STUDENTS RESPONDING TO A SHORT STORY

An explorative study of verbal and written responses

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Abstract

The purpose of this small-scale explorative study is to get insight into the relationship between students' verbal and written responses to a literary text. Do adolescent students alter their response to a literary text in the course of reading, talking and writing about it? Do they develop new ideas or a different interpretation depending on the mode of response? Participants were ten Dutch students (Grade 10, sixteen years old). They read a short story written by Jeanette Winterson, while thinking aloud. Subsequently, they responded verbally to the story as a whole, and then wrote a review in which they were asked to give their opinion of the story and to substantiate their opinion. Differences between students' verbal and written responses were mapped out. Contrary to our expectations, students did not respond more evaluatively and interpretatively in their written reviews compared to their verbal responses. However, their judgment of the story was more differentiated in their written review, and they noticed more often literary aspects of the story than during reading and thinking aloud. The mode of response (verbal or written, online or offline) apparently may influence the way in which students respond to a story.

Keywords: literary response, writing to learn, thinking aloud, verbal response, secondary education

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the goals of literary education in Dutch secondary schools is that students learn to express and deepen their personal responses to literary texts (SLO, 2012). Writing about literature plays a prominent role in the curriculum. Students in the final grades of secondary education have to read a minimum of 8 to 12 Dutch literary works and write about each of these works. Writing tasks include expository writing (e.g., book reports, reviews, summaries), creative writing (e.g., write an ending to a story, write a filmscript of a book) and expressive writing (e.g., reading logs). Students' written documents are usually gathered in a portfolio for feedback and assessment (Janssen, 1998; Oberon, 2016). Since there is no prescribed national curriculum, literature teachers and schools are free to choose which type of writing task they wish to apply, and for which purposes. As a result, there may be huge differences between teachers and schools.

Theoretically, writing assignments may fulfil different purposes in the literature classroom. First, student writings may serve as an instrument for the teacher, to get insight into students' literary competence and their development as literature readers. Writing assignments are for instance used to show the teacher how much is understood of a literary text ('knowledge telling writing') and how much progression has been made in the domain of literary reading and response. Second, student writings may also serve as an instrument for learning. It is assumed that students become more engaged and reach deeper levels of understanding of a literary text, by writing about it. Writing, in other words, may function as a medium for 'knowledge change' or 'knowledge transformation' (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Foxworth & Mason, 2018; Klein, 1999; Klein & Boscolo, 2016; Newell, 2006; Rijlaarsdam & Braaksma, 2015). We use the term 'knowledge change' in a broad sense; it not only may include changes in cognitive aspects (e.g. increased or changed factual knowledge, insights), but also changes in affective aspects of literary response (e.g. increased engagement, empathy).

Previous research has shown that extended writing indeed may improve students' literary response compared to restricted writing, such as answering teacher questions, or to not writing at all (Boscolo & Carotti, 2003; Janssen & Braaksma, 2016; Marshall, 1987; Wong, Kuperis, Jamieson, et al., 2002). However, what it is exactly that students may learn seems to depend on the particular writing task at hand. Writing a literary review, for instance, may encourage them to respond evaluatively or critically to a literary text, while summary writing may stimulate them to search for connections between text elements (Langer & Applebee, 1987; see also Hebert, Gillespie, & Graham, 2013). Other writing tasks, such as personal logs or creative tasks, have the potential for increased interest and engagement on the part of the student (Janssen & Braaksma, 2016). Newell (1996) found that students take away different things from a literary text, depending on the particular mode of writing. Those who wrote in a formal, analytic mode provided fewer personal

associations than those who carried out a personal writing task in response to the same literary text.

However, although writing plays a central role in the Dutch literature curriculum, it is not the only means for learning. As Penrose (1992) and others have pointed out, the type of learning that writing affords, might be prompted by other classroom activities just as well, perhaps even better (e.g., class discussions, peer conversations, thinking aloud). The question arises what the value of writing is, compared to other ways of responding to literary texts, and whether students develop new insights through writing about a literary text

In this paper we focus on one particular writing task; the writing of a short literary review or critique. This task is often found in Dutch literature classrooms (Kieft, 2006; Oberon, 2016). Students are asked to read a literary text (a novel, poem or story), form a judgment or personal opinion of that text, and substantiate their judgment by using arguments. We compare this writing task to two types of individual verbal response prior to the writing task; thinking aloud during reading ('online' response) and verbal response immediately after reading ('offline' response). Both are relatively open tasks that may focus students' attention and make them think deeper about what they are reading (Kucan & Beck, 1997). Such think aloud tasks have been frequently used as research method in studies of literary reading processes (see Janssen et al., 2012; Pieper & Strutz, 2018 in this volume), but these tasks are seldomly used as instructional tasks in Dutch literature classrooms.

