYBOARD EXERCISES. ALL OF THESE EXERCISES ARE FOR BOTH WRITERS AND ILLUSTRATORS. AT SOME POINT DEPENDING UPON INTERESTS AND THE GROUPS I WILL DO SPECIFIC WRITING AND/OR DRAWING EXERCISES THAT FOCUS ON CREATING A PICTUREBOOK. I ALSO DO SOME EXERCISES LOOKING AT THE TEXT/IMAGE RELATIONSHIPS IN A VARIETY OF PICTUREBOOKS.

A02: I talk about writing without censoring myself for a first draft, and encourage writing a first draft in longhand. I suggest not looking at what you’ve written for several days (unless there’s a school deadline!), and then settling into the rewrite by reading what you’ve written aloud.

A03: yes: mainly organization, preplanning, not being intimidated, and collecting info on any interesting topic "just in case".
APPENDIX G: BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD APPROVAL
(PILOT STUDY)

Certificate of Approval

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT INVESTIGATOR</th>
<th>DEPARTMENT</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gunderson, L.P.</td>
<td>Language and Literacy Educ</td>
<td>B04-0227</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UBC Campus,

Ward, David, Language and Literacy Educ

Title:
Author Interactions with Children and Young People

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT TITLE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>START DATE</th>
<th>END DATE</th>
<th>APPROVED FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>April 2, 2004</td>
<td>March 22, 2004</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The protocol describing the above-named project has been reviewed by the Committee and the experimental procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board by one of the following:

Dr. James Frankish, Chair,
Dr. Cay Holbrook, Associate Chair,
Dr. Susan Rowley, Associate Chair

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the experimental procedures.
APPENDIX H: BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD APPROVAL
(NATIONAL SURVEY)

The University of British Columbia
Office of Research Services
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road,
Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - MINIMAL RISK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:</th>
<th>INSTITUTION / DEPARTMENT:</th>
<th>UBC BREB NUMBER:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lee P. Gunderson</td>
<td>UBC/Education/Language and Literacy Education</td>
<td>H06-03539</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other locations where the research will be conducted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):

- Carl Leggo
- David Ward

SPONSORING AGENCIES:

N/A

PROJECT TITLE:

Authors As Mentors: Canadian Writers Supporting the Next Generation

CERTIFICATE EXPIRY DATE: March 28, 2008

DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Name</th>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consent Forms: main study consent and questionnaire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire, Questionnaire Cover Letter, Tests:</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>March 25, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>February 25, 2007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The application for ethical review and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board and signed electronically by one of the following:

Dr. Peter Suedfeld, Chair
Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair
Dr. Arminee Kazanjian, Associate Chair
Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Associate Chair
Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair
APPENDIX I: TRANSCRIPT OF AUTHOR SURVEYS IN WORD DOCUMENT

Note: Some responses or portions of responses have been removed to protect participants’ identities.

A01: AS I MOST OFTEN TALK ABOUT PICTUREBOOKS I GENERALLY BEGIN BY DEFINING THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF ILLUSTRATED BOOKS AND BY DEFINING WHAT WORDS DO AND WHAT PICTURES DO. NEXT I TALK ABOUT LEVELS OF CONCEPTS AND PLOTS FOR THE DIFFERENT FORMS AND DIFFERENT AUDIENCES. I DO SOME EXERCISES IN CLOSE READINGS OF SOME PICTUREBOOKS, EXERCISES IN MAKING A TEXT DUMMY WITH PREVIOUSLY WRITTEN MATERIALS, THEN SOME STORYBOARD EXERCISES. ALL OF THESE EXERCISES ARE FOR BOTH WRITERS AND ILLUSTRATORS. AT SOME POINT DEPENDING UPON INTERESTS AND THE GROUPS I WILL DO SPECIFIC WRITING AND/OR DRAWING EXERCISES THAT FOCUS ON CREATING A PICTUREBOOK. I ALSO DO SOME EXERCISES LOOKING AT THE TEXT/IMAGE RELATIONSHIPS IN A VARIETY OF PICTUREBOOKS.

A02: I talk about writing without censoring myself for a first draft, and encourage writing a first draft in longhand. I suggest not looking at what you’ve written for several days (unless there’s a school deadline!), and then settling into the rewrite by reading what you’ve written aloud.

A03: yes: mainly organization, preplanning, not being intimidated, and collecting info on any interesting topic “just in case”.

A04: (I am usually invited to talk to students grade-five and upwards through high school) Students are always surprised that the contents of a diary that I kept when I was eleven could actually have been interesting enough or important enough to ever end up being a book. Many are astounded that they could actually have anything valuable enough to say now that could ever result in anyone being truly interested in it in their future. I don’t have “tricks of the trade” that I’m aware of. So I encourage students to keep journals and make scrap books with photos or drawings about their lives. It doesn’t have to be an overwhelming every-day journal. I suggest that even writing about a family reunion or about their relatives, or March break----might seem less daunting a project but it’s very worth while and who knows maybe they’ll find someday that they have material for a book. I explain that my process in writing “*****” was going back and reliving day-by-day (in sequential order) that summer of 1977 when my parents shipped me off to ****. My diary and captioned photo album allowed me to return to that time and to experience everything as if it was happening and as if I was still eleven. I encourage that they too can actually be published now in numerous ways. I suggest writing letters to the editor of their local newspapers about articles or about events that might not have even been covered by the paper. I advise them to write and send reader-letters to magazines like National Geographic or to send book reviews to various Young Adult magazines that want pieces from YA readers. They are constantly amazed that someone, an editor
somewhere, might actually be interested in publishing what they have to say. I recommend they print-off some of their dialogues that they have with friends via email or chatting and put them in a binder. We used to be able to keep volumes of posted letters. But now they are lost in the instant. Sometimes we message or email something that was brilliant or important and it is sad that it is lost forever if someone doesn’t save it. Sure you can save it to disc but as technology constantly changes or you move from using Outlook Express to Outlook etc...you might not be able to open them in the future.

A05: I have a workshop in which I divide the students into groups of author / illustrator / editor / art director. The challenge is to work together to write and illustrate a part of a picture book (they must have an outline of the complete story but develop only 2 spreads).

A06: yes. I talk about the process of mapping out a story, character development, and incorporating your personal life experiences into the story.

A01: IN THE BEGINNING EVERYONE WANTS TO KNOW HOW TO GET PUBLISHED. EVENTUALLY IN DISCUSSION THE GROUP GETS PAST THAT FIRST FASCINATION AND ON TO THE IMPORTANT ISSUES OF WHAT CONSTITUTES A GOOD IDEA AND WHERE DOES IT COME FROM. ANOTHER FREQUENT QUESTION HAS TO DO WITH STYLE- HOW DO YOU DEVELOP YOUR OWN STYLE OR FIND YOUR OWN VOICE? GENERALLY I SAY WRITE A LOT, DRAW A LOT—YOU JUST HAVE TO DO A LOT OF WORK TO FIND YOUR VOICE AND STYLE. IF YOU DO THE WORK YOUR VOICE AND STYLE WILL EMERGE YOU WILL GET BEYOND BEING DERIVATIVE.

A02: Students usually ask where ideas come from or how to get through the middle, where things bog down.

A03: nothing strikes me.

A04: I’ve found that unless the students have a great librarian or teachers that are active participants in the discussions that the students don’t know what to ask at all. They don’t even know what “writing process” means. They might ask “How long did it take to type ‘*****’? Did you have to type it yourself?” When there hasn’t been the active support of teachers or a librarian I find that when I talk about process the students want to know “How much money do you make?” and I explain about royalties and what an advance is. Or they end up telling me completely irrelevant to anything and often hilarious stories about their lives (well actually I always get some of those and for me it’s often the best part of the day!) When there is a wonderful adult educator present...and when the students have had guidance or have prepared questions or even have learned a little background--- the value of my visit and what they and myself take away is a billion fold.
A05: They have no idea that so much and so many people can be involved.
A06: they ask about time commitments, writers block, how to get published, how much money you can make.

Question 4

A01
FOR MANY IT IS VERY PERSONAL, VERY HELPFUL. FOR OTHERS, THE BORN STORYTELLERS, IT IS STORYTELLING, MAKING UP A NEW WORLD.

A02: Students are often surprised at how long it takes to write a ‘real’ book. They are reluctant in their own work to rewrite and the enormity of what that task really means only confirms their reluctance. They speak of having a good idea but running out of steam as they get part way into the story.

A04: Surprisingly, fear of censorship comes up often and also fear of not being able to write what they truly feel because they will get into trouble. This is also why many do not want to keep journals, especially journals that a teacher is going to read or might be discovered by a sibling or a parent. They always want to know if I got in trouble for the diary I kept when I was 11. Students often express that they think the first draft of their work is good enough and they can’t comprehend when I explain to them how many drafts, re-writes and edits a manuscript faces before being published.

A05: They usually are surprised at the amount of work, effort and consideration that goes into the creative process.

A06: their amazing imaginations, creativity.

Question 9

A01: HOW TO GET PUBLISHED, WHAT TO PUT IN A PORTFOLIO.

A02: They don’t usually ask writing questions in correspondence. They tell how they feel about a particular book, they tell me what I should be writing next and they ask personal questions.

A03: they don’t really ask.

A04: They don’t usually ask about the writing process. The majority of mail is to tell me about how funny they found “****” or that they have done a book report on “****”. I have received requests to read and comment on their stories or even manuscripts. Twice I’ve been asked to proof read essays and once I was sent a high school English paper
which had received a failing grade and I was asked by the student to write to their English teacher (however the English teacher was correct).

A05: Most letters are in response to a presentation and just want to tell me they enjoyed it.
A06: I receive more thank you’s than actual questions. If anything, when is the sequel coming out?

Question 10

A01: READ A LOT, WRITE A LOT AND IF YOU ALSO PLAN TO ILLUSTRATED- DRAW A LOT- YOU HAVE TO DO THE WORK LOTS OF READING AND LOTS OF WRITING AND/OR DRAWING.

A02: I’m not sure that elementary age children – my normal fan base – are interested in clear specifics about writing. I think they want encouragement and confirmation that writing a book is something a normal human can do. I always tell them to read as much as they can – there is no better way to learn how to write.

A03: what I say: see above they don’t ask much about writing.

A04: The questions I have received tend to not be about specific processes but are more along the line of “is this good” “is there any hope for me-----should I finish the story/book I started writing”.

A05: My focus is more on illustration (I should perhaps not be participating, but think that it is as valid as the writing).

A06: I haven’t conversed with anyone about the writing process.

A01: I DON’T HAVE ONE- I DON’T HAVE A HUGE CANADIAN READERSHIP- I CHOSEN TO PUT MY EFFORTS INTO OTHER AREAS. HOWEVER, I THINK A WEBSITE IS AN IMPORTANT MEANS OF BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH READERS AND WRITERS.

A02: I have a very basic website with no fancy animation or blog features, but it serves as an introduction to me, and to my books. Kids doing a project or teachers wanting more information on a particular title can easily refer to the website, or contact me directly, all things that would have been much more difficult if relying on libraries and snail mail.

A03: I have one but I don’t get any responses from it.
A04: If I didn’t have a website where readers could contact me I can only surmise that I would have had no contact and no interaction with any readers as I have only received emails from my website and have never received any other kind of contact.

A05: They are damned hard to maintain and update. Also hard to target. I am currently speaking to a designer to make mine more effective but fear the cost to do so. I want it to be informative and helpful to the creative individual, but at the same time because sales keep you going...keep the books in the sphere of attention. Almost impossible I would guess, but must try.

A06: Am in the process of setting up a website now.

A07: I certainly discuss the process and craft of writing. In my residencies, I focus on building a story in scenes, visualizing a scene prior to writing, the tools of scene writing- narrative description of character, setting and action, dialogue and character thoughts and feelings. I also use drama and storyboarding as tools for understanding how scenes are written.

A08: yes.

A09: I SHOW THE CHILDREN HOW TO MAKE A PICTURE BOOK; HOW TO USE ROUGH DRAWINGS BEFORE DOING A FINISHED PAINTING.

A010: I pass on creative writing techniques in workshops with teachers, student teachers, and students. (Some of these have been recorded in a doctoral thesis here in Ireland.) Use of images - postcards, magazines etc to help description. Visualisation techniques (the movie in your head). Research, e.g. books, libraries, take care on the Internet as not all information is correct, travel to your settings, learn the skills, languages, religion etc of your characters (e.g. I met with the Muslim community, fasted for the whole of Ramadan, learned to pray in Arabic, and read the Qu’ran to empathise with my Muslim characters. Read the work of other writers in your field e.g. if you want to write battle-scenes, read books in which there are battle scenes. Note how the professional writer works. Use of poetic images to enhance your text, as Ray Bradbury says “feed your Muse, read poetry weekly.” **Read books about writing by writers, e.g. Ray Bradbury’s Zen in the Art of Writing.** **Grammar tips: care about adjectives (“does this adjective weaken the noun?”), active instead of passive verbs. Trimming sentences. Revision.

A011: inspiration (where do ideas come from), publishing process, revision/editing (e.g. how do you let go of paragraphs or pages you’ve worked really hard on!

A07: Students want to know how long it takes me to write, where I get my ideas, and how many times I have to “do it over”. Surprise comment: Mrs. M., did you write each one of those books yourself? and he meant did I hand type, bind, and produce each separate book. Surprise comment no. 2: “Oh, so I get it, the story is about a person, really, not a bunch of stuff you just make up.” In response to an overwhelming amount of time spent on character development and the learning, changing or growing of a character throughout a story...
A08: Writer’s block is often asked, as is how to get published.

A09: STUDENTS USUALLY ASK HOW LONG IT TAKES ME TO WRITE A STORY. I SOMETIMES GET SURPRISE QUESTIONS ON COPYRIGHT (FROM 10 YEAR OLDS!) WHEN I MENTION THAT MY BOOKS ARE BASED ON FOLKTALES.

A010: The standard question is: Where do you get your ideas from? I invariably say, “I have no idea. They just arrive in my head. Where do you get yours from?” “The television.” Who was my favourite evil character? (This really threw me.)

A011: they ask about above
they ask for sequels - that surprised me because I had no idea kids today wanted series (I always thought it was the publishers driving that, and maybe it was originally, but now it seems to be consumer driven). they ask how much of the content is based on fact. they ask how long it took to write (this frequently comes up). is it me on the cover? who is she, how can they meet her? do I have a belly ring? (girl on the cover does!) did I always want to be a writer.

A07: I always start out asking them what’s hard and what’s fun about writing. Hard: getting ideas, endings, beginnings, middles, deciding what to put in, putting in enough details, and my hand hurts. Fun: you get to make things up, you get to tell what you think and feel, you get to be in a different world, you don’t have to do math.

A08: Want me to read what they wrote. They also want to know how to get published.

A09: THEY MOSTLY SAY LITTLE ABOUT THEIR WRITING BUT THAT THEY DO LIKE TO DRAW.

A010: hate revision. They don’t like the work aspect of writing!

A011: they don’t like to revise/rewrite/toss/edit, they “don’t think they could ever do something that long”. they want to know how I learned to type fast enough to do a whole book! sometimes they say they want to be a writer.

A07: Where do you get your ideas? Was what happened in your books really true? How did you get your book to be so long.

A08: Not usually, it’s more about my books.
A010: Usually they ask about the publishing process! How do I get an agent? How do I get a publisher? The second most common question is about research. E.g. where can I find information about myths and legends?

A011: mostly whether I will do a sequel. sometimes how long it took to write
- where I got the ideas.

A07: I tell them that writing for a writer is what soccer is for a soccer player: the most fun thing they can think to do on a Monday afternoon. Stories and telling stories is a way of being yourself and learning about yourself. Students want to know if they could be a writer one day. Yes. Even if they get b's? Yes. They want to know if someone tells them it’s bad, is it bad? Bad is never a good way to describe anything- what is bad about the piece of writing, what needs work. Writing can always be fixed. It's called revision.

A010: Quite frankly, they want to know more about publishing.
A011: I think they really want to know that it is possible for a “regular” person to write a book! Authors still seem inaccessible to many of them, and they bring scraps of paper to have signed when they can’t afford a book...they see you as someone special and different. They like when I tell them that I was partly inspired by a friend who published travel memoirs. They are interested when I tell them that I started with short stories and contests, and that they can do the same right now with things like the Toronto Star Short Story Contest for kids.

A07: I have been working with one student for four years. She recently submitted a mystery story she started writing in grade 11. We haven’t heard the results.
A08: 2-6months. I don’t know.

A011: no, and again, I would be in a tricky spot professionally because of being a teacher.

A01: GIVING BACK- AS SIMPLE AS THAT. I’M A FIRM BELIEVER IN MENTORSHIP.

A02: Many moments of laughter. And of course the good feeling that I’m passing along a friendly helping hand to kids who love books.

A03: I get feedback on what they understand and on what level, to keep my
writing aimed as it should be. I am especially concerned about being accessible for kids from other languages and cultures, as I believe my nonfiction can and should help them adjust. It’s hard to know how much comprehension to expect.

A04: It would be awfully silent without this. It is one thing to get feedback from a critic. It is completely different hearing from a reader. My background is ****. In the theatre the response is instantaneous. You know on opening night from the applause and laughter or deathly silence and yawns whether the play worked or how it is being received. This is what correspondence from readers can be like.

A05: The contact. They see we are real.

A06: My correspondence has been in reply to thank you’s.

A01: IT DEMYTHOLOGIZES THE WORK, MAKES IT A POSSIBLE CAREER OPTION. ALL CHILDREN DESERVE TO KNOW THAT WRITING AND ILLUSTRATING CAN BE VOCATIONS. I GREW UP IN ***** WHERE THERE HAS BEEN A LONG TRADITION OF BOOK FAIRS IN THE SCHOOLS WHERE CHILDREN COULD MEET AUTHORS AND ILLUSTRATORS. I GREW UP MEETING AND SPEAKING WITH WRITERS AND ILLUSTRATORS FROM MY EIGHTH OF AGE TO THE PRESENT. I GREW UP WANTING TO WRITE AND ILLUSTRATE CHILDREN’S BOOKS. I GREW UP BELIEVING THAT I COULD DO IT NO DOUBT IN GOOD MEASURE BECAUSE MY PARENTS, TEACHERS AND THE AUTHORS/ ILLUSTRATORS I MET SAID I COULD INDEED WRITE AND ILLUSTRATE BOOKS.

A02: Authors visiting schools should be an essential part of the curriculum. All children benefit, even if they haven’t read the author’s books – though of course the visit is FAR more rewarding if the kids are familiar with the work under discussion. But any expert (policeman, chef, meteorologist...) is a resource to a classroom, and authors happen to be experts in what a classroom is about – becoming literate.

A03: I would like to do more but I can’t afford to go for free very often, and funds are of course limited. I recently spent half a day for $250. I would rather be paid a third as much, three times as often!

A04: Students comment with surprise on every single school-visit I’ve made about the fact that I’m “not boring”. They seem to have a pre-conception about authors---that we’re aloof and unapproachable, intellectual and eccentric weirdoes. I have the sneaky suspicion they get this from television and movies... and envision authors holed up in their creepy mansions surrounded by dusty leather bound books and of course always using a manual type-writer or feathered quill. I donate the time to visit schools because when I was a child I was told that being an author was a ridiculous dream. I’ve had
teachers at a couple of high schools say to me that some of their colleagues are giving out a similar message.

A05: I wish you had included illustrators too. We bring a focus on creativity, the wonderful and the frustrating side of it. We make it real. We also reinforce what many teachers are telling and sharing with the students. I love it when a child (speaking broadly turns to a teacher with that look of “you said that too” when I share something. The teacher may say it, but coming from a visitor it just seems more real. I have many letters from teachers, parents and kids that tell me the effect that a visit had. Sometimes on the way to a school I question myself as to what possibly could I offer, whether it is crazy to take school time or to charge for what I do, yet afterwards I am reassured by the smiles of everyone, and the comments by the teachers about the enthusiasm and creative burst. If I were able to, mostly due to time restraints, I would send out letters to past schools a week, or month or even years later to see what effect my visit had. I do not want a visit to be a thrill of the moment, and then no lasting effect. But even then, I get some reassurances from either teachers who pass on my name or even more recently when I met a student who was in an 8 week project who still remembered the experience and now was still actively writing and studying to be a teacher herself. For what it is worth here is an email I just received through my wife who books my presentations (this was in response to a full day visit and an evening parent/student literary event funded by the ministry of education /****).

A06: Although my book has only been out for 6 months, I’ve visited over 50 schools and can see how important authors are to school environments. Its a chance to promote literacy, creativity, and chasing dreams.

A07: I have been working with one student for four years. She recently submitted a mystery story she started writing in grade 11. We haven’t heard the results.

A010: I discourage regular correspondence. If a reader writes to me more than once, I will answer back while also explaining that I cannot engage in regular correspondence and that I normally answer only one email per reader. I simply do not have the time. As Tolkien wrote to one of his readers, to keep up that kind of correspondence would mean getting no work done! I expect that CS Lewis was not talking about readers here but the college students he tutored as part of his paid work! That said, I have mentored young writers who are friends of mine through the early years of their career even as older writers have mentored me. Some of the young writers I have mentored are now published. Some have agents - through my introduction - but are not yet published. Others were already published and I have supported them in further work.

A011: no, and again, I would be in a tricky spot professionally because of being a teacher.

A07: don’t have one, but I’m working on it. My concern is that my website will be seen by my readers, by teachers, by editors and others. It needs to serve so many audiences...
A08: I don’t have one.

A09: HARD TO SAY; I HAVE A WEBSITE BUT HAVE NOT MAINTAINED IT VERY WELL...SO READERS CANNOT CONTACT ME VIA MY WEBSITE. IT IS SOMETHING I WILL CORRECT IN NEAR FUTURE.

A010: Websites are extremely important for children’s authors, I would even say essential. Not only for the contact with readers but also with librarians and teachers. I think websites are not as important for writers of adult work. (I do not mention my adult work on my site as it is geared towards YA literature.) Young people use the Internet to a huge degree, e.g. Myspace and Bebo etc. They expect their favourite writers to have a website. Also they use the website as a research tool when doing projects and book reports. I find that my blogs in particular allow for interaction between myself and my readers, both kids and adults.

A011: I have been contacted by readers who have just looked me up, and sent me comments, which is encouraging. I have added links to references in the book, *** readers can follow up on things that the main characters were involved with, and I have had good feedback. My webstats suggest that I have about 150 views per month so far. I notice that many authors have blogs and have decided that’s not for me, again, because of being a teacher and needing some distance between teacher me and personal me and author me, but have posted some art because students seem to want to know the author the way they know the characters in the books.

A07: Continuing a relationship with students and teachers has given me many affirmations about writing for this audience. It helps me to understand them better and through their questioning, understanding my own writing process better, too.

A08: It keeps me in touch with my readers. It gives me an insight into how kids think. Also, kids are honest and thus I find out what works in my books and what doesn’t.

A09: I have not corresponded with readers.

A010: Quite frankly, there are days when it buoys me up! How to describe what it means to receive an email from a young person telling you that your book helped them through their parents’ divorce (recent) or their twin’s death (last month) ... We all yearn for meaning in our lives, to know that our work is worthwhile. These are moments of affirmation. I am certain that I get more out of the correspondence than they do (though I do my best to be responsive, helpful, compassionate). Ultimately, however, I feel that the books themselves are my contribution to the equation and correspondence is something slighter.

A011: affirmation! suggestions for other books (eg desire for sequels).
A07: As a writer in residence, I find it fascinating that most of the students are not taught writing from a writer’s perspective on process but from a teacher’s process with their eyes to assessment. Over 80% of teachers I’ve worked with require their students to fill in story organizers that define character, setting, problem, two main events and solution. Stories aren’t necessarily about solving problems, sometimes we don’t know an end before we begin. I see so many kids who struggle to understand how to translate a plan into a story. I encounter kids who hate story writing because of the planning involved that they say they were never successful at doing. I think many teachers just simply don’t know. They believe it is hard to teach, hard to assess and hard to do. My goal as a writing teacher is to help the non-writing teacher of writing understand a different way is out there.

A010: There’s no question but that authors in schools encourage reading and writing, especially when the experience for the students is a good one. I have been told this again and again by teachers and students alike. Here in *** I have been part of the Pushkin Trust programme - which encourages creative writing in primary and secondary schools and sends writers into the schools - as well as the Writers in Schools scheme. In Canada I have gone into schools and libraries through publisher-sponsored reading tours and also on CCBC tours. In the USA, I went into schools and bookstores through a publisher-sponsored reading tour. The reactions have always been the same. A mutual enthusiasm between the students and myself lead to stories, chat about writing and reading, and teachers telling me later that students had read my books beforehand because they knew I was coming. We all respond to the personal touch. Writers can be the bridge between the student and the book, making the latter less of an impersonal or daunting project and something they can enjoy.

A011: As a teacher, I have seen many authors! I have seen our librarian book great speakers through the CCBC, and terrible ones, just because they walked in, showed that they had some books published, and named a price. Currently, I am involved in a personal ethical dilemma because I have heard that a local writer, who has self-published, will be coming in for “only” $300!!! I have glanced through the book, and found it full of grammatical errors on the very first page - do I say nothing, and let her come in to show that ANYONE can write? Or do I suggest that they spend their money on someone more established, with less expensive and grammatically correct books? I have found as an author that schools don’t always take advantage of the opportunity to have an author in - I have offered to read FREE of charge at the high school I attended and have received no response. I was in Calgary this spring, and sent flyers to several schools offering a low-cost reading, and again had very little response, despite the recent addition of my book to the **** for reluctant readers list, and my assurances that as a teacher, I am used to speaking to groups of adolescents.

A012: Yes. I talk about writing historical fiction—the importance of research, choosing a time period you enjoy, getting it “right”.

A012: Usually, what made me choose World War 2 as the setting for my book.
A012: Where do I get the ideas from? Did I do my own illustrations? If not, did I have to pay the artist? When did I start writing?

A012: As I write historical fiction, I speak often on the need for accuracy in every detail; how I researched the book, etc. Also, voice. Putting yourself in the characters' place.

A012: No. They're one-offs.

A012: My website is not going to set the world on fire! **** However, I've had a few comments on the guestbook. I only get about 20 viewers a week.

A012: They know that I'm a real person and that I care about them. There's nothing worse than writing to someone, waiting anxiously for a reply, and getting nothing. I was a **** at one time, and the children were just thrilled if an author replied to them. I'd like to think that someone's smiling and jumping up and down to get a reply from me.

A012: I had to bang my shoe on the desk at one school to get them to shut up during a writing exercise—and there were 3 teachers in the room. (That school also forgot to cut me a cheque; I had to go back to get it.) Letters written to me by one class show that authors can influence children's thinking on reading. One teacher wrote to me once and said that a child who never read was seen with her head tucked tightly into my book after I left, and that child wrote a lovely review of it for the school paper. Another teacher said that the two boys who spent half their recess talking to me after my presentation were the two most unmotivated boys in the school. Really made me feel good.

A013: Mostly I tell them writing is really about re-writing, and on occasion I've shown them the various messy, marked-up drafts of my own work (which is very exotic to kids who for the most part write on screens rather than on paper). I tell them I sometimes go through nine or ten drafts to get the work to read the way I want it to.

A013: They invariably ask "how long did it take you to write such-and-such" and they're amazed and dismayed to find out just how long and how much work it takes to produce a book. Frankly I hate the "how long does it take" questions and try to steer them into more interesting territory, like where I get ideas for stories.

A013: Not much, mostly because on a one-shot visit to a large classroom situation they don't have the time to make more than brief comments. In the past (when there used to be more funding for these things) I've done workshops where I've visited the same classroom several times and actually gotten to know the students, who were very eager to share their work and talk about it.

A013: No, mostly it's what they think about a particular book.

A013: I have a website but it currently has no discussion/blog capability for readers - it's eternally on my to-do list upgrade my website but I never seem to get around to it. I think web contact with readers would be useful for marketing my work but I'm not sure it
would be a terribly effective way to have a dialogue about the writing process. And I would worry about corresponding taking time away from writing (which may explain why I haven’t done anything about my website).

A013: Making more funding available for writers to go into schools more often (i.e. for more than the usual single-visit / reading / Q & A) would help kids develop their writing and communication skills.

A014: Yes, I talk a lot about the writing process, especially the need for revising their work. I tell the kids to set their finished work aside and look at it the next day with fresh eyes. I also tell them that they can’t write well unless they do a lot of reading. I talk about the need to develop their own “voice”, and to do that they have to listen to the voices of other writers. Sometimes I’ll have them do an exercise where they try to write like Dr. Suess or another author that they’re familiar with (**** has come up a few times) so they can see how hard it is to have a unique voice.

A014: They love to ask how much money I make!! They ask questions like “how do you pick names for your characters”. Another common question is “Do you base your story on real life? Did this happen to you?” Then I get to talk about taking real life experiences and distilling them into something fictional, how they can use their own experience and create something new from them.

A014: They love to talk about genres, I notice. The science fiction and fantasy writers especially will talk about what they’re reading and then how their writing is like such and such an author. They also will confess that they don’t edit or rewrite their work – the act of creation is where all their energy goes. Another thing I hear a lot is how hard it is to finish something, especially if it’s a long piece.

A014: They often ask questions about the plot, rather than about writing. I sense that often they’re doing a school project! The question about the writing process that gets asked the most often is “where do you get your ideas?”

A014: Since they ask so often about getting started, about finding inspiration, I tell students to read a lot, to keep a diary, to clip things out of the paper and file it away as a prompt, and to observe the world around them, consciously and daily.

A014: I don’t have a website at the moment (at least not for my fiction).

A014: I remember how important it was to me as a young writer to make contact with a real author, and I am thrilled when young readers feel that way about me. It makes me feel as if my effort is meaningful.
A014: I find that even the kids who aren't big writers or readers will respond to me with respect for the art of writing. Seeing an author, whose picture and name are on the back of that book they're holding, opens their eyes to the possibilities. I always tell kids how I had dreamed since childhood of being an author, and how long and hard the road was. I tell them about the unbelievable thrill of that first acceptance and the moment I opened the box and held my book in my hand. They really like that. No matter whether they're aspiring writers or hockey players or whatever, a real person telling them "I did it, you can too" gives them hope to dream their dreams.

A015: I talk about where I get ideas for my writing and how to write mysteries.

A015: Usually, how long does it take to write a book, do you use an outline, how does one go about getting published, how do I choose characters' names, and how do I choose titles.

A015: Mostly they just write to tell me they like my stuff. If they are doing book reports, they want to know personal stuff (age, family, etc.) as well as where I got the idea for whatever book they happen to be writing about.

A015: Occasionally a kid who wants to be a writer will ask for advice. I tell them to read as much as possible, to write as much as possible, and never to give up, no matter what anyone tells them.

A015: My website is woefully out of date. I simply do not have the time to maintain it myself and haven't got around to finding someone to do it for me.

A016: I do writing workshops on a variety of topics, for example, character development, point of view, self-editing, the revision process, how to do historical research, how to use a library, for adults, I also do a "how to get published" workshop.

A016: most are surprised at how long it takes to revise most everyone wants to be published, although they don't necessarily want to write.

A016: that they find it hard to begin a story and that they don't like revising.

A016: they ask about specific characters in my books, usually, and what happened to them after the book ended.

A016: most want to know more about a book rather than about writing when kids ask about writing, I am always encouraging, if they send me their writing, I'll glance over it and respond with an encouraging note to keep on writing
sometimes, if the student is a strong writer, I'll suggest that they join a free online crit 
group I run. I also run a writing camp every summer.

A016: I have mentored one student for 12 years, very successfully 
others have gone on for years, but most just a few exchanges.

A016: my website saves me a fair bit of time because I can refer readers to it.

A016: getting feedback on my books and also knowing what people would like me to 
write about next. I have also ended up writing about some of the people I meet this way.

A016: I think it's essential that students get the opportunity to meet authors in person. It 
makes them realize that a person wrote the book—a regular person! Makes all things 
seem possible.

A017: I do talk about the writing process a good deal. If it's a short session and I'm just 
introducing my books, I discuss ways I got started on the different titles, what was 
involved in creating a first draft, the revision process, etc. In writing workshops and 
residencies, I work with students on such specific aspects as "creating a great beginning," 
"how to write dialogue," "developing a scene," etc. (I generally use handouts with 
examples I've developed.)

A017: There's often interest in how long it takes to write something. The surprise 
comments are more along the lines of "How old are you" (which, so far, hasn't connected 
to my craftsmanship!).

A017: In workshops I make it a practice to write along with students for at least part of 
the time. That way we can share how we felt tackling a particular assignment. Comments 
come in with a full range: "I had trouble thinking of something to write," "I really liked 
my beginning but then I couldn't think of where to go next," "This part was funny. I liked 
writing that..." Generally speaking, students like to read something they've composed 
aloud, and they're proud of a story that's been showcased in a particular way (an 
illustrated "book" for the library or classroom, an entry in a published anthology or 
magazine, a taped reading, etc.).

A017: They generally don't ask questions about the writing process. More often it's a 
content question ("Why did you let *****?"”) or "What book are you writing now?"

A017: These types of questions tend to emerge from school visits and writing workshops 
and residencies. I haven't had the experience of getting very profound questions via e-
mail or letters (except from University students studying my books in their classes—but I’m assuming that’s outside of the scope of this survey).

A017: No. (Except for University students and adult writing-workshop participants.

A017: I don’t have a website.

A017: It’s been gratifying (encouraging) when students write saying how much they liked a particular book, what they liked about it, etc. Again, I have to say, more meaningful feedback has come from school visits.

A017: I think, oftentimes, an author visiting a school can model the teaching of writing for teachers (so there’s kind of a cascade impact). Whenever I do a school writing residency, I make it a point to meet with the teachers involved prior to the residency beginning, so I can talk about writing process with them and review their questions and expectations.

A018: I don’t believe in “tricks of the trade” and I respond to what the children are interested in about my writing and my writing process. I believe that for children writing is a different challenge than it is for adults. My experience can be interesting to them and may give them new ideas about what they can do.

Teachers love it when I talk about drafts and how for me the most enjoyable part of writing comes when I am actually rewriting, but the children never really believe this. For them it’s a lot of work just to get a story down the first time and they can’t look forward to another draft. They are interested in where my stories come from so I tell them that anything that happens to them or that they notice in the world can inspire a story or be part of a story so it’s a very good ideal to keep your eyes open.

A018: Where do you get your ideas? How long does it take you to write a book? Are the people in your books based on real people you know? My favourite question: What do you like about being a writer?

A018: I encourage students to compare their experiences with mine. Do they find it easy or hard to know how to finish a story? How do they come up with a title? Do they like to use lots of words or just a few? We enter into dialogue, a dialogue of fellow writers, if it goes well.

A018: Same questions as above.
A018: They want to know how the difficult task of writing can turn into a “real book”. Some see themselves as possibly being able to do this. Others just like to hear that I, too, know that writing isn’t easy and is a lot of work.

A018: I don’t have a website. I would like to have one because it would make basic information about my books easily available and enable me to raise some questions that children could think about. We could then perhaps have some interesting interchanges. However, one of the difficult things about being a writer is that it’s very hard to find time to do all the peripheral promotional tasks that are now expected.

A018: Of course it is very rewarding to read the comments and questions about my books. I write for these children. Their thoughts are the most important.

A018: I think that most important is the simple fact of being there as an author so that the children can see that a real person writes books that they can read and enjoy. A really crucial element in a school visit or in correspondence with children who have read a book as a class project is the involvement of the teacher. If the teacher helps the children think about my books before I speak with them (or write to them) the session will be much more valuable and enjoyable for me and for them.

A019: I do discuss the process of writing at a level geared to my target group (i.e. young children K-3). One of my books is loosely based on a series of real events (even though the resulting story is somewhat of a fantasy). I read the story to the children and then go back and discuss the “story behind the story” to show them how real events inspired the resulting story. My point to them, once I’ve connected each event for them, is that each of them has experiences everyday that may seem ordinary but could lead to a story. My second book isn’t based on real events so there was some research I needed to do after the fact to ensure that some of the specifics of the story made sense. I turned some of this research into a little quiz for the kids. The point of this exercise is to show them in a fun way that research is often part of the writing process. Beyond this, I talk about the process of editing and how important that is to get the sound and sense of the story just right.