Writing a review poses multiple constraints, such as rhetorical, linguistic and genre constraints. In writing a review, students have to take these into account. They must be able to provide a coherent representation of the literary text, reflect on theme or meaning, and present evaluative commentary. We therefore expect that students will respond more evaluatively and present a more differentiated opinion of the literary text in their written reviews than in their preceding verbal responses (Langer & Applebee, 1987). Furthermore, we expect them to respond more interpretatively, reflecting on the story's overall meaning or on the larger point the author might be making.

Verbal responses do not make such high demands on the student (Ericsson & Simon, 1993). Generally, thinking aloud requires less effort than a writing task. Moreover, students are relatively free to bring forward any reaction they might find appropriate; personal ideas, associations, experiences, feelings, evaluations, general opinions, et cetera. As a result, students' think aloud responses are probably more spontaneous, direct and personal than their written reviews.

In the present study we explore which changes occur (if any) in the content of adolescents' literary response, during talking about a literary short story and subsequently writing a review about the same story. Our research question is: *Do students develop new ideas, interpretations or insights by writing a review, compared to their initial verbal responses during and immediately after reading a story?*

We believe that more insight into how students carry out different kinds of literary response tasks is relevant for literature teachers as well as curriculum designers

who have to decide which (type of) task to use for which particular purpose. In addition, we aim to contribute—in a small way—to writing-to-learn theories and research in the context of literature teaching and learning.

2. METHOD

2.1 Participants

Ten students (four boys and six girls) voluntarily participated in the study, with their parents' consent. In return the students received a voucher.

All students were enrolled in Grade 10 of the pre-academic track at three secondary schools in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Their average age was 15.5 years (*SD* = .67). In the Netherlands, formal literature education starts in Grade 10. This meant that our participants had received less than one year of instruction in literature, and thus may be considered as novice readers of literature. According to their literature teachers (whom we shortly interviewed about the students beforehand), half of the participating students were 'high achievers' in literature, while the other half were 'low achievers' in the sense that they showed little interest in literature reading and received low grades for literature.

2.2 Procedures

Verbal and written responses were collected during individual sessions after school time, led by one of the researchers. Each session took about 90 minutes. Students were first trained in thinking aloud as they read, during 30 minutes. Students received general directions on paper, watched a videotape of a student thinking aloud while trying to solve math problems (cf. Ericsson & Simon, 1993), and practiced thinking aloud while reading a simple short story.

The students then read a more complex short story (see below for the story used). The story was presented to them fragment by fragment on a computer screen. By pressing a button, students could scroll forward or backward through the story. A bar indicated the number of fragments already processed and still to follow. Whenever a student fell silent, the researcher gave general prompts in order to stimulate a response (e.g. 'What are you doing?' 'What is going on in your mind?'). More specific prompts were avoided, in order not to cue particular kinds of response. Students were given as much time as they needed to read each fragment and respond.

The think aloud sessions were audio taped and afterwards typed out in protocols. (See Appendix A for an example of a think aloud protocol).

After finishing reading and thinking aloud, the students were asked to verbalize their thoughts about the story as a whole. The prompt used was: "What do you think of the story as a whole?". Reading and responding to the story lasted between 15 and 20 minutes. (See Appendix B for an example of a student's verbal response in the post-reading phase).

Finally, students were asked to write a short literary review about the story, of about 200 words, intended for peer readers. The review was written on the computer. Students were asked to provide a summary of the story, to state their opinion of the story and to substantiate their opinion with arguments (see Appendix C for the task directions; Appendix D contains an example of a written review). Students completed the writing task in 10 to 30 minutes.

2.3 The story

The story used was a Dutch translation of *The Three Friends* by the award-winning British author Jeanette Winterson, from her collection of short stories *The World and other Places* (1998). The story is short (about 600 words) and may be characterized as a post-modern fairy tale. It is witty, mysterious and invites multiple interpretations beyond the explicit storyline.

The story is about three friends who decide to go on a quest. One of the friends wants to seek gold, the second wants to seek wives, while the third proposes to seek "that which cannot be found". They agree to go searching for the last and set off in fine array. First, they come to a house without any floors. Diner guests throw golden plates for them to catch. Next, they arrive at a Turkish harem, where each of them is offered six wives. The three friends take the wives and let them carry the golden plates. Finally, they come to a tower in the middle of the sea. That which cannot be found, has found them. A ship "thin as a blade" comes towards them. The story ends with: "They saw the rower throw back his hood. They saw him beckon to them and the world tilted. The sea poured away."

2.4 Analysis

The content of all verbal and written responses was analysed by both authors of this paper, using a coding scheme (see Table 1). They determined whether a student produced one or more statements in each category (+), or not (-). First, they did the scoring independently of each other, and subsequently compared and discussed their findings. A final score was decided upon based on the outcome of the discussion.