A019: The questions asked by the age group I present to are often similar and predictable. One notion that often crops up is that they think my job as a writer is to physically write or type out the words in each of the books—i.e. that the job of the writer is to form or make the physical words vs create ideas with words. However, most of them also understand that the writer is the creator. Other typical questions are: How long does it
take to write a book, Are you writing any other books, How many books have you written.

A019: Again, with this age group, you get a certain level of reflection. When it’s time for questions, most of their questions are really comments about their own experiences with cats or chickens or frogs (as these are the characters in my books.) I think this is a good thing as it means that my words have sparked some kind of connection in their own lives and I point this out to them. When they tell me about their cat or frog, I suggest to them that perhaps there’s a further story in the comment they shared with me that they could develop further into a book.

A019: Again, I’m dealing with fairly young children. Typical questions are: How many books have you written, What is your favourite book, What is your favourite author, Are you writing any more books, How long does it take to write a book.

A019: I tell students to draw and reflect on their own experiences .... things that happen to them in their real lives everyday. I suggest to them that there are stories all around them. I also tell students that to be a good writer they should be big readers. One of my part time jobs is writing the children’s book reviews for **** magazine. Another part time job is operating a mail order children’s book business. I talk about these jobs and how I am always reading wonderful books by other authors and tell them that I think all this reading helps to make me a better writer because I am constantly exposed to great stories and words ... it’s like exercise for my brain.

A019: I developed my own website and badly need to update it. It serves it’s purpose though. I publish my website on bookmarks I hand out to children at presentation and let them know they can go there to hear me read my books and also to read some poems I wrote when I was their age (seven). They can also read a story on my website that isn’t available in bookform (it was published in ****.) I have a teacher’s unit on the site as well. To be honest, I need to do a better job with my site, both in terms of updating it more regularly and encouraging interaction with kids. Lots of ideas, but too little time!

A019: Both presenting to, and corresponding with, students has given me a better handle on my target audience. While I have three children of my own (currently 10, 14 and 18), having first hand contact with the exact audience I am writing for has made me think about future stories in a different way. I read voraciously to my own kids and we read everything—we have literally thousands of children’s books in the house. I loved sharing long picture books with them and we enjoyed many authors from overseas. The reality of what works in the Canadian picture book market is different from the experiences I had with my kids. I had to learn to make things shorter and simpler. I had been told this by my publisher, but it was getting face-to-face with my audience that really drove this point home to me. They are the consumers and what they think and how they react is the best measuring stick.
A019: “Free” has no value. I volunteered to do some school readings to a few schools in my area (the school my own kids attend and a few neighbouring ones for friends or family). These were tougher presentations because the teachers weren’t really committed to the importance of what I was doing—they weren’t prepared and it almost came across that they felt they were doing me a favour by having me there. In contrast, when an outside school hires me, they have done so with a purpose in mind and the experience is completely different. Because of my full time job, I don’t do that many school presentations—perhaps 10 or so a year—but when the schools are prepared, it’s a great way to charge my batteries.

A020: Tricks: Tell the truth. Be honest. Write from your life. Do a lot of research. Check and recheck your information. Write descriptively. Write emotions. Don’t stop too soon, write a little more than you think possible, then add even more until you have a piece that makes you feel good. “Touch it once.” That means, take a few minutes here and there to build your writing. Don’t wait until you have “lots of time.” You will probably never have lots of time.

A020: How do I get started? I’m not a good speller or good with grammar. Can I still write? We tell students that the biggest obstacle is not spelling or grammar but making the time to write. The students are always surprised to see how they can make their writing “grow” with a few basic tricks involving: writing descriptively, writing emotions, adding dialogue, the 5 W’s, favorite words, and so on. The biggest surprise is that there is usually someone who cries during a writing workshop (with adults). Also, the students are always surprised that they can create such a good piece of writing usually with only 12-15 minutes of actual writing time.

A020: They often say they have trouble writing. They are afraid of grammar and spelling mistakes. We ask them to start with an incident from their life that is a story they like to remember or tell to others. They love to write about the funny things that have happened to them or their families. They easily share these stories. Adult learners often choose subjects about their life that have been trying to get on paper for many years. It could be the birth of their first child or a childhood memory (which is sometimes painful). They are often surprised by what they write. They didn’t expect the subject to come up, such as an adventure from their younger days.

A020: Yes. They also ask about writers groups and about forming a writers group.

A020: Yes. I tell them it is not easy to write. Do not be discouraged. Write for yourself, not others. New writers sometimes email or mail manuscripts. We know whatever we say makes a strong statement, so we are always encouraging.
A020: Our website [****] is extremely useful. We keep it updated, we have a blog (occasional blogging). We add photos of some of our tours etc (with permission), we have posters and more on the site. We have used the blog to write about various schools (with permission) to get students to go to our site.

A020: It encourages us as well as the students. The students (of all ages) give us the energy to travel nine months of the year visiting schools, libraries etc. Without their interest, energy and appreciation, we would not have the emotional support to continue doing this work.

A020: We especially enjoy visiting remote schools and schools in smaller communities across Canada. But whether rural or urban, many students have never met an author before. Because A020 is a **** First Nations author, this also makes a positive impact. We encourage students that “all cultures are important” and to write about their cultures with pride. What they write today will be fuel for their writing tomorrow.

A021: Yes I do talk about the process. I actually have a handout that is titled “how to become a superstar writer.” It has little cartoon characters on it each with such points as how to get ideas, how to create characters, how to decide what type of fiction to work on. I try to present the material in a creative and “fun” way. I especially concentrate on being creative and loose with the first draft, then rewriting and rewriting and rewriting.

A021: Often their questions are similar. Where do I get my ideas? That sort of thing. But recently one young writer asked how I could remember what it was like to be young? She was worried that she would forget as she grew older and not be able to write about being young. I told her that’s where imagination, memory, and rewriting all work together.

A021: Mostly that they have difficulty with endings. That the have ideas but aren’t sure whether they are good enough.

A021: Where do I get certain ideas for my books. How did I know when I was a writer. Would I read their book. Most of the questions are quite general, though once in awhile they will ask something more specific like why do you use 3rd person.

A021: I try to keep most of my comments simple and straightforward. I tell them the best method to write is BIC (butt in chair). In other words don’t worry about all the other stuff, just worry about writing down your story. You can correct and make it better in the rewriting stages. I think students want to know whether what they are experiencing as they write is similar to what a “real” writer experiences.

A021: A few times. At most two or three years.
A021: I don’t know. I think it was encouraging. But as far as I know one I’ve corresponded with has gone on to write the next Harry Potter.

A021: I’ve had my own domain name for several years. I think it gives them a place to visit and feel that they “know” me by reading about my life and my work. The welcoming aspect of the website tends to make the students more chatty, I think.

A021: I think it’s good to keep in touch with readers. To know how they are reacting to my books and to choices I’ve made as a writer. It’s curious how many are angry at me for the deaths of certain characters. I don’t know that it affects my writing, though. I tend not to think about the audience too much while I’m writing, more just focus on the story.

A021: I think the personal appearances are important because they let students see a live author and see that they’re not all “dead or boring.” And it lets them know that we’re just normal people who happen to have the ability to write stories.

A022: Yes. I have tried to teach young writers to be direct, to focus on the story they are trying to tell but, above all, to read, read, read.

A022: The main questions are about getting started, keeping on track and ending. The only surprises I’ve had have been from obviously gifted kids and the surprise could more properly be defined as delight.

A022: They share their stories and the problems they are having with them (as mentioned above).

A022: Very little. Generally, when they ask these questions, I detect a homework assignment.

A022: I think the few who aren’t hoping for a magic formula really want to know how to organize their thoughts. Since many do not live where writing courses are available, I tell them to read their favourite authors’ over and over and to consult them to see how they handle the problems of character, dialogue, change of pace etc. Since this is what I do, myself, I tell them this, in the hope that this will encourage them to follow my lead.

Yes. In one case, a year, in several others for several months. It’s too soon to tell.

A022: The pleasure of sharing my own stories plus the pleasure of hoping to pass on what I’ve learned to the next generation of writers.

A022: I would love to see more programs that bring writers into schools for prolonged periods of time. I have been going into schools for many years and, when I’m in a school for a day—or, when I’m lucky, for longer -- I always ask to see the kids who write. Most often the teachers send me the enrichment class. I think this is because it takes a long
time for the real writers to admit that they write. When I talk to a class about my books and they ask me what I was like as a child and I say that I was shy and dreamy, I see, without half looking, the recognition in the eyes of the writers. They’re not the kids who ask the questions and hardly ever the ones the teachers pick to come to a session for writers.

A023: I talk about the elements of fiction, plot, setting, character and theme and that it is in setting and character that writers make their stories believable and draw readers into them...I talk about “painting word pictures”, “showing, not just telling” and being aware that (most of) our readers and (most of) our characters have five senses thus it is not enough to describe only what can be seen...

A023: They ask where ideas come from, are my characters drawn from people I know, how I work (when, for how long, where etc).

A023: Students have trouble finishing stories. It’s fun to write beginnings and even middles but endings are hard work which may be why we see contrived and ‘cop-out’ endings...”He woke up...it was all a dream.” and the like.

A023: Similar questions to what I’m asked when i’m in schools.

A023: I try to be as encouraging as I can and often relate my own difficulties being published the first time. They want to know the “how” to become a writer, can a kid be published? How?

A023: Students are drawn to websites and I find that they are often much more familiar with me and my work because they have visited my site before I arrive at the school.

A023: I love to hear what students are thinking as they read my books. I have made alterations to subsequent books and even written particular books because of what young people have written to me.

A023: I think one of the most rewarding elements in my career as a writer—a career that is, by definition rather solitary—is going to schools to interact with, and read to, kids.

A024: Yes. I seem to average about 30 days of school readings a year. Some in
my home province, some further from home. I do this because it spreads
the word about my books and supplements my income. I do, however, enjoy
it. I go out and have a good time with the kids...while passing along
some information about writing in general as well as my own enthusiasm
for reading, writing and good books of all kinds.

A024: Yes. I seem to do about five days of writing workshops a year, usually
grades 3 - 8. some of them are Young Writers Conferences. Others are schools that bring
me in to work with specific grades.

A024: Yes. I never give any presentation without talking about several
aspects of the process or craft of writing....even if it is only at the simplest level for
Kindergarten children. Topics iniclude getting ideas, keeping up energy, building
characters, finding a great ending, doing research, choosing words carefully, writing
what intrigues you, writing good dialogue and the amazing art of rewriting.

A024: Where do you get your ideas? Are your characters people you know? Your own children?

A024: Yes - every once in a while I’ll run into a whole raft of VERY insightful
questions.... but, sorry, my brain doesn’t want to remember any at the moment. All my
brain remembers is that every once in a while it is sooooooooo much fun because the
students get beyond “where do you get your ideas?”

A024: okay,...here is an example.... “Is it hard to put it all together?” That seems like a
simple question but its really very insightful because the truth is LOTS of people have
great plot ideas, LOTS of people can write proper English and throw in a few creative
words, LOTS of people can write a great opening....etc. etc..... but they still end up with a
boring story. It IS hard to put it all together. It takes lots of work, lots of creative
suggling, lots of delicate tuning etc. etc....

A024: Students tell me they have the same problems I have .......starting out with a great
idea and wonderful energy....and slowly watching it fade away. ......coming up with a
good ending ......choosing a title. And sometimes they say they don’t know what to write.

A024: yes... Sometimes because the student is doing a book report on one of my
stories. Sometimes because one of my books is on one of the Young Reader's Choice Awards Reading Lists. Sometimes because the student has entered the A024 **** Writing Contest which I run once a month from December to March each year.

A024: yes... Most of my letters come as class projects...either the class has read the book or they are thank you letters following one of my visits to their school.

A024: I get between 500 and 2000 thank you letters following school visits. Otherwise I only receive about 40 letters “out of the blue”.

A024: they ask “How do you choose such good words. How can you write good. Please give me advise so I can write better.” It is rarely specific.

A024: Every student who enters my Home Page Contest gets a personal e-mail back that BRIEFLY mentions something in his or her poem that I’ve found interesting. “I like the way I can see what you are describing” or “I like the sense of mystery in this poem” or “I like unique words you’ve chosen to describe the snow...especially ............” There have maybe been five cases where all I’ve said is “thanks you for sending your poem” and nothing else because I really couldn’t find anything positive to say. If a student is a strong writer and if they have specifically asked for constructive criticism and IF I have time, I’ll talk to them about what I see as the strong points of their work. I rarely give negative feedback in e-mails as you can’t SEE the student to gauge how much they can handle. However when I work as a mentor (see below) the student and I do lots and lots of editing together, with me being as careful as I can possibly be to encourage and support their writing while still getting them to see some places where a small change will make a big difference. eg. Lets find places where we can end the chapters with cliff hangers. (students always like that!) “Because you’ve changed location 5 times in this chapter, you’ve lost energy, it’s like we step backward each time. Can we combine a couple of these and get the energy back?” And any time I want to say “wow!” “yes!” “I like this!” I do... but I only say it if I mean it.

A024: For the past three or four years I have mentored a student at our local school----a different student each year, once a week over a twelve week period. I find it LOTS of work...I carry the story around in my head during those weeks and am often trying to think of ways to joggle the student into producing a better story...while not imposing myself on their work. . On the other hand the students have always been talented, hard-working and totally delightful personally...so it has worked out very well.
A024: I haven't done anything over a number of years.

A024: All three years to date we have ended with a finished story that the student was proud of and we have done a presentation of the process and the work to the other students in the class.

A024: I use my website more as a way to pass along information than a way to relate to my readers. I relate to my readers through the stories themselves. I think it keeps me more in touch with kids. My own children are adults now so I definitely need that contact. On the other hand I get more contact when I'm actually in a school. I'm also conscious of feeling I “should” help kids who love to write.... I have quite a bit of contact with kids and I try to be my bit, but it is the writing itself that matters to me. I write because I love to WRITE. I don't write because I want to relate to kids!

A024: I think it is very important for authors to be themselves. I think they have a very different roll than “teacher”.

A025: I generally describe my personal writing process, which for me is very much connected to visual inspiration. As both an author and illustrator, I show students some of my artwork that has sparked my stories. I also explain how I draw my way through writer’s block. I also share how I have always had a love for writing and illustrating, even as a small child, and how I pursued this passion throughout my life.

A025: Students ask everything from how a book is manufactured to how old I am! I can’t say that any questions surprise me anymore, but I am often impressed by thoughtful or well thought-out questions by young people. In particular, I remember the passion, enthusiasm, and unique individuality of the young people I meet.

A025: I find that students are very enthusiastic about their own creative processes. Kids often show me samples of their work. Many kids who are serious about their craft ask very technical questions to do with writing, illustrating, or the process of getting published.

A025: I respond to every email I receive. When it comes to regular mail, I usually receive this in bulk. For example, a school or institution I have visited will collect notes and letters from students and forward them to me in one package. I only respond to these items if requested. So, I would say email: 100%. Regular Mail: 10%.

A025: They ask anything and everything from how I came to get my inspiration, to how I come up with character names, or how I came to arrive at this point in my career..
A025: I try to encourage young people and let them know that I was once just like them: a young child who had a dream of becoming a writer and illustrator. At one point, it felt unachievable, but now I am accomplishing what I always dreamed of doing. At the same time, I tell them to work hard and write as much as they can to hone their craft. For those students who are really keen, I give them a handout listing “Traits of Good Writers” and sometimes I send them a list of magazines and websites that publish material by kids. I also have some e-books that chronicle the making of my last two books, so I often send that to kids who email me.

A025: I can often have lengthy periods of correspondence with students. It may last weeks or months (though sometimes with lengthy gaps). I also teach creative writing to children through a regular program and many of my past students continue to correspond with me.

How was it successful?
I think kids just want to be heard and I think it can be very gratifying for anyone, but especially children, when their dreams are taken seriously. I find that many children can be inspired just by meeting someone who does what they want to do. I also have had a lot of success just connecting with children in a way that they can appreciate.

A025: My web site has given me instant access to my readers and potential fans. I have been able to book many school visits through my website. Also, I can post interviews, audio clips, illustrations and sample chapters from my books. It's all a matter of connecting.

A025: For me, it is a great feeling to know that I have had an impact on someone. I have received fabulous emails and letters from students, and it is immensely rewarding.

A025: I have had a lot of success in schools. I am not that young (36), but I come across as young and I think this has helped me connect with young people. I am often the biggest kid in the room and I think this comes across in my visits and presentations. Also, the fact that I am male has helped me connect with the boys. Many elementary schools are dominated by female role models, with the male role model often being associated with science or physical education. So I think it's a fresh outlook for the artistic boys to see someone doing what they might want to do.

A026: Yes, we discuss the craft of writing constantly. I use specific writing exercises to illustrate writing skills. For example, we explore word choice, poetry structure, character development, how to build conflict within a story, story structure, how to write your life as story, writing using your senses, use of scenes to build stories, using dialogue and action versus narrative, and so on. We also discuss how to write different types of stories, like fantasy, science fiction, mystery, etc.
A026: They ask where I got my ideas, why a character choice a certain route, why I chose to write about a certain topic. They also ask many questions about the writing life. There are always surprising questions, such as “if writing is so hard then why do you do it?”

A026: They read their stories and tell their story ideas. We discuss problems they are having with a work-in-progress or how to approach a story idea, and I often read and critique student stories.

A026: They ask about sequels to books I’ve written and suggest plots for sequels. They ask how I got my ideas and questions about the writing life (how much I make, how and when I write, did I write as a kid, etc).

A026: If I’m critiquing their work, I tell them what I like about their story and ways it could be stronger. If do this by asking questions about character motivation and plot—not by pointing out what they did “wrong.” This leaves them inspired. And I make sure they understand how in-depth the revision and re-writing process must be. We focus on how to revise to make a story richer. They often don’t realize how extensive the revision process must be.

A026: I have had ongoing correspondences over several months. I mentor adults who write for children over a period of years. Very successful. Students are grateful for constructive feedback and encouragement. It means more to them when these words come from a published writer.

A026: People who want workshops typically contact me by email and find my email address through the web. Students are even more web-savvy than adults. The use of the web to contact authors will only grow.

A026: Knowledge of my audience is essential. Also, I simply enjoy the kids and value the feedback on my work. We gain from each other.

A026: School librarians are essential to school literacy, and they typically understand the value of an author visit to a school. They also plan well for an author visit, with preliminary and follow-up activities. I would hope that the value of author visits be highlighted and encouraged in the future—not just for young kids but for teens as well, who tend to have less author visits.
A027: Yes, I talk about the writing process involved in the book. I emphasize the fact that in spite of having been a teacher, I needed to work with an editor to make sure that “my words were polished.” I also talk about the others who worked on the book, the illustrator, graphic designer, printer. I talk about where the idea for the book came from, about the language choices I made that reflected the language the juvenile narrator would use.

A027: For some reason, the subject of how much I earn as a writer usually comes up. They assume that I must be very rich if so many books were sold. One interesting comment I remember came from a boy who said that he would have thrown the manuscript away rather than revising it one more time. (I think this was the third revision I was describing.)

A027: They sometimes do tell me about the stories they are writing in terms of the content, not the process.

A027: I occasionally get letters from students that are usually part of a class assignment to thank me for coming. I have also gotten emails from teachers who have read one of my books to the class and are giving me a class reaction. Aside from acknowledging the letters and or emails, there is no further correspondence.

A027: I don’t think I’ve ever gotten a letter/email that asked about the writing process.

A027: So far, the only response I’ve gotten was to thank me for the book.

A027: Having been a teacher/librarian who arranged author visits and an author who has made such visits, as well as being a mother and grandmother who has seen the reaction of my own children/grandchildren, I believe that the prime payback of author visits has been to encourage the students to read and to confirm the writing process that teachers guide their students to follow. I always note the smiles and nods of the teachers when I describe how I work with an editor to “get it right.”

A028: I’ve been doing author visits for several decades, so my author readings have changed over the years. Key things I always present are how revision is necessary to make your writing the best it can be. I used to show a hand written document all crossed out in red, so they could see how little of the first draft ended up in a published story. Now, one of the things I stress is that writing is more than sitting at a computer—it’s also about research and that it can be on any topic that interests you. Many of my publications are in sports fields and travel writing, so I talk about how much fun writing can be. In terms of writing workshops, I use a lot of powerpoint to show students how I get my ideas and where I draw my research from. Specifically, I use things like photos in my
historical fiction, to help me fill in the details to make stories come to life. The hands-on workshops I’ve done use things like pictures or artifacts to help kids see how to make their stories more than a series of events, by developing how to show, not tell techniques.

A028: Students almost always ask where I get my ideas and how old I am. :-) There have been no surprises that I can recall.

A028: I think the most common thing they’ll share is that the first thing they remember is writing stories in their minds, which is my first memory. Also, many share the fact that they enjoy writing poetry, which is where my writing career began.

A028: I respond to all, but there are very few.

A028: The emails I’ve received have commented more on the story or asked questions about why the characters behaved the way they did, rather than asking about the process, other than the standard, how long have you wanted to be a writer questions that teachers give.

A028: I find my web sites lead to reprints of parts of published books and sales of photos to companies. Many students email asking permission to use a lot of my snowmobile material for use in the school reports, which I always grant.

A028: I develop insights into what young readers have identified with in the novels, which helps me with age targeting my writing.

A028: I think authors are very important in school environments, because students can see that they can also become writers. Meeting an author often opens a new genre or type of novel or writing to readers, so their reading experience is enriched.

A029: Can you describe what kinds of writing skills, techniques or “tricks of the trade” you share with the students? I have several ‘courses’ that I teach, from the basic process of writing to finding your voice. Within those, the most popular pieces are how one comes up with ideas, brainstorming or mapping, formatting a manuscript, what person to write in, and how to get published.

A029: They want to know how I write. What do I start with, how do I flesh out the story, do I do research, how do I physically write (on a computer, by hand, etc.), when do I write? The previous question reflects the questions I am asked, as I developed my courses from those questions.
A029: The kinds of topics they are writing about, their own desires to get published, discussion of how to make their stories better.

A029: I don't have much of either, so I reply promptly, but usually it's only two or three times.

A029: They usually want to know when my next book is coming out, or if they can do a school project on me and want info about me personally.

A029: They want to know that they might be published one day.

A029: I have a Web site, and find it useful for my readers and for those organizing a visit with me.

A029: Not much in most cases, although I do feel gratified when students tell me they got great marks on a school project they've done about me. I don't notice any difference in book sales, or other benefits at this point, as I hardly do any correspondence with students/readers.

A029: It's great that students get to hear an author and know that they are 'real, live people.' Hearing an author gives them a boost in their own budding writing abilities, as well as a boost in their school work, as they get to understand that writing well is more than just putting words on paper. They see that it takes dedication and many revisions and the dreaded editing to come up with a finished piece. Increases literacy and reading in general. Increases enthusiasm for using libraries and the printed word, and opens new worlds for the readers.

A030: In some cases the classes have read one of my books so I use examples of how the various characters were developed, what kind of research was required and why I chose the points of view I did as well as using examples from earlier drafts to indicate "polishing" etc. If the students have not read my books I give a more general talk on why I became a writer, how I got the ideas to write the various books as well as a lot on the publishing process. I demonstrate this with different covers, foreign editions, etc.

A030: Of course the usual "where do you get your ideas?” but I am sometimes impressed by the sophistication (these are mostly grades 4-6 students) of the questions about point of view, flashbacks, etc. At one of my very first school visits a boy asked me (****) "why does the tree fall at the end?” I gave a 'brush-off' sort of answer:"because of the storm.” "No, he said, “why did it really fall?” Since I'd had a big fight with my editor about why the tree should fall—in my opinion it was necessary because **** had defied the **** which the tree represented. Editor said that was too **** for kids. Obviously this boy figured it out (amazing his teacher who claimed he was a poor student!) I learned never to underestimate students ability to get into a book although I fear publishers seldom realize how smart they are.
A030: Mostly problems with construction. Because they read more books than short stories their attempts to write short stories usually end up as a first chapter of a book which they then scramble to 'end'.

A030: I get letters both ways. If they e-mail, I respond that way, if by letter I do that—usually then I can throw in a bookmark or postcard of a book as well.

A030: Mostly the old “where did you get the idea?” but also other more in depth questions about plot. Or specific things like “why did you kill the horse?”!!

A030: I try to convey the impression that although there is all the work of re-writing there is also the fun of telling yourself a story.

A030: No, just a few months, though I sometimes meet students later on.

A030: My website was created by a group of grade 5 students who felt I should have it. I regret to say that I’m not computer/internet literate enough to do much about it, though I know it is used for school projects.

A030: Not as much as actual class sessions. Through them I’ve learned a great deal about the/my writing process. Dissecting what I’ve done to explain “Why?” to students has been very enlightening. The letters have only been good because they let me know what they’re reading and what they like.

A030: I have done hundreds of school readings in 9 Canadian provinces (for some reason haven’t got to P.E.I.!) as well as in Australia and the U.S. and I am constantly amazed at the dedication and creativity of teachers and students in using different projects to study my books. It is very exciting for me.

A031: I talk to them about how it worked for me. About reading and writing all the time, and never giving up. Some writing tips that I make amusing and go into detail about: Never explain. Never tell when you can show. Never stop the flow of the story. Never set out to “say something”.

A031: I’m often asked how often I write, whether I carry a notebook, that sort of thing. I’ve been asked about research, and how fantasy writers can “write what they know” when not writing in the real world.
Many of them carry notebooks to write down thoughts. Many of them do the things I did as an early writer, and I always give them lots of encouragement. I’m always aware that I would never have asked a question when I was young, so I’m talking as much to the ones who are silent as to the ones who ask.

I don’t think there is much they can learn from talking to other writers. I just tell them to read a lot and write a lot, and give them encouragement.

I would enjoy doing this, since I’ve done some mentoring at work (I’m a technical writer) that has worked out very well for both sides. It hasn’t happened with students. An occasional adult has shown interest but it’s never been a suitable matchup. (One wrote non-fiction, another’s writing I really didn’t like.)

I have a website and I sometimes hear from visitors there.

I write my books for teens, so I always like to hear from them. Sometimes they give me ideas what they’d like to see in the next book.

My talk is based on ‘How a book is born?’ I do a show-and-tell and describe the steps in the writing cycle from the very beginning from the creation of idea to the revision of the manuscript to the submission process to the publishing stage. I let them peek into the window of a writer’s life. I give them examples of famous writers who were rejected yet were published because they persisted. I stress the magic rule - that persistence always pays. Lastly I play a True/False game on the writing cycle.

Where do you get your ideas from is the most common question? Other questions are as follows: Are you rich and famous? Why did it take so long to publish your book? How old are you? This question is always asked. What is your favorite book?

Surprising question: But why are you brown?

They tell me the stories they write and their dreams.

Yes. If all the students are in one class I reply to them collectively.
A032: Mostly they write short stories and pictures of their stories.

A032: Students really want to know if they too can be authors and if they can publish books and what does it take to be a writer?

A032: To date I have published only picture books so my readers are young and not that informed of my website. However I am sure the release of my short stories and Young Adult novel it will change.

A032: The letters from students show how the story helped them. This validates my writing and encourages me to write more.

A032: The students’ enthusiasm and interest depends on the fact if their principal has briefed them about the author visit or not. The principal’s introduction of the author to the students on that day indicates to the students that the author visit is important. Often the teacher reads ahead of time to her class one story by the author. This fuels the enthusiasm of students and they try to maximize the benefits of author visits and ask many questions. Very few teachers regard author sessions as free time and either don’t attend them or do not make any attempts to discipline the students.

A033: I talk about the “essential parts of story”—character, plot, setting and climax/situation.

A033: Mostly, “where do you get your ideas?”

A033: “How come you’re a writer?” still gets me.

A033: Nothing I can think of.

A033: They are seldom about the writing process. They
talk about the stories and what they liked about them.
They ask about the publishing business.

A033: No. And if they are looking for me to write their essay, I am generally vague.

A033: They don’t seem to want to know a whole lot and are generally shocked and disappointed to discover that it is a process and not an event.

A033: No real benefit aside from an ego boost.

A033: I spend a great deal of my non-writing time visiting schools and yet have very little feedback personally AFTER the fact.

A034: The key messages to students: They need a coach, as in any sport. Most eventually realize their teacher is their coach. Structure is essential, either after a flying first draft, or as a starting point, but success in all writing relies on it. For fiction writing, they need to be aware of the Ps: People, Place, Plot (or problems) and Pretty (saying everything in the pretties way possible.) We are all writers.

A034: With elementary school students, that is hard to say. Most do not have a grasp of what writing is all about but would like the rock star status (!!) writing novels bestows. (Yeah, right.) What they need to know about the writing process is the revisions made to the copy edited version of the revised manuscript that took eight drafts to prepare before you sent it to the editor to begin with: a recipe for success in any field — work with the coach and never give up.

A034: I have taught writing, and journalism (a close cousin) for many years, and am still in touch with many of my graduates. Does this count, or are your interested only in contact with younger students about my work as a published author. As well, I teach writing courses on line and thus correspond without end. Some of these students continue the relationship. Somehow I don’t think that is what you were getting at, but may be wrong. And from left field: A graduate of mine in a college journalism program has retained contact and is now being mentored in her first young adult novel — as a friend, not a student. Does this count?
A034: See the comment about the j-grad writing a children’s novel. I think that qualifies as success.

A034: I realize the necessity but haven’t had time to learn the stuff and can’t afford to pay!

A034: Every time a writer tries to explain the inexplicable (where do stories come from?) digs another hidy-hole in which new story ideas can grow.

A034: It is important for schools to know that author visits are productive only if the students are aware of the writer and his work, and have read at least one or more books, and come prepared for some specific questions about the work.

A034: In addition, teachers should prepare students with other basics:
Asking for an autograph on a scrap of paper is in poor taste. Even polite authors who dislike saying no do so with strong reservations.
Students should be told ahead of time that the author cannot name a character or a book for a student. (It is a request I receive almost every visit.)

A035: Because I am also an oral storyteller one of the most popular writing workshops that I give involves moving from the oral tradition into written text. In this workshop we examine how retellings can be personalized by students as they make a story their own.

A035: The most commonly asked questions are: Where do you get your ideas? How do you write? (What is the process for you.....do you compose on the computer, do you write by hand and why.) How long does it take you to write a book on average? How do you organize your work time? Do you plan your story first before you start to write? What happens when you get stuck or have writer's block? What do you think is the most important things we should do to improve our writing?

A035: Mostly they want me to read drafts of their work and make comments.

A035: Mostly they want me to look at their writing and to talk about ways that they can make it better.
A035: They want some positive feedback from someone who actually writes. I think too often writing in schools is very teacher directed and aims to satisfy the needs of external examiners.

A035: I do not have a website. If students need to find out anything about my work they go to the websites of the Writers Union of Canada, Canscaip and Publisher and Agent sites.

A035: The ability to share my thoughts about writing. For so many students their experience of writing in school is about writing on demand. I want them to know that this is a very very difficult thing to do and that is not the norm for those who write as their passion.

A035: I think that anything an author can do to speak to the importance of developing authentic voices of students is a move in the right direction.

A036: have participated in 3 day high school curriculum-related poetry session in association with the LTTA out of the Royal Conservatory in Toronto and with writing workshops where I have developed a “****” Programme which I also bring to Teachers conferences. I'd be happy to supply the latest version of the programme if it’s suitable for your thesis.

A036: For many years I did a writing workshop with the street kids at **** in Toronto (****). I often explained before starting that my goal as a writer was to make some kid “out there” feel a little less alone. One young man, patiently explained to me that his goal as a writer was to make himself feel a little less alone. I grew up as a writer in that moment.

A036: They are either “jammed from being perfectionist” (having swallowed the rubric whole and thus need to know what exactly they need for an X, or that it’s totally impossible, they suck, don’t know how to say or convey anything—the **** actually help in these two extreme responses and indeed, were developed to address them.

A036: No, they want to know about the character, the ideas or about me.

A036: What are the “secrets”?

A036: No, never more than 2 or 3 notes back and forth.

A036: Not to date, although Penguin is developing a website for my next book.
A036: This is where I greedily get all my good bits, my details, watching eaves dropping, stealing. They have in the past written absolutely heart-braking letters, so candied and personal—it’s not so much about their writing process as it is, that they want to tell me their story. They influence me greatly as a writer.

A036: Although, it is changing, it is very difficult and complicated to get writers into high schools. I’ve been blessed more than most but, it’s a tough, tough sell, given schedules and that all the teacher conferences and most festivals are geared towards elementary and middle school age range. We’ve got a long way to go to catch up to Australia or England in this regard.

A037: Yes, I talk about both the process and craft of writing. Mostly, I show them what has worked best for me. I like to find inspiration in art and music and bring some samples to show the kids. Using art, I like to show how writers create pictures using words instead of paint. And with music, I like to show how different lyrics and arrangements can help writers add emotional depth to their scenes. I also like to talk about showing not telling and how writers use what-if to plot their stories.

A037: I usually get questions like, ‘How many pages do you write a day?’ ‘Are your characters based on anybody you know?’ ‘How long does it take to write a book?’

A037: Hmm ... this is a tough one. Other than actually reading me their work, they don’t actually share a lot. They might tell me something about their plot or about what genre they like to write.

A037: Sometimes they ask about where I get my ideas. But mostly they just want to know when the next book is coming out.

A037: This is tricky, because I find the students who write aren’t really asking me questions. What they really want is for me to read and comment on their work.

A037: There are a few people that I have maintained correspondence with and commented on their work in a mentoring capacity. I am still friends with most of them, so the correspondence is still ongoing - over a 2-3 year period. How was it successful?
Depends on how you define success. If it’s in professional sales then it hasn’t been successful yet. But if it’s in writing improvement then I would say it’s been relatively successful.

A037: I find my website to be a very important tool to keeping a connection with my readers, particularly my **** Livejournal blog and my Book Club. Readers can keep track of what’s going on in my series and can contact me with questions, etc.

A037: The biggest benefit for me is just knowing someone out there is reading my work and wants me to continue. It’s helps inspire me to keep plugging away!

A037: The best school visits for me are the ones where the teachers/librarians actually like to read kids books and have used their enthusiasm to encourage the kids to read. Readers make the best writers and are the most interested in what a writer as to say. Those are the visits where I feel like, wow, I’m so lucky to be doing what I’m doing!

A038: I speak about, and elicit oral responses from students, creation of character, plot/story and setting, and the importance of style – and emotion. Readings are therefore interactive with students’ responses, and I read from relevant portions of my work and that of other authors. Writing workshops require the students to perform writing exercises and share their work (the latter on a volunteer basis).

A038: When did you start writing? Where do you get your ideas? How do you find someone to publish your work? Are you rich?

Has there been unexpected or surprise comments that you still reflect on? Many! I tell them there are three questions they aren’t supposed to ask an author: How much money do you make? (I ask them to figure out how much an author makes based on the royalty system x number of books sold etc.) How old are you? (**** – that seems to satisfy them). How many times have you been married? (They laugh and concentrate on this last question!)

A038: Their story ideas, their journals, the books they like to read . . .

A038: 10 or so (I think teachers discourage students from peppering us with emails). Approximately how many letters do you receive from students/readers per year?
Sometimes a package containing a letter from each student in the classroom - this type of correspondence is obviously encouraged by teachers.

A038: Same as above, including some personal questions such as, Do you have a dog?

A038: Keep writing and reading. What do you feel students really want to know about writing? That they are not alone in their struggles to define the story they want to write; that we must keep trying even though we might receive rejections or criticism; that we must have the passion to keep going for success might come after many attempts to bring a story to fruition, or even after years of working at our writing.

A038: Ongoing. When they get published for the first time (or even subsequent successes) they contact me, knowing that I have been and will be their prime cheerleader (or one of perhaps many people who supported their efforts).

A038: I do have a website and my email is typed on it (people can’t just click on it because that was the source of a lot of junk mail). I receive letters from people – students and adults – who have read my books and want to comment on them.

A038: I figure if I can’t entertain a classroom of students for one hour (reading) or a 2-hour writing workshop, how could I hope to entertain them throughout the length of a book? Personal interaction with students not only keeps my senses sharp to their fields of interest but also gives me ideas for stories. One school class asked a question about what happened to one of my secondary characters – and so I wrote a book (a sequel) featuring this character and dedicated it to the staff and students of that school.

A038: I believe that people remember pretty well every book they read as a child, and certainly the authors that have come to their schools. It is important for them to meet “a real live author” as they so often refer to us as, and also for us to meet “real live readers.” It’s a win-win situation and I’m thrilled to be a part of the symbiosis.

A039: Yes. I have talked about writing. Mostly about the process - where ideas come from. How you work with early drafts. I have also done workshops on poetry and on writing strong description. I never know how valuable this is. As a former teacher, I think I could always do better with my own class than I can as a parachute-in teacher/author.

A039: Students invariably ask: how long does it take to write? Where do your ideas come from? Do you base characters on your own life experience? I’m surprised when they ask questions related to form or the over-all construct of the novel. I reflect on them only in
the sense that I’m glad some kids are viewing the novel as a constructed reality and
asking themselves questions about what it all means.

A039: Not a lot. Some shyly confess that they like to write. More tell me they don’t.
There isn’t much time to get kids to open up. (I generally work with jr. high kids and they
wouldn’t want to be caught seeming too keen.).

A039: I try to match comments to students and can’t recall a stock phrase. I’m not sure
kids really have an interest in the writing process. They really do like to get a response,
however. It’s more, “Hey. I’m not invisible and I thought I was.”

A039: No I haven’t. I’ve offered a few times, but no one has taken me up on it. I think
there’s a lot of potential for this kind of work.

A039: I don’t have one. As I have a book coming out next year, I’m thinking about it. I
imagine it makes you easier to locate, etc. However, A017 - a friend of mine - has done
quite well through the websites operated by CANSCAIP and Young Alberta Book
Society, so perhaps it isn’t essential.

A039: Occasionally, a student confides something through correspondence that s/he
wouldn’t likely do in class. “I am being bullied by my stepfather,” or “my mother is
always gone.” I think it’s important to let that child know there are people who care
without playing social worker. It’s always beneficial to feel like we make a difference.

A039: Again, I question the value of a one-shot drop-in visit by an author. I think it
would be so much more beneficial to work with a group for an hour or so over a five or
six week period. That way I, as writer, would get to know what each student is capable of
and they’d be more at ease with me.

A040: I rarely talk about process unless requested to by a teacher or asked by a student.
When I do, I generally talk about descriptive writing. How to take an historical incident
and describe it so it comes alive for a modern audience. In a workshop setting, I have
props (the favourite is a World War One shrapnel shell) that I ask the students to describe
in one short paragraph, using all five senses. I then encourage them to read out their
descriptions and get comments from the other students. Most questions are standard,
“what inspires you to write?” sort of thing. One of the best was from a grade seven girl:
“Do you find it hard to let go of your writing once it is finished?” They tend to be very
concrete and talk about actual thing or incident they are writing about (especially boys).
Most write with little awareness of the process (I’m talking here about the younger
grades, 6/7/8), but there are exceptions. No. It’s usually about something that caught
their imagination in one of my books and a question about background or research. Or
else it is stock questions for a book report. I tell them that, rather than focussing on one
aspect of the writing process, they should read voraciously and absorb all the different
ways authors have expressed themselves. This means that they go through phases of
being derivative and trying to write in a particular style, but that is okay. It’s all practice and will lead eventually to finding their own voice, which is what the serious ones want. I have a blog, but it is more useful for teachers planning readings etc. I have a presence on several websites, CANSCAIP, TWUC etc. The only feedback I have had from readers is that they have found out biographical details about me. It’s good for the ego, knowing that someone reads the books. I enjoy interacting with kids, they often bring a novel and surprising perspective to what they read. I think the value of authors in schools, (for the general student population rather than the elite writers) is in creating a broad awareness of the writing process and the background (in my case often the research background) to telling a story. It makes books more accessible to the less enthusiastic reader if they know something about it and if they see that the author is just a regular person who tells stories. I hope that encourages them, boys particularly, to read more. People write books and teachers occasionally seem to forget that in their enthusiasm for the book itself. After all, some of these kids are going to grow up to be authors, not books.

A041: yes

I’m answering this quickly (deadline looming) so will probably forget a couple of things I routinely talk about: importance of revision - I try to “experience the story through my characters” - i.e. put myself in that situation to try to be able to show in close detail when it seems important - I tell the students that I sometimes get stuck - that we all have our blind spots, and that talking to colleagues helps us see the bigger picture at times.

- I talk about the role of publishing house editors - how we all have to “do corrections” on our work before it ever gets to print. I always show examples of marked-up manuscripts!

A041: where do I work? what are my hours of work? do I get mad when editors tell me to make changes? - can’t think of any surprise questions/comments.

A041: not very much - unless teachers prompt discussion.

A041: don’t know ... haven’t actually kept track, and don’t have time just now to check through my saved e-files (I save all correspondence).

A041: 100% yes - when students show genuine interest, when their correspondence is well-written/well thought out, I sometimes engage in dialogue. Usually this has to do with author studies, author fairs, etc. I find that written letters tend to be of higher quality, so usually take more time on my response to these.
A041: importance of revision using character as “filter” for narrating a story
Questions most often occurring: Do I like to write? I don’t very often get comments/questions pertaining to their writing.

A041: don’t have my own yet - one in construction ; rely on pages @ professional orgs.

A041: nothing tangible apart from profile, and “feeling good” about connecting with readers, and knowing my work’s being used in schools.

A042: I may talk about the process of writing though it’s not the primary focus of my presentation. I tell them that a book starts with an idea. That I read around the subject before I sit down to write and that I have the whole story in my head before I begin. I tell them I expect editorial revisions and sometimes I give them examples of editorial changes.

A042: I don’t remember any questions about the writing process as such, surprising or otherwise. Students may ask where I get my ideas from or how long it takes to write a book, but that’s about it. I write and illustrate information storybooks, so the main focus of my presentation is the information content of the book plus the process of putting a book together - focusing more on the illustration process than the writing process, as I can demonstrate this with slides.

A042: I reply 100% to all correspondence. Often I receive a group mailing, to which I reply with a single letter, answering all the questions.

A042: Very little, because this is not the emphasis of my presentations.

A042: I don’t use a website for correspondence. It’s a great pleasure to receive mail from students who have enjoyed my books, and know that my work is reaching them. I write books based on actual events in nature. My contact with schools showed me that my books provoked questions that were not easily answered by parents or teachers, so I prepared information guides to my first three books, then switched to including
supplementary information as end pages or an appendix. In other words, the response of readers to my work has helped me to improve my books.

A043: YES -- How to deal with writer’s block, how to create a unique metaphor and simile, how to create an interesting character.

A043: Where do you get your ideas? How do you start? What do you do for writer’s block? Lots of unexpected or surprise comments but I don’t reflect or recollect them any more.

A043: Mostly they share: their problems with writing, not being able to complete a story, not knowing how to continue with the story in the middle, not knowing how to end a piece.

A043: Often they ask me homework type questions—what’s your theme, setting etc. Things their teachers have asked them to research. About writing they ask where I get my ideas, are my characters based on real people, which incidents really happened to me.

A043: I have no specific comments. I answer their questions and depending on the seriousness of their query may impart more writing wisdoms on them.

Students really want to know the secret magic formula to producing a wonderful story each and every time. They also want to know how they can get published and whether they are worthy of publication.

A043: Yes, two months.

A043: It wasn’t so much about writing as that the students were lonely and wanted to know someone famous cared about them. By responding, I hope I showed I cared.

A043: Certainly the easy correspondence of e-mail has made me more accessible to readers. Do the students get that e-mail from my website? I don’t know. They do leave comments for me on my “book”. I think websites are a necessary tool so that I don’t have to supply biographies to educators and librarians as much.

A043: It reminds me that children really still read and read my work and enjoy it. They rarely write to say anything that isn’t flattering so it’s always encouraging to read the notes.
A043: An author visit works best if somehow the students perceive you to be a celebrity. The educators can help with this by downloading website information and posting it and reading the works aloud or displaying them prominently and encouraging students to read them.

Then the author celebrity need to speak personably and treat the students as though they matter, which of course they do. The reading of the author’s novels becomes very much personality driven. If the student likes you, they will make every effort to read you. The student takes away from this experience, not only an excitement for reading and writing, but that a celebrity is “down to earth” and cares about them.

A044: In ordinary author visits, I talk a lot about the process of revision, how nothing the students see on their library shelves was just written and published. In workshops and residencies, I concentrate on different technical skills, character development, point of view, descriptive writing for example.

A044: Last year in Nova Scotia a relatively young student, maybe grade four, commented that I must like to challenge myself in my writing. No one had ever said anything like that before. You can always tell which students are serious readers and potential writers because they ask questions about writing.

A044: What do students share with you about their own writing processes? Everything.

A044: About 20, more if a book is shortlisted for a readers’ choice award. Sometimes whole classes write individual letters to me, so it can be as many as 80 to 90 letters per year in those cases. But the number of spontaneous hard copy fan letters from self-motivated readers is always quite small. 100% and I reply to both equally. I give each letter careful consideration and provide as much information as I can. It can easily take an hour to write a reply.

A044: Sometimes they do, more often they are interested in themes or characters, or want a sequel.

A044: Only if they are interested in becoming writers themselves, and then, the questions are more along the lines of how time is spent. Most beginning writers, adults as well as
children, simply don't have the understanding of the writing process to ask more specific questions. For example, no one has ever asked me about character development or point of view. These concepts have to be introduced in writing workshops before people begin to think in those terms.

A044: No, students generally want answers to specific questions and do not require long-term attention. I'm willing to bet C.S. Lewis had a housekeeper. This winter, I agreed to accept a professional mentorship for which I am well paid. That's really the only circumstance under which I can spare the time to do that sort of work. This is a program for adults and the person is very specifically interested in learning to write for young adults. That said, I ran a book club for four years out of the local independent book store, one Sunday a month. Because I am a writer, we talked about the writing. I found, after a few years, the girls (I think I had one boy one year) began to sound like writers. They would say things like "I found the pacing of the book was off," or "I was distracted by the way the writer shifted the point of view." I realized that we were looking at books in a very different way than they did in language arts classes at school.

A044: I'm not sure how useful that was to any of these girls, who are still in high school. I had a feeling I might have been working at cross purposes with their teachers.

A044: My website has two pages, one for young writers and one for adults who want to write for children. I developed these mainly so I could be useful to people with questions without taking time away from my work. Writers who develop long-term relationships with readers are probably not also doing housework and cooking in addition to writing, researching books, playing an active part in the local writing community and travelling. I work evenings as well as days to accomplish everything I'm supposed to be doing.

A044: The books go out there and have lives of their own. It's nice to know they are being read and appreciated. Sometimes you realize a book has actually mattered to a reader. I don't go out of my way to seek school visits. Some are very poorly organized, the travel can be grueling and the time lost from writing is hard to recover. I enjoy talking to students who have read my work. Pitching my books to students who have never heard of me is a pathetically slow way to build a readership and I've passed the point where I have the patience to do this. The books themselves are my primary contribution to literacy and my obligation is to keep producing solidly crafted work. I mistrust the whole idea that contact with a writer can promote literacy. The kids to read, the ones who aren't interested aren't going to suddenly convert because they meet a writer. Some very intelligent kids will never be engaged by literature. I raised such a child. She's on her way to medical school now, but she never learned to read literature for pleasure. So I'm not a big fan of author visits without a definite focus. That said, when I have the opportunity
to teach writing workshops, I feel I am able to convey some really important skills and information about writing, but only if the students are engaged and receptive.

A045: Yes. Sometimes I discuss how I use research to create factual elements in my fiction. Sometimes I talk about how the illustrations in picture books work with the text to create the story. I always discuss the editing process and how important it is to have someone other than me read my work and make suggestions for improvement.

A045: They always ask how I got my ideas and how long it takes me to write a book. They ask when I first started writing. I always describe that I began writing at their age and emphasize that they are writers too.

A045: When prompted, they’ll tell me about what they are doing in class—how they share their writing and do peer-editing.

A045: Just started mine.

A046: I incorporate a PowerPoint presentation which shows the process I use to write, taking students/teachers from the idea phase, through research, drafts, revisions and editorial input to the final publication itself. I show samples of writing from each stage, and emphasize the types of decisions that are typical. With older groups, I also talk about the publication process, mention queries-proposals, and how collaboration with a publisher/editor is secured and nurtured.

A046: I get the usual questions, some more personal than others. Two favourites: Have you become rich from your books? How old are you? Since I largely write non-fiction and incorporate true stories, students are often interested in how I find the material for my books and how I do research. Typical questions are: How do you find these stories? Have you met the people you write about? How do you know the stories/facts are true? Do you have to get a person’s permission to write about him or her? What happens if a person doesn’t agree with what you write about him or her?
A046: Very occasionally students will share a problem that they have with their writing. Usually the question is directly related to an assignment they are writing for their teacher, but sometimes the more eager student who writes just for fun will be daring enough to pose a question. In that case, 50% of the time the question is: Do you ever have trouble finding ideas to write about? Almost as often the question is: Do you ever have trouble finishing a story? (By the way, I answer ‘no’ to the first, and ‘yes’ to the second, both followed with some elaboration).

A046: The number varies a lot and is really difficult to say. If a book is in a reader’s choice program like Silver Birch or Red Cedar, I will get a fair number of e-mails. If I do readings, I sometimes get feedback or questions. Otherwise, I rarely hear from readers unless a teacher makes a point of having a class correspond in which case I get a sudden burst of mail.

A046: Again, as with e-mails, few unless some force like a teacher or award nomination initiates the process.

A046: I reply 100% of the time to both e-mail and regular mail. If a teacher makes a class project out of writing letters, I sometimes send a single response to the whole class rather than one to each student as the questions students ask tend to be repeated.

A046: Most of the time correspondence focuses on what they liked/didn’t like about a book, favourite parts or passages, people or experiences in a story etc. Occasionally, a question surfaces about where the idea for the book came from, why I became a writer, and sometimes I’ll get one about my writing habits.

A046: They are often curious about how and why I became a writer, and also about how I write. They sometimes express genuine surprise that I struggle with wording on a regular basis and that I have to repeatedly rewrite passages. They are under the impression, I think, that if you are a professional writer - and a good one to boot - then the words just flow out of the pen and right on to the page, perfect the first time around. They are also surprised that I write every day for at least a few hours, and that habit is as great a part in success as any talent they might have.

A046: Just once, a few years ago when a student contacted me several times through a year. Somehow he became entranced with my writing, read everything I ever published, and kept contact by mail for 5 or 6 months. We corresponded more about life than about writing as I recall.
A046: At the moment, I don’t have my own website (that may change shortly). Students/teachers can find me on several web pages, however, such as the Writers’ Union of Canada and Canadian Children’s Book Centre. The experience has been very positive as it provides easy access for teachers and librarians, but I can’t say that students themselves have accessed me this way.

A046: First, it’s gratifying just to know that someone is reading the material I write. Secondly, on occasion I find out how a book impacts on the reader, and that is perhaps the greatest reward of all. Now and then, you can tell that you have given readers something to think about, or have affected the way they think about a subject, or have sparked an interest in reading where none existed before. Thirdly, the correspondence puts me in touch with the world of children and the market for which I write. Otherwise, sitting at desk all day, it’s easy to feel disconnected from these young people and to lose perspective.

A046: I grew up in an era where writers kept to themselves and the whole process was one of mystery. I had misconceptions about writers and the processes they used, and, having never met a professional writer or corresponded with one, thought the way I wrote was the exception rather than the norm, and the material I produced was hardly worth the effort. I know differently now, but it’s taken years of experience and many false starts to get where I am. I think putting kids in touch with writers humanizes the process, and informs them that not only are there many different kinds of writing, but just as many different ways of accomplishing it. I wish I’d had such contact when I was in school.

A047: a lot of emphasis on the role of reading in a writing life; sources of ideas for stories, with an emphasis on ‘real life’; doing research; revising my own work; working with an editor.

A047: Where do you get your ideas? How long does it take to write a book? Why did you want to be a writer? What do you like writing better - picture books or novels? Maybe - if you could change anything in any of the books you’ve written, what would it be?

A047: Often they just want to tell me about a story they have written or are writing, looking, I think, for my approval and encouragement more than anything specific about their process.
A047: See Question 3. They also ask if I have any suggestions as to how they should go about finding a publisher.

A047: I like to try opening their eyes to the abundance and variety of story ideas all around them. And I encourage them to focus on developing their craft as writers, and to have fun doing it, because getting rejections from publishers (as all writers do) can be discouraging, and it would be a terrible thing if they were to become discouraged about their writing and stop writing before they had a chance to become the writers they’re capable of becoming.

A047: I maintained contact with one student from the time she was in grade seven and into her second or third year of university - first through regular mail and then through email. How was it successful? She gained terrific confidence in herself and the power of her writing and used it for social good. She was really proud to share with me something that happened when she was in high school; a girl had been victimized and beaten by a group of girls and left in a situation where she might have died. The student I was in touch with wrote letters to the community paper and more or less demanded an apology to the girl from the instigators, and got it. She said a lot of her confidence came from the comments I’d offered her on her work and the encouragement I’d given her.

A047: I have a website, a pretty good one I think, and it’s certainly made it easier for teachers and so on to get in touch with me. I don’t often hear from students through it, but I did have an ongoing exchange with a boy from Germany who’d read one of my novels as part of his ESL course, and that was pretty neat.

A047: It helps keep the books alive for me, in a way, to hear about how readers have enjoyed them. It helps make me feel I’m doing something worthwhile, both in writing the books I do and in encouraging students in their efforts.

A047: I’ve been told a number of times about kids who hadn’t read a book till they picked up one of mine, about kids who hadn’t written anything until they wrote something about my visit to their school, and about how they can’t keep my books on the shelves once I’ve been to a school or library. Kids reading and kids writing because of something I wrote or said? It doesn’t get much better than that. And knowing I’m one of many writers who have had similar experiences, it’s hard to believe anyone would ever doubt the value of having authors visiting with kids.

A048: Yes, I often talk about the craft of writing, especially with older students from grade 3 and up. The students also do short exercises. I describe, timelines, character development, setting, plotlines and endings. I really focus on the editing process as that is most students don’t like to work on rewriting. We also talk about ideas and where ideas come from and what to do with a great idea. I play a game ‘hotseat’, where a volunteer takes the chair in front of the class. The other students ask questions. On chart paper we
describe the answers and responses and that's how we can develop a character. A box with items can help determine character traits.

A048: How much money I make. How long it takes me to write a novel. Where I get my ideas. Why I write about the second world war if I wasn’t in it. An the one I still reflect on when I find myself desperate for writing time is: You write books, you teach fulltime, you have three children, you built a house with your husband, you do house tours, when do you find the time to write?

A048: The students often tell me what they like to write about. They share that they hate rewriting. They ask me if I will read their work and give them feedback, which I always do.

A048: It differs from year to year, but when my novel “****” was nominated for the Silver Birch Award, I must have answered over 200 e-mails and 300 letters.

A048: The students ask me where I get my ideas, how long it takes to write a novel, If I’m working on any sequels, how much money I make, when where I write and what I am working on write now.

A048: Some of my specific comments are: If you really want to become a writer, you need to practice, practice writing, you need to read, read, read, and you have to be very determined, never become discouraged and never give up. I share with them that it took me seven years for my first book to get published.

A048: I only have corresponded with students for two or three times.

A048: My web site has been very successful I have posted study guides for teachers and students for all my books. The feedback from students and teachers has been very rewarding.

A048: I love hearing from my readers. It gives me an incentive to write more. The students often are very honest in their opinion and interpretation of my writing. It is very rewarding.

A048: I think it is very important that authors visit the students in schools and libraries. The interaction between author and student is very important for the author as well as the student. An author visit encourages students to read. The students are often very excited during an author visit. The learn about the back ground of the book. They learn there is a whole story behind the novel they have just read.
A049: AS A NON-FICTION AUTHOR I USUALLY TALK ABOUT THE CONTENT OF THE BOOK RATHER THAN THE PROCESS OF CREATING IT. STUDENTS MAY ASK HOW LONG IT TOOK TO WRITE ETC. BUT LITTLE MORE THAN THAT.

A049: NO, THEY USUALLY ASK ABOUT THE CONTENT OF THE BOOK — DID I MEET PEOPLE WHO ARE MENTIONED IN THE BOOK ETC. THEY ALWAYS WANT TO KNOW IF EVERYTHING IN THE BOOK IS TRUE.

A049: WITH MY BOOK ABOUT D-DAY A NUMBER OF STUDENT SAID THEY HAD INTERVIEWED THEIR GRANDPARENTS ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES IN WWII. WITH ****, A FEW TOLD ME OF KEEPING **** OF THEIR OWN.

A049: THIS DEPENDS ENTIRELY ON WHETHER THE BOOK IS NOMINATED FOR ONE OF THE PROVINCIAL "TREE" AWARDS. WHEN A BOOK IS NOMINATED THERE CAN BE LETTERS FROM WHOLE CLASSROOMS WHO SEND THEM AS PART OF A CLASS EXERCISE. OUTSIDE OF THESE AWARDS LETTERS AND EMAILS ARE RARE. BUT I’M SETTING UP A NEW WEBSITE AS I HAVE FOUR NEW BOOKS IN 06-07 SO MAIL MAY INCREASE.

A049: SOMETIMES NONE. WHEN NOMINATED FOR A "TREE" AWARD — MAYBE 30-100.

A049: VERY SIMPLE QUESTIONS. WHAT GAVE YOU THE IDEA? HOW LONG DID IT TAKE TO WRITE?

A049: AGAIN, THEY'RE MOSTLY INTERESTED IN THE CONTENT NOT THE PROCESS.

A049: OCCASIONALLY I’VE EXCHANGED MORE THAN ONE LETTER OR EMAIL WITH A STUDENT BUT USUALLY NOT MORE THAN TWO-THREE LETTERS.

A049: I’M WORKING ON MY OWN WEBSITE WHICH WILL HAVE CONTENT TO EXTEND THE READING EXPERIENCE.

A049: IT’S GRATIFYING TO GET DIRECT RESPONSES FROM READERS. BUT USUALLY, TO BE FRANK, THERE’S NOT MUCH CONTENT TO THE LETTERS AND THEY’RE ALL RATHER SIMILAR. OCCASIONALLY A STUDENT WILL SURPRISE WITH A WELL-WRITTEN LETTER SHOWING A DEVELOPED INTEREST IN A SUBJECT AREA BUT IT’S RARE.
A049: I find giving a talk about a book to be much more successful than reading in schools. Showing artifacts or pictures helps, too. I recently tried out a book in progress with a few classes and their responses were helpful in tailoring the content to the age group. Generally, I’m reminded of how simple and dramatic the presentation of the material needs to be.

A050: Yes, I talk about the process and craft of writing. I describe how my personal experiences and experiences of others inspire my writing. I speak to the students as writers, which of course they all are, and I provide examples of how we frequently play “what if” when a potential story idea intrigues us. I also emphasize the need for honesty and commitment to one’s writing, as wonderful stories sometimes only emerge throughout the rewriting process that consumes such a large part of the writing process. Students are often surprised to learn that I frequently rewrite my text 8 or 9 times.

A050: They frequently ask where my ideas come from and also how long it took me to write my book. They also often ask me if I always knew that I wanted to be a writer. While this perhaps does not apply to writing process, students are very interested in the publishing process, eg. did the publisher approach me (I wish!) or did I contact him/her, how did I make contact with the publisher, did I have any say about the cover illustration, and how long did the entire process take from when I began writing until I had a finished book. My favourite surprise question however was “How do you get paid and how much?” Kids are so beautifully honest and I’m privileged by the opportunity to return that favour!

A050: They sometimes comment that writing is hard and suggest that perhaps they’re therefore not good at it. I am always eager and happy to disclose that those are my experiences as well and that each story takes its toll on me in different ways, yet is rewarding in different ways. I also get a sense that students sometimes feel they have too little choice about their writing content and style.

A050: Is this my first book, do I like being a writer, how long did it take for me to write it, where do my ideas come from, do I like being a writer.

I think they really want to know what it’s like being a writer. Unfortunately they frequently don’t necessarily see themselves as writers despite their classroom writing and sometimes the personal writing that they undertake (eg. journalling, personal poetry writing, etc.).
My first book was just released about a year ago and so correspondence with students has not been long-term. Most usually, the students write with their personal responses to my book and I then respond to them. So far, correspondence has not extended beyond that.

A050: Here is my confession: I have not yet constructed a website. My reasons for not having done so (yet!) are entirely unoriginal and predictable: time constraints, family commitments, lack of computer skill, etc., etc. Ironically I have corresponded with other writers via their websites. Must get onto that....

A050: I respect young people enormously and my personal goal is to write books that they enjoy reading. The only way I can accomplish this is by contact with my readers.

A050: I seek out, on an ongoing basis, opportunities to network with and listen to the concerns and methods of other writers. Invariably I come away with even a small tidbit here or there that helps me while on the road to becoming a better writer. I similarly believe that students, as writers themselves, benefit from contact with a wide range of writers as this will hopefully increase the likelihood of them connecting with the work of one or several individuals. I feel this can only help them in their own writing and creative pursuits.

A051: Since my books are mostly nonfiction, my interactions with students takes the form of hands on workshops where I talk, demonstrate and/or have the kids experiment depending on the book and teacher request.

A051: We don't talk a great deal about the writing process. Most of the discussion is more about the publishing process, i.e. how a book gets made, and about the research that goes on even before I start to write. Kids are interested in serendipity stories that occur during the research process.

A051: I am presently corresponding as a penpal with students in two classes in B.C. via letters. The correspondence is not connected to their writing but rather as getting to know you in both directions.

A051: We just started this correspondence in A063 and so far I have received two batches of letters. Other than this, I don't receive correspondence from kids.
A051: They don’t ask about the writing process. They ask questions about my likes and dislikes, my travels, my city, and where I get my ideas from.

A051: I use websites for the purpose of research.

A051: I am using the information I gain from the correspondence for a future series. This was made clear to the classroom teachers before we started. Children are motivated to write because they are writing for a purpose.

A052: A bit. So far, I have only made short presentations to elementary classes. As a playwright, I usually enter the class in role as a character from one of my plays. We discuss different aspects of character and what kinds of details we can add to make a character more interesting.

A052: Generally, students want to know “how long” it takes to write a story or a play. Both teachers and students want to know, “Where do you get your ideas?” or “How do you come up with this stuff?” One teacher commented, “And I thought my mind worked overtime!” Nothing really special stands out. Up to now, I have not done a lot of school presentations.

A052: Some background: I believe that drama is a powerful key to “unlocking the imagination”. I use drama exercises to “spark” students’ imagination and it works wonders. Students are itching to start writing following a drama activity that has really captured them. They are excited to share their characters and their characters’ adventures with you. They love to come up with creative and funny names for their characters.

A052: I have only ever received one email from a student, a grade 9 girl in the States who was attending an honours English class. For her class project she had to interview a writer. Her teacher had distributed a list of people to choose from and I guess I was on that list. She claimed she knew my work. She interviewed me and I responded to her questions via email.
A052: The above-mentioned girl wanted to know what kind of training I had undergone to become a writer. She was interested in a list of books that I enjoyed reading and that I could recommend to her. How long have I been writing? When did I start? Did I always want to be a writer? Who influenced me in my writing pursuits? Those kinds of questions.

A052: Like most writers, I encourage students to read: all the BEST books that they can get their hands on. If they are interested in writing plays or scripts, I encourage them to attend plays or other forms of theatre. While writing can be fun, it is not always or rarely easy. High school students can join their school newspaper to gain writing experience.

A052: I don’t have my own website per se. Although I am interested in establishing one someday. The girl who contacted me for an interview found my name on the **** website. I also have a webpage through my publisher. Websites make you more accessible.

A052: With my limited experience, this is difficult to answer. I was truly amazed that a student would seek me out for an interview. For me, the biggest benefit is the opportunity to encourage another. I’ve received a lot of encouragement and support along the way, and it’s my opportunity to give some of that back.

A052: I wish I could answer this question in two months time. But, here are some things I can share at this point: I know that the students and the teachers that I will be working with are very excited about the prospect of working with a playwright and with the opportunity to perform in a play that I have written specifically for them. In addition, the parents of students are excited as well, and have taken me aside to share this with me. This pilot project is a unique offering and so far it has generated a lot of excitement, and interest by other people in the school district and other districts.

A053: I DO TALK A LITTLE ABOUT THE PROCESS OF WRITING INDIRECTLY. THE PROCESS IS SUCH A MYSTERY IT’S DIFFICULT TO PUT INTO WORDS. I DO SPEAK A GREAT DEAL ABOUT INSPIRITATION (THE SPIRIT WITHIN WANTING TO CREATE) AND HOW, FROM THE MANY, MANY STORY IDEAS THAT I GET, THE ONE’S THAT TURN INTO BOOKS ARE INSPIRED BY SOMETHING, SOME FORCE OR POWER THAT WANTS TO CREATE THIS PARTICULAR STORY. I TELL THE STUDENTS THAT IN ORER TO BE ‘OPEN’ TO INSPIRATION, ONE NEEDS TO DO TWO THINGS --- SHUT UP AND SHUT OFF. BY SHUT UP, I MEAN STOP TALKING SO MUCH AND HAVE SOME DOWN TIME WITH YOURSELF. SHUT THE MIND DOWN FOR A WHILE AND JUST BE, JUST LISTEN. INSPIRATION CAN’T GET IN IF WE’RE ALWAYS ‘ON’. BY SHUT OFF, I SPECIFICALLY MEAN “SHUT OFF THE TV, THE COMPUTER, THE PLAYSTATIONS ETC.” IF WE BECOME TOO BUSY BEING ENTERTAINED, WE’LL NEVER HAVE THE TIME OR DESIRE TO CREATE SOMETHING FROM INSIDE OURSELVES.
A053: MOSTLY, I'M ASKED "WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS FROM?" AND, "HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO WRITE A BOOK?" I CAN'T RECALL ANY COMMENTS THAT I STILL REFLECT ON.

A053: MANY STUDENTS TELL ME THEY'RE WRITING A BOOK (SHORT STORIES IS MORE LIKE IT) BUT THEY CAN'T SEEM TO FINISH. THERE'S NEVER ENOUGH TIME AND ALWAYS WAY TOO MUCH TO DO. WHEN I SUGGEST THEY "SHUT OFF" THEIR TV, THEY GET VIOLENT. JUST KIDDING. THEY CAN'T SEEM TO ENTERTAIN THE THOUGHT. MANY HAVE SAID THEY'D DIE WITHOUT IT. IT'S SAD REALLY.

A053: A DOZEN AT MOST. THIS IS STARTING TO PICK UP A LITTLE BECAUSE OF CURRENT NOMINATIONS FOR ONE OF MY BOOKS.

A053: I RESPOND TO ALL CORRESPONDENCE. 100% I REPLY TO EMAILS THROUGH EMAIL AND LETTERS THROUGH REGULAR MAIL (BECAUSE THEY DON'T OFTEN PUT AN EMAIL ADDRESS IN THE LETTER).

A053: HOW DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS? WHEN DID YOU START TO WRITE? HAVE YOU WRITTEN ANY OTHER BOOKS? WHAT'S IT LIKE BEING A WRITER?

A053: I DON'T THINK THEY WANT TO KNOW MUCH ABOUT THE WRITING PROCESS. THEY SEEM MORE INTERESTED IN HOW YOU CAME TO WRITE THE BOOKS THEY PARTICULARLY LIKE, WHERE YOU GET YOUR IDEAS, AND ABOUT THE LIFE OF A WRITER.

A053: I'VE NEVER CONTINUED CORRESPONDENCE OVER ANY PERIOD OF TIME. IT'S USUALLY A ONE-OFF.

A053: I THINK WEBSITES ARE FABULOUS BUT I DON'T HAVE ONE AND CAN'T RESPOND AS TO THE IMPACT IT HAS ON MY RELATIONSHIP WITH READERS.
The benefits are that I get to actually realize there are young people out there who do read my books. We writers live in a vacuum. It seems that tons of work go into creating a project, and then it disappears into some Bermuda Triangle. There's no sense, except for the occasional school or library visit, that anyone is even aware you exist.

School environments seem to be the one place we authors get to make contact with the world of our readers. Thank God for them! Young readers, for the most part, are really happy to have you come by and visit, and, if your presentation is a decent and entertaining one, they treat you like a star. Where else does one get asked to autograph books, scraps of paper, running shoes, shirts, arms etc. Kids are still able to get excited about us, and it feels great!

Basic picture book story pattern - show, don't tell - let the main character solve his own problem - editing process - time it takes to write a picture book - length of story.

The most common comment is surprise at the number of edits/re-writes.

They are proud of stories that they have written.

Often, they want comments and feedback on their work. (Is it ready for publication? / Is it a good story? / Does it need editing?)

The main comment I make is in regards to the "show, don't tell rule" Most educated people are good writers, but they don't understand the difference between a speech and a narrative.

There's one student with whom I have corresponded for about five years. He's changed direction several times - screen play, short story, novel, picture book - so progress has been chaotic, but he seems determined to complete something, and his writing has improved greatly.
A054: All contact with the young is helpful. It keeps me on my toes and helps me to look critically at my own work.

A054: After visiting schools, I get a lot of feedback from teachers. They often comment on how energized the students get after one of my presentations.

A055: The importance of vocabulary, simplicity, brevity, clarity, patience, some other source of income, etc.

A055: General questions such as where do I get my ideas, etc.

A055: about a dozen when my books are shortlisted for an award. Very few otherwise.

A055: Will I write a sequel.

A055: You are never too young (or too old) to be a successful author (site examples, like Gordon Korman, David Barron etc) How long does it take to write a book. Where do I get my ideas etc.

A055: I don’t have a website.

A055: Encouragement to keep writing. Praise always feels good.

A056: Basic, emphasizing the importance of READING as the primary tool in the writer’s magic box of tricks.

A056: Where to send it. How much money do I make.

A056: Many stories started, very few complete.

A056: Where ideas come from, where to send it.
A056: Keep Reading, Keep Writing. What do you feel students really want to know about writing? Should they continue or is it a pipe dream. (to become a published writer.)

A056: 6-8 months. How was it successful? Student didn’t kill herself, continued with her writing.

A056: Discover what they like to read.

A056: More funding for literacy programs, particularly author visits to schools, is very much needed from all sources. Reading and writing must become more important at all levels, home, school, industry, government with new and innovative programs and funding available. Priorities must be shifted to reflect this new paradigm.

A057: ‘CHARACTERS COUNT SO COUNT YOUR CHARACTERS’ IS ONE OF MY FAVOURITES. ALSO—ONLY GOD GETS THINGS RIGHT THE FIRST TIME. WRITERS HAVE TO LEARN TO RE-WRITE. I ALSO DO A WORKSHOP ON CHARACTERIZATION, AND ONE ON THE 10 TOP TIPS FOR WRITERS (THERE ARE ONLY 7 ON THE WORKSHEET, BUT YOU’D BE AMAZED AT HOW SELDOM KIDS FIGURE THIS OUT.) I MOST OFTEN DO WORKSHOPS WITH ELEMENTARY STUDENTS, GRADES 4-8 AND UNLESS A TEACHER HAS STUDIED ONE OF MY BOOKS WITH HER STUDENTS, THE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE WRITING PROCESS TEND TO BE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN. THE KIDS ARE MORE PLOT FOCUSED.

A057: HOW MUCH MONEY DO YOU MAKE? HOW OLD ARE YOU? WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BE A WRITER? WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS? CAN YOU GIVE ME ONE OF YOUR BOOKS? MOST UNUSUAL QUESTIONS: ARE THOSE YOUR REAL TEETH? AND WHERE CAN I GET MY POETIC LICENSE. (TRUE!).

A057: NOT VERY MUCH. I THINK THIS HAS TO DO WITH THEIR AGE AND A CERTAIN DEGREE OF AWE AT SEEING A ‘REAL LIVE AUTHOR’. A LOT OF MY PRESENTATIONS ARE IN SMALL TOWNS WHERE THEY DON’T HAVE A BOOKSTORE, MUCH LESS RESIDENT AUTHORS.
A057: NONE—I DON’T PUBLICIZE MY E-MAIL ADDRESS. THIS IS PERHAPS NOT A GOOD IDEA, BUT.

A057: INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS SENDING A LETTER GET INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES; A CLASS SET OF LETTERS WILL GET A CLASS LETTER (SUITEABLE FOR PHOTOCOPYING) AND AN AUTOGRAPHED BOOKMARK FOR EACH STUDENT.

A057: OFTEN SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ABOUT MY BOOKS. AND WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS (AGAIN) AND HOW CAN JAMES BARRY CAPTURE TED WHEN TED ISN’T REAL ARE TWO OF THE MOST COMMON. THIS LEADS TO A DISCUSSION OF WHAT HISTORICAL FICTION ACTUALLY IS.

A057: NOT ANYMORE, ALTHOUGH THE LATEST BATCH HAD ONE LETTER WHICH IS UNLIKE ANY I HAVE EVER RECEIVED AND INCLUDED COMMENTS SUCH AS ‘MOST OF THE CHARACTERS ARE STEROTYPES, BUT ONE DOES SHOW SOME GROWTH OVER THE BOOK’. AND THIS FROM A GRADE 6 STUDENT! HE WILL GROWN UP TO BE A GLOBE AND MAIL CRITIC, I AM SURE.

A057: NOT THAT MUCH. USUALLY THEY ARE RESPONDING TO A TEACHER GENERATED ASSIGNMENT. BUT AGAIN, THIS MIGHT BE THE AGE OF MY READERS. I IMAGINE OLDER KIDS HAVE MORE DETAILED QUESTIONS.

A057: ABOUT 3 YEARS. How was it successful? YES AND NO. THE STUDENT WAS ILL WITH A DISEASE THAT SHE DIDN’T KNOW WAS FATAL (HER PARENTS KEPT IT FROM HER.) SHE WROTE TO ME AND ASKED FOR A SEQUEL TO ONE OF MY BOOKS. I ENCOURAGED HER TO WRITE HER OWN SEQUEL FOR MOSES, ME AND MURDER, AND SHE NOT ONLY DID BUT SUBMITTED IT TO MY PUBLISHER! LUCKILY HER CLASSROOM TEACHER GAVE ME ADVANCE WARNING AND I WAS ABLE TO LET THE PUBLISHERS KNOW THIS WAS COMING AND ASK THEM TO BE GENTLE WITH THEIR RESPONSE. ALTHOUGH P.E.P. DIDN’T PUBLISH HER SEQUEL, HER SCHOOL DISTRICT DID A LIMITED RUN (ILLUSTRATED BY HER FATHER, DONE A COMPUTER, PHOTOCOPIED AND COIL BOUND) AND EVERY SCHOOL IN THE KELOWNA SCHOOL DISTRICT WAS GIVEN A COPY.
I HAVE LOST TRACK OF HER—I'M AFRAID TO ASK HER NOW RETIRED GRADE 6 TEACHER, BUT I SUSPECT SHE HAS DIED.

A057: I'M A LUDDITE WHO WISHES SOMEONE WOULD SET A WEBSITE UP FOR ME AND UPDATE IT REGULARLY AND NOT CHARGE ME A THING. BECAUSE THIS HAS NEVER HAPPENED, I DO NOT HAVE A WEBSITE EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED WITH **** AND ****, BOTH OF WHICH ARE HORRIBLY OUTDATED (SEE LUDDITE COMMENT ABOVE.)

A057: EARLY IN MY CAREER IT WAS VALUABLE FEEDBACK. NOW I ENJOY THEIR RESPONSES, BUT TAKE THEIR INPUT LESS SERIOUSLY. AFTER ALL, MY FIRST BOOK CAME OUT IN ****—I'VE BEEN IN THIS GAME FOR A LONG TIME. IT ALWAYS FEELS GOOD TO GET THE 'I LOVED YOUR BOOK, YOU'RE THE BEST WRITER I'VE EVER READ' TYPE OF COMMENT. I SMILE FOR A WEEK AFTER ONE OF THOSE LETTERS ARRIVE.

A057: READINGS ARE FEWER AND HARDER TO GET, PROBABLY BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS TO SET THEM UP. FEWER B.C. AUTHORS' BOOKS ARE ORDERED FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIES, BECAUSE A TECHNICAL DOESN'T HAVE THE TIME TO READ THE CATALOGUES OR THE BUDGET TO BELONG TO THE BOOK CENTRE OR CANSCAIP. ALSO, B.C. IS NOW FULL OF CHILDREN'S WRITERS. BACK WHEN I FIRST STARTED DOING READINGS, **** AND I WERE SOME OF THE FEW WHO DID THESE TOURS. WITH SO MANY AUTHORS NOW LOOKING FOR GIGS, THEY DON'T COME AS OFTEN AS THEY DID. ALTHOUGH I DO AS MANY AS I CAN HANDLE (ABOUT 35 LAST YEAR, MORE THAN USUAL) AS A RETIRED LEARNING ASSISTANCE TEACHER (AMONG OTHER TEACHING POSITIONS) I FIND IT MOST REWARDING WHEN A TEACHER TAKES THE TIME TO LET ME KNOW THAT STUDENTS WHO DON'T NORMALLY READ MUCH ARE TAKING MY BOOKS OUT OF THE LIBRARY. ENCOURAGE THEM TO READ THEM READ, ANYWAY WE CAN! ONE WROTE THAT AFTER MY PRESENTATION A BOY WHO WAS A NON-READER AND PROUD OF IT, NOT ONLY READ **** ALL BY HIMSELF, BUT MADE WANTED POSTERS AND A POPSICLE STICK MODEL OF A GALLOWS! AS WELL.

A058: At presentations I generally don't get into much discussion on the writing process. (I do talk about literacy for a few moments.) During workshops, the focus is entirely on writing and a few of the main points I try to impress on students are: Finding the voice
of a story. Sharpening your instincts for truth and clarity, the discipline involved in writing.

A058: Students are often interested in details such as where ideas come from, how much money writers make, what time of day is best for writing, how to keep a story going, and how to end a story. (Very rarely are there any genuinely practical questions on publication, editing and so on.) I can’t think of any particularly surprising comments, but have sometimes been amazed at the depth of students’ talent.

A058: For the most part, they’re inclined to share their struggles and problems. Fewer will talk about how the process works for them and fewer yet have a clear, burning desire to write. Rather, many students base their writing ambitions on some romantic (and quite mistaken) idea of what it means to be an author. The rare time I encounter a student with a real passion for literature and writing, it almost makes me want to cry with joy.

A058: Between 30 and 50 -- it often depends on the number of current nominations, as more students contact me if I have books in a readers’ choice program during the school year.

A058: 100% Always! I am fanatical about answering students who have taken the time to write. (I even print their messages as soon as I receive them, so that I will have their addresses in the unlikely event of a system meltdown.)

A058: They frequently ask questions about whichever novel they’re studying. On writing, one question that comes up a lot is whether or not I base my characters on real people. They may also ask about where I get my inspiration. That kind of thing.

A058: The one thing I most try to impress on students who want to write is the importance of reading. It’s surprising how many fail to see the relation between the two! And I encourage them to listen to their own inner voice, to find the creative style that’s right for them. It’s very common for students to talk about writing like a favourite author. As for what students want to know about writing, I haven’t often found that they really know that. Usually, they have a general idea that they’d like to be an author and they’re “trying” to ask the right questions.
A058: There are several students with whom I’ve been in touch for more than a few years. Exchanges are very infrequent – one or two a year in general – but as long as they continue to write, I continue to answer. Sometimes they write to say they’ve read my latest work, but often they seem to be in need of some form or encouragement or reassurance. Once they get it, they may not write again for many months. I can’t honestly call my exchanges with students mentoring in the true sense of the word. If you help build someone’s confidence - that’s the best success possible.

A058: I don’t have a site. Readers find me through my memberships with various writing organizations. I have just started a blog, but it’s too soon to know if there will be any young visitors.

A058: Well, it’s a great feeling to have someone tell you that they love your books. But, ego aside, it’s an honour to be able to touch their lives, even in small ways.

A058: I think it’s important to recognize the very real impact author visits have on student literacy. After an author visit it’s common for there to be waiting lists a school libraries for the author’s books, and the general interest in reading is higher.

A059: YES, I TALK ABOUT WRITING. HOW TO LOOK INSIDE FOR TRUE FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCES, AND BRING THEM TO LIFE USING IMAGINATION (OR, TO BE BLUNT, LYING YOUR HEAD OFF). EXAMPLES FROM MY OWN AND OTHER PEOPLE’S WRITINGS, AND THEN INTERACTIVE STORY BUILDING.

A059: ONE STUDENT ASKED IF IT WAS OKAY TO KILL PEOPLE IN STORIES. YES, I REPLIED. WHAT ABOUT IF I KILL MY DAD? HE ASKED.

A059: MOSTLY THEY ARE PLEASED AT HOW HARD THEY WORKED AND HOW THEY ARE SURE I WILL LIKE THEIR NEW STORY. I MADE MY OPENING SENTENCE JUST LIKE YOURS, ONE STUDENT SAID.

A059: IF THEY ARE REAL WRITERS, THEY WANT TO KNOW HOW THEY CAN GET PUBLISHED. THE REST WANT TO BE FRIENDS, AND HAVE THEIR NAME IN MY STORIES.
A059: NO MORE THAN A FEW EXCHANGES. AFTER THAT IT GETS CREEPY.
A059: JUST OPENED MINE, AND THE INITIAL REPSONSE HAS BEEN HUGE.
MORE SALES? I DUNNO.

A059: EGO GRATIFICATION, KNOWING THAT SOMEONE OUT THERE CARES,
SHARING A LAUGH WITH A FUNNY KID, HELPING A LONELY KID FEEL BETTER.

A059: MOST TEACHERS ARE SUPPORTIVE OF AND GRATEFUL FOR PRESENTATIONS (A FEW USE THEM TO MARK PAPERS). THE BEST TEACHERS USE AUTHOR TALKS AS A SPRINGBOARD TO IMPROVE STUDENT READING AND WRITING.

A060: Where to get ideas or inspiration. I ask students about events that happened the night before at home. (always an eye-opener! If only the parents knew what the kids tell teachers/authors about their home lives!) How to build a character. How to keep a plot moving with action words. How to make a satisfactory ending, tying up all the loose ends. How to edit your work in the final stage with particular attention to spelling and grammar (teachers love this part.) I also do readings/presentations in which I show creativity in other areas of my life. The trick is lots of visual gimmicks and interaction with students.

A060: They ask about my cat. My age. Every 12 year old boy wants to know how much money I make (they think I’m J.K. Rowling.) What do I drive?
How many books do I have out? How long does it take to write a book? Who is my favourite writer? What is my favourite book of those I’ve written.

A060: I always have students read their own work because it totally delights them to have an audience. They love goofy names for characters and wild descriptions.

A060: 300 (more if I have a book up for a readers choice award.)

A060: 30 (sometimes entire classes write, prodded by teachers.)

A060: Most want to know what inspired me to write a book and if there will be a sequel.

A060: I tell them that my inspiration comes from all around me and that writing is much easier than they think. They should listen to conversations, think about what they talked to a friend about and write about it. Have fun. Some students ask for in-depth detail
about a book, ie. Who is the main character, theme etc. Obviously they want me to do their homework. Not happening.

A060: Most just are delighted to have one reply back. A few e-mailed for about a year or so and a couple have been “fans” for three years, basically until they went to high school and then I didn’t hear from them.

A060: Definitely have a website. Mine gets a lot of hits. Writers need to think more about the promotional part of their “business.”

A060: Finding out my books are touching children.

A060: The Catholic school boards have me in 90% of my visits, 10% are public schools. I have mentioned this imbalance to other authors who agree it is like this.

Students like to know you are a real person. I speak to ages 9 through 17. I love each age because they always teach me something new. One sad aspect I have noted is the increasing family dysfunction in most of these children’s lives. In a character study, I asked a student who was in her family to show how characters are just like them, and she said, “Do you mean right now? Or last week? Last week there were six kids, but now there’s only Mom and my sister.” I think the students like to read to recognize themselves in books and realize they are perfectly normal, even when you make bad choices. It’s all part of growing up.

A061: Yes—I have read the first book ****of my in 132 schools. I read full days in many schools including a school in **** Catholic School Board Toronto to over 1000 students (4 readings—story telling).

A061: Yes, my readings are always followed by a question period. The messages I like to leave with the students:

Make your writing unique. Choose a topic that most people have not thought about. IE Jesus’ Grandparents.

Arouse curiosity—think laterally—have your reader say, “Wow! I never thought of that.”

A061: A. How long did it take you?
****. One grade 6 male student asked me, “Was there glue on the cross?”

A061: Two grade 8 girls in different schools are working on a novel. One of them is writing from her own life experience involving her horse and the loss of her mother. I
am presently in **** and I promised to keep our discourse going once I return home April 15th.

A061: A. My impression of their work—

B. How to go about publishing—I am self-publishing and have over 7000 books in circulation.—I was signed to a contract with them for 4 years. ****

A061: Only briefly—correspondence will resume with one student once I return to **** Ontario. The 2 girls mentioned that my comments had really motivated them to keep on.

A061: My website has been responsible of selling many books for me.

A061: Personal gratification and some how very motivational.

A061: My readings are mostly in the gyms. In one school, the principal had a junior grade lined up beside a senior grade. The later kept an eye on the young ones. The junior classes should enter the gym last since the first class has to sit there while all the other classes enter. It makes it too long for them. It is somewhat very difficult and disturbing to read when there are mentally challenged students present.

A062: Briefly I talk about the process of writing, editing and getting published, but mostly as answers to questions. My audience is grades 3-5 and I usually have less than an hour to read and talk.

A062: How long did it take? What’s your favorite book/author? How do I get to be a writer? How can I get published? Who inspired you?

A062: Generalities, ‘I wrote a book about my cat’ etc.

A062: At present, not many go to my site, but I do not have a hit counter. A few teachers have looked at it as background to having me come in.

A062: Teachers tell me that the students were very engaged by my reading and talk and that they are actively writing as part of their teacher’s program, so this is a reinforcement/boost.
A063: yes. Because I’m an author, illustrator and designer, I talk at various times about all these things, gearing the content to the age group I’m addressing. Since my books are largely non-fiction, I usually talk about research techniques, including reaching out to experts, such as zookeepers, to find answers to specific questions. Kids are always interested in where ideas come from, so I explain the process, from germination on, and sometimes confess to pulling ideas out of the ether, which, more or less, requires making oneself open to the unexpected. In general, though, when it comes to skills & tricks of the trade, other than shocking them with the number of edits a books goes through (my record is 25), I tell them more about illustration tricks than writing tricks - mostly because I don’t actually think there are many writing tricks other than reading a heck of a lot, and reading a wide variety of material.

A063: The most common question they ask is: Where do you get your ideas?, which is sometimes difficult to answer, see “ether” comment above. I frequently get completely unexpected comments from kids, but they’re unexpected because they usually have absolutely nothing to do with writing (i.e. “My mom is a famous singer! She sings karaoke in lots of bars!”) Though one little girl, grade 2 or 3 once said, after my presentation, “Thank you for working so hard!”

A063: That they often find it difficult, and I agree with them. I usually explain that there are parts of the writing process (i. e. listening to criticism), and illustrating process (i. e. drawing), that I don’t at all enjoy, but that I soldier on through these parts to get to the parts I do enjoy, particularly the very end when I’m really happy with the results because, by working through each part of the process, I’ve ended up making something wonderful that could have just been pedestrian.

A063: They’re not usually interested in the process (average age is 6, written by parent), they either just want to say they enjoy my books or want answers to specific questions about the content.

A063: I really don’t get much of this because I don’t write fiction, and, until recently, the non-fiction I’ve written has been aimed at a pretty young age group.

A063: It’s got me a fair amount of interest from educators. Now that my books are aimed at a slightly older audience (8-12 as opposed to 3-8), I expect to get more correspondence from kids.

A063: Contact with civilization. Feedback.
A063: For myself, without the interaction with kids in schools and the feedback I get from them, I doubt I’d still be doing this. Also, there’s so little money in the actual books, if I didn’t do school visits, I’d starve, so it’s a good thing I get such a kick out of them. But beyond the impact these visits have on my own life, I know from what teachers (mostly gr. 1-4) have told me afterwards that they’re incredibly valuable, in particular that, even weeks afterwards, these young kids will continue to reference my visit and things I said, often making connections that surprise the teachers.

A064: You can examine my books, **** for the chapters on writing tips for children (and their teachers.) I use those and my other books to help inspire the children’s poems. When I go to schools, I usually spend two hours with a group going from inspiration and choice of idea to rehearsal of the idea to the writing to editing for ideas (what more do we want or need to know) to revising to editing text to proofreading to performing the poems in many different ways. I have done this for a long time and have a great deal of experience with groups from 30 to 300 from kindergarten to adult and teacher candidates. I was a teacher myself for 25 years.

A064: Some of the university student leaders I worked with were struck by the idea that you have to schedule time for the creative process, even if nothing much seems to be accomplished.

A064: It’s fascinating watching students, with disabilities or behavioural problems, surprise their teachers with wonderful poems.

A064: I am going to be a mentor in the League of Poets Poetry week with young poets this year.

A064: How much money do you make?

A064: I do not have a website. I am a member of CANSCAIP, The League of Poets and The Writers’ Union so I am on their websites.

A064: The ones I do still get bring a smile to my face and that is worth a lot.

A065: YES, I TALK ABOUT CHARACTERS, PLOT, SETTING ETC. AND HOW TO INCORPORATE THESE INTO THEIR OWN COMPOSITIONS. FOR THE YOUNGER GRADES, I HAVE THEM CREATE THEIR OWN LITTLE BOOK’...THAT IS, THEY WRITE A STORY THEN TRANSCRIBE IT TO FOLDED
PAPER THAT HAS BEEN STAPLED ON THE SIDE, ILLUSTRATED ON THE COVER AND IN PAGES THROUGHOUT THE ‘BOOK’.

A065: >NOTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY..ALWAYS SOME CUTE QUESTIONS LIKE WHAT KIND OF CAT YOU HAVE OR THINGS THAT REALLY HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH THE WRITING PROCESS - EXCEPT THE FACT THAT MY CAT LOVES TO SIT ON MY LAP WHEN I TYPE!

A065: THEY SHARE THE STORIES THEY HAVE WRITTEN ABOUT AND STORIES THEY HAVE IN THEIR MIND BUT HAVE NOT YET PUT TO PAPER

A065: AFTER A SCHOOL VISIT, I SOMETIMES RECEIVE LETTERS FROM THE CLASS...I DON’T REALLY RECEIVE THEM AT OTHER TIMES (PERHAPS I’M NOT YET THAT FAMOUS) ;)

A065: IF I GET THEM (EXCEPT FOR THE CLASS LETTERS) I REPLY PERSONALLY.

A065: NO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE WRITING PROCESS REALLY.

A065: I’VE MAINTAINED CORRESPONDENCE WITH ‘WOULD-BE’ WRITERS...IT USUALLY LASTS SEVERAL EMAILS..AGAIN, THESE AREN’T CHILDREN.

A065: VERY IMPORTANT FOR SALES/CONNECTIONS...HAVEN’T HEARD MUCH FROM READERS through thirteen.

A066: I show students to process - how to get ideas for stories and poems, how to edit and rewrite, how publishers work, how illustrators, work and how books are printed. I do workshops about writing poetry. Also fiction: building a story, characters, using tense, senses etc. I tell children to “paint pictures with words in the head of a reader.”

A066: They ask about getting ideas, they often ask about rewriting and editing and are amazed at how often I rewrite. They enjoy hearing that you can write about common,
every day things and places. They often comment that they didn’t know that a poem
doesn’t have to rhyme and much enjoy discovering this.

A066: They often tell me what they are writing about, how many stories they have
written. We always share stories about favourite books.

A066: Where I got the ideas, how old I am, what my favourite books are. Not too much
about the writing process itself. More about being readers.

A066: I tell them that they are writers, too. They love learning that “real” people are
writers. I often tell them about writers who had their first book published when they were
still in school (Gordon Korman, Grade 6/7).

A066: I have stayed in touch with many young people. Sometimes for several years.
Many of them are still writing, feel that it made a huge difference to them, have taken or
are now taking writing courses or journalism in college.

A066: I know that my website is heavily used by teachers and students. They use it for
author studies and book information. I get most of my school and conference bookings
via my website. I also have an online magazine in which I publish writing by children. It
is now used by children all over the world (20 countries) and receives about 100
submissions of stories and poems per month.

A066: I’m not sure I do so for a benefit. They might end up reading (or buying more of
my books) but the main reason is to encourage young people to read and write.

A066: In addition to workshops and readings, I also speak at many Young Author
Conferences. I know that being selected to participate in a Young Authors Conference
(Kamloops, Nanaimo, Ft St John) has a big impact on students’ attitude towards writing.
In Kamloops I can tell a definite difference in the quality of students’ writing. They had
held their Young Author Conference for over 20 years. Some who attended as children
are now published authors! Teacher/librarians tell me that, following a school visit, my
books won’t be on the shelf for the next two years. That’s the impact of an author visit on
readers as well as writers.

A067: I think the most important aspect (trick of the trade) of
a school visit is making the content interactive. I personally draw on many drama
techniques in order to bring the words off of the page. I also use as many visuals as
possible. In terms of the process itself, I usually look at the curriculum the school is
implementing and then use pieces of my books, poems, dramatic pieces, non-fiction,
etc. that relate. For example, if one of the curricular focuses is literacy I might choose books, poems, non-fiction, or dramatic pieces that relate to reading, writing, representing, speaking, or listening. Additionally, I try to incorporate the same vocabulary as the school (e.g. reading strategies such as connecting, predicting, engaging, and so forth).

A067: Students ask/tell so many interesting things—anything from I studied that idea in school to I like the way the character moves, speaks, dances. As I said in the 2nd question, I like to bring in visuals to help kids envision what I am talking about. Some of these visuals are props. Kids often ask about the props (e.g. how they can make them at home, what are the materials, if they can touch them, etc.). I guess what is surprising is how articulate little kids can be. They can form their questions in ways that are both meaningful and clear.

A067: Most share that they want to be writers or that they are writers. Some talk about having trouble getting started. Occasionally, a child will discuss their struggles with reading and writing.

A067: However, students often ask about the writing process. Some questions include: Do you get stuck? How do you think about your ideas? Do you write with your son? Are you a teacher? Do you like to write? How do you fix it so that it becomes a story? And so forth. I like to tell kids to believe in themselves and in their work. I suggest that they pay attention to their inner voice and write the kind of writing (whether it be plays, visual art, stories, non-fiction, music lyrics, etc.) that makes them feel inspired and happy.

A067: Certainly kids and adults alike talk to me about my website. They like to see my pictures, and see the books I write and read. I think having a website is like having a car. It gets me there. It brings me to the kids. I think it is crucial.13. The benefits of corresponding with kids (I can speak about having scheduled and non-scheduled question periods and talk times) are:

a. They let me know where kids are at—what interests them, what doesn’t interest them, how they understand my writing, how I can understand their writing, etc.

b. I can feel their energy. Very inspiring.

c. It reminds me of being a kid. It brings me closer to my memories.

d. It creates connections that can be discussed, drawn, played, and so forth. One of my favourite things to see is kids at recess re-enacting the stories that I just told them. Who knows what seeds we (authors, performers, illustrators, etc.) are planting. Only time will tell.
14. Kids always want to correspond. I have done over 30 public performances this year and have not yet had a performance where no one said something at question time. Authors have the capacity to empower and make a difference in a child’s life. I can not stress how important setting aside time to dialoguing with children is; I think it is essential.

A068: YES, I SHOW HOW I USE A PROCESS OF WRITING QUITE SIMILAR TO WHAT THEY USE IN CLASS. I SHOW THEM HOW A BOOK COMES TO BE FROM THE INITIAL IDEA TO THE FINISHED PRODUCT. ALSO I ENCOURAGE THEM TO WRITE ABOUT ‘WHAT THEY KNOW’ ALTHOUGH THEY TEND TO FIND THAT NOT ALL THAT INTERESTING.

A068: SOMETIMES THEY ASK IF I KNOW FAMOUS WRITERS LIKE RL STINE OR JK ROWLING.

A068: THEY OFTEN LIKE TO WRITE ABOUT EXOTIC TIMES AND/ OR PEOPLE.

A068: VARIES A LOT, ESPECIALLY WHEN I RECEIVE A CLASS SET.

A068: 100% ALTHOUGH WHEN IT’S A CLASS SET I USUALLY SEND JUST 1 LETTER TO THE WHOLE CLASS.

A068: WHERE I GET MY IDEAS MAINLY.

A068: STUDENTS WOULD LIKE TO KNOW THAT WRITING IS EASY AND THAT AUTHORS MAKE A LOT OF MONEY.

A068: DON’T HAVE ONE BUT I LIKE VISITING OTHER WEBSITES TO GET INFO, AND WHEN I HAVE TIME.

A068: IT MAKES ME STOP AND THINK AND-EVALUATE MY OWN WRITING PROCESS.

A068: AS A FORMER TEACHER/LIBRARIAN, AND AS A NOW FULL-TIME WRITER, I DON’T THINK I CAN OVER ESTIMATE THE POWERFUL INFLUENCE AN AUTHOR VISIT HAS ON STUDENTS’ OWN WRITING AS WELL
AS THEIR READING. AN AUTHOR VISIT OPENS A WHOLE NEW DOOR FOR STUDENTS, THE DOOR THAT SAYS, ‘I CAN DO IT TOO.’

A069: I often (if not always) talk about the process or craft of writing. As a writer who is also a teacher, I have a plethora of tricks of the trade. I work with kids to get juices flowing, using music, visual art, drama activities to stimulate creativity and writing. I often bring along a kind of attic tickle trunk, full of toys and antiques, for the young writers to touch and observe to spark the imagination and their own stories. Other techniques I employ include: story starters, character charts (or interviews), first lines, narrative games, the group poem. And I bring along give-aways—pencils, bookmarks, coloured pens—to encourage students to take risks and to read aloud from their work.

A069: The most frequently asked question is “where do you get your ideas?” Certainly, when students are moved to ask about the real issues behind my fantasies, I am surprised and delighted (i.e. questions like “are children used as slaves, today in this world?” or “what is genocide?” or “are there really writers imprisoned for writing their ideas?”

A069: Mainly students tell me about writer’s block or they verbally relate a long and complicated plot line of their own that they really want me to hear and comment upon. Older students will sometimes share an emotional block that they are fighting to overcome.

A069: Mainly, students want affirmation that what they are doing is good. I sometimes give extensive suggestions, particularly to older writers, about plot inconsistencies, writing successful dialogue, elements of fantasy writing. More recently, I’ve worked with young writers in shaping time and point of view shifts, creating more tension between characters and in plotlines, avoiding gratuitous violence.

A069: Yes, I’ve been writing to some students for twenty years, and certainly maintaining ongoing correspondence with some for twelve. How was it successful? Don’t the numbers speak for themselves?

A069: I suppose my website offers opportunities for writers to find me easily, if they choose to write, but personal contact is the main reason students begin writing to me in the first place.

A069: I am the creator and coordinator of a provincial summer arts camp for kids who love to write, now in its twelfth year. Mentoring young writers is one of my life’s passions and something I feel I owe to them having been mentored myself. Working
with young people gives me hope for the world and certainly for the future of writing and reading in this country.

A070: I have not spoken about the process or craft of writing.

A070: The most common question is, ‘How long did it take you to write this book?’

A070: What do students share with you about their own writing processes? A love for telling stories.

A070: Where do ideas come from? How long did it take to write the book?

A070: I tell them to persevere, to not quit. I tell them the importance of learning good grammar and good speaking skills. I tell them that ideas for things to write about are all around them. I think they want to know how long it takes to become a “real” writer.

A070: How was it successful? I don’t think I have mentored anyone.

A070: Websites are important, but one must be careful with them. There is a lot of misinformation on the Internet.

A070: It is always good to know that someone has been reading my work and likes it. I always appreciate an opportunity to thank someone for reading my books, and to remind students of the importance of learning good grammar.

A070: I think it is important for authors to go into schools so that students can see that books are written by people; that authors are just men and women doing their jobs.

A071: I talk about how I wrote the book I’m speaking about, since I have only one published picture book at this time. I talk about how I’ve had to revise multiple times and how reading out loud has helped me to find trouble spots.

A071: Students ask me how I got my idea (the story is based on a folk tale, so I tell them I was interested in folk tales and did research in libraries and also asked people for their favorite folk tales) but they don’t ask too many questions about the process because I
don’t think they understand that it is a process. I say this because I’ve been asked variations of this question repeatedly: “How did you make the book?” which to me implies that they think I actually MADE the whole book — wrote the story, drew the pictures, printed it up, and put it between hard covers with a nice flap jacket to boot. When I get that question, I explain the whole process — coming up with the idea, repeated revising, sending it to the publisher, crossing my fingers, waiting waiting waiting, acceptance, waiting waiting waiting, finding out who the publisher chose to illustrate, waiting waiting waiting, getting editing suggestions, editing, waiting waiting waiting, then a book.

A071: I haven’t done writing workshops, only presentations.

A071: None of these questions are applicable to me as a children’s book writer. I’ve written a parenting book and have corresponded with people largely via email but haven’t heard from students except for thank you notes after presentations.

A071: Can’t justify spending piles of money to pay someone to design a web site for me. However, I haven’t yet figured out how to make my own. If I really wanted one, I’d have one, believe me, but it’s not a priority. Some day I suppose I will get around to it.

A072: Yes Presentation Descriptions:

A072: They ask if it’s hard work. They want to know if I’ve written chapter books. (I haven’t.) Most of my visits are hour-long presentations, and different groups of young students tend to ask the same questions - how old am I, am I married, what’s my favorite color, sports team, etc., do I have siblings, how much money do I make. One student wanted to know if I felt bad that trees were killed in the making of my books.

A072: Often a student will say that he or she is a writer or illustrator, that he or she wrote a story or poem or comic strip recently. A lot of kids draw pictures and give them to me. The occasional junior high or high school student shows me her sketchbook or reads me a poem.

A072: Occasionally a class will send a thank-you note via email.

A072: Maybe 100 thank-you notes from classes who’ve been assigned to write them by teachers.

A072: Maybe 5%? I usually send one thank-you note to classes who’ve sent me letters. Not much...most of the thank-you notes seem to be written based on a template given by the teacher: Say thank-you, say something you liked about the story, draw a picture, etc. The thank-you notes almost always come from division 1 children.
 Occasionally, a school has prepared for my visit by having kids look at my website beforehand. I think my website has made more of an impact on adults than kids.

I don’t think I’ve seen a big benefit from corresponding with students/readers.

Cover sources for ideas, research, character creation/tracking, drafts and revisions, setting, plot, language choices, theme integration, working with editors, publishers, and illustrators, staying motivated, the business side of writing... content of the talks varies from school to school, grade to grade.

Students are curious about everything from how many cats I own to the number of pages in my longest book to whether I prefer pencils or pens. Having done hundreds of talks to thousands of children, there really isn’t much of my personal, writing, or non-writing life that has not been asked about! Children have asked whether I colour my hair, if I have my own limo, whether I steal other authors’ ideas, if I have ever been so mad at another author that I’ve punched that author, if I ever make spelling mistakes, if I get frustrated when editors make suggestions, and why I don’t get a job as a stand-up comic. Many students want to know when the next book will come out in a particular series. From the mundane to the profound ‘have you ever regretted your choice to become a writer?’, they are fearless when it comes to asking questions.

See above - too many to count! Children constantly surprise and delight me with their insights, comments, questions, humour, and thoughtfulness. One boy, wanting to give me a special gift just for showing up at his remote northern Ontario school presented me with a pheasant foot freshly amputated from a bird he’d shot on the weekend. The stump-end was carefully wrapped in Kleenex and tied with string. When he handed it to me he said, “If I were you, I wouldn’t take the Kleenex off. I cleaned it off, but it’s still kind of bloody.”

Working with students in extended workshop sessions (taking place over multiple sessions) provides the greatest opportunity for lengthy discussions about their work. They talk about every aspect of writing - from shaping and containing their ideas to specific language usage to editing and publication. One teenage boy writing a complex fantasy novel lamented he was having difficulties fleshing out the love interest sub-plot. He confessed, “I have little experience in these matters and have to make everything up.”

Varies hugely - depends on how many new books I have out, in what genres, and how much touring I do. Range is from dozens to hundreds.
A073: same as number 6. Often school classes will do a letter writing project and I’ll get a fat envelope full of letters. That boosts the numbers! In terms of individual writers, email is the more common way for readers to get in touch, though I did have one enterprising girl send me a fantastic graphic novel version of one of my books. I made a copy and sent her original back - it was far too good for me to keep!

A073: I aim for 100%, though I know I have missed a couple over the years, like when the volume was huge following a Silver Birch nomination. That onslaught coincided with a tour and though I tried valiantly to keep up, I know a few slipped through the cracks. I generally compose a lengthy group letter to classroom letter packages as many of the students ask the same questions. Unusual questions are referred to specifically within the body of the more general letter (if that makes sense). I respond to both email and snail mail equally and reply in the same way the letter arrives.

A073: I try to answer each student’s question personally - some need encouragement, some need specific information, some are looking for feedback on a particular piece of work.

A073: Varies widely depending on age, type of writing, level of interest, and writing goals.

A073: The longest exchange was over a period of about four years for one child. I am still in touch with her, though the ultimate outcome remains to be seen. In general, those students who engage in a conversation lasting more than an email or two are more serious about their writing to start with and so tend to be more successful. I recently stumbled across a blog kept by a young writer who referred to a critique I had done for her at a workshop years earlier. Apparently it made quite an impact, though I must confess I have no idea who she was! It’s hard to know from my end just what the impact is at the other end.

A073: Websites, blogs, facebook, Flickr, etc. are a great way to disseminate information, provide additional support materials for teachers, and make it easy for students to find me and correspond. I am in the process of redesigning my main website (I’ve had several since the earliest days of the web and don’t know what I’d do without the Internet!) and hope to make it even more useful and appealing to students. They enjoy being able to get to know me ‘virtually’ prior to a school visit and it is so helpful for teachers who are
preparing for a visit. I also maintain a website just for young writers – it contains writing exercises, information about getting published, etc., in an attempt to answer some of the more commonly asked questions. It’s also due for an overhaul, but has always been popular, even in its current condition.

A073: Without this contact it would be very, very easy to lose touch with my readers/audience. Emails have pointed out mistakes in my books, made requests for new directions in existing series, and draw attention both to what the readers like and what they don’t. The number of emails also correlates directly with the general level of activity relating to my books (sales, touring, etc.) - a bit like the old canary in the coal mine. When the letters slow down I know I need to pay attention!

A073: I am not a teacher, but the feedback I get from teachers is that the impact of an author visit or workshop lasts for months. Student interest in the author’s books obviously improves, but so does interest in books and authors in general. The whole process of writing is desmystified and students tackle writing projects with a whole new mindset. They are no longer afraid of messy-looking first drafts (how could they be after they’ve seen my disastrous notebooks?), they understand how important (and frustrating and satisfying) the rewriting and editing process is, they think more critically about what they are reading and are aware of the decisions the author makes when writing a book.

From the author’s perspective, working with students is always stimulating, thought-provoking, challenging, and hugely rewarding. It is simply amazing to see how, with coaching and support, a child can create writing of depth, sensitivity, and beauty. Their energy and willingness to tackle new writing challenges never fails to inspire me. I often wonder who gets more out of the workshops!

A074: talking and giving examples of “telling the truth” in fiction, creative non fiction. How to incorporate their own “life story”. Different points of view - what works and when.

A074: Always concerned and asking about where ideas come from. Am occasionally surprised at how “conservative” many students appear to be when choosing their subject matter

A074: Often anxious about their writing skills even when obviously very gifted.

A074: Again, where ideas come from and the difficulties of starting and sticking with a writing project.
A074: Is it possible for me. I like to bring this down to earth by stating that in our own way we are all writers. That writers are not some isolated breed somewhere out there.

A074: Yes, but only for 4 or 5 exchanges.

A074: don’t really like websites.

A074: Just keeping in touch and hearing the concerns of young writers has been important.

A074: As a whole I think the importance of authors in schools has been overemphasized. It’s the book and the reading of it that is important. As a kid I had no particular desire to see or hear the often all too human author. As an adult I have attended too many boring readings. Must say though that children’s writers are usually more lively.