Table 1. Coding scheme of students' verbal and written responses to The Three Friends

Type of response	Examples of student responses
Detecting problems, asking questions	`A trapdoor in the ceiling': I don't know what that is.
	How can there be a ceiling, but no floors?
	What happens at the end? I don't get it.
Providing personal, elaborative, or associative responses	So the three friends find riches and women. I am becoming very jealous (laughs).
Reflecting on theme, main idea or (moral) message	I think the story is about death and dying. That is something you find, when you are not looking for it.
Reflecting on literary aspects, e.g., genre, structure, style	"Once upon a time…". This must be a fairy tale.
	The style is poetic and a bit archaic, as if it has been written a long time ago, in the middle ages or so.
Providing evaluative comments	This part of the story is rather boring; nothing exciting really happens.
Providing arguments to substantiate opinion	I like this story. It is strange, but quite interesting and a bit philosophical.
	The story is unrealistic; all kinds of things happen that cannot possibly happen in real life. I do not like those kind of fictional stories.

2.5 Expectations

We expected that more students would report problems in understanding (parts of) the story and personal, elaborative associations when verbally responding to the story than in their subsequent written reviews. We also expected that more students would provide in their writing

- reflections on theme, main idea and/or moral of the story;
- reflections on literary aspects of the story, such as genre, structure and/or style.
- evaluative comments on the story;
- arguments to substantiate their opinion of the story,

than in their verbal responses during or immediately after reading.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Detecting problems in understanding (parts of) the story

Because writing a literary review is less direct than verbal responses and requires of students to produce a coherent, convincing text, we expected fewer students to report difficulties in understanding the story than in their online verbal responses. This expectation was partly confirmed. All of the students in our study reported more than once that they experienced difficulties in understanding (parts of) the story, but

more did so during reading and thinking aloud. In the post-reading stage difficulties were reported less often and more tentatively (see Table 2).

Table 2. Detecting problems in understanding (parts of) the story

Student	Phase 1 During reading: verbal response	Phase 2 After reading: verbal response	Phase 3 After reading: written review
Bob	+	+	+
Charlotte	+	+	+
Darianne	+	+	+
Julia	+	+	+
Jurriaan	+	-	-
Maaike	+	-	+
Miguel	+	+	+
Naomi	+	+	+
Stefan	+	+	+
Stella	+	-	-

Note 1. Names of students are fictious.
Note 2. + indicates that the student reported one or more statements within this type of response during a response phase; - indicates the absence of such statements.

Students especially experienced problems concerning the story passage about the "house without floors". Students found it hard to imagine such a house, and wondered how people could live in it. Furthermore, some students reported difficulties in comprehending certain words or phrases in the story. The Roman number "CIXX" and words such as "exuberant", "scythe" and "despise" were unknown, hindering them in their efforts to reconstruct and interpret the story.

Moreover, all students experienced problems making sense of the end of the story. Stefan, for example, grappled with the final story passage in his verbal response:

> "[Sighs]. They have found something which cannot be found, I think. Or something like that, but it is rather complicated. [Cites] "The sea poured away". I don't know what they mean by that. Maybe it is a hurricane, or something, in the water. But I just don't know. [Cites] "Who are they with starfish in their hair?" I do not really understand the end of the story. What do they mean by that?"

Students complained that the story was "vague" or "unclear", and therefore difficult to comprehend.

3.2 Personal, elaborative or associative responses

Only four of the ten students provided personal, elaborative or associative responses to the story (see Table 3).

Table 3. Providing personal responses or associations

Student	Phase 1 During reading: verbal response	Phase 2 After reading: verbal response	Phase 3 After reading: written review
Bob	-	-	-
Charlotte	-	-	-
Darianne	+	-	+
Julia	-	+	-
Jurriaan	-	-	-
Maaike	-	-	-
Miguel	+	-	-
Naomi	-	-	-
Stefan	-	-	-
Stella	-	-	+

Miguel, for example, said in his verbal response to the beginning of the story:

> "Yes, this reminds me above all of myself. I used to have two friends myself. Or rather one good friend, there were only two of us. And then, at elementary school, a third one joined us."

And Darianne wrote in her review:

> "Probably they [the three friends] had nothing else to do and so they thought of searching for what cannot be found. That would not have been my first choice, not even my third choice, as it was with those boys. When I have nothing to do, I dance to music quite exuberantly. But well, that's me ....".

Darianne's review is exceptionally elaborative and expressive, compared to the reviews of the other students. Yet, on the whole, students' writings appeared to be somewhat 'flat' and obligatory compared to their initial verbal reactions. Original, interesting associations students put forward during the think aloud sessions did not recur in their writings. Concerning the main characters, for instance, students came up with the following ideas while thinking aloud;

> "Well, these are boys that are looking for challenges." (Darianne)
> "The three friends. The three little pigs. Comic figures. Huey, Dewey and Louie." (Julia)

These ideas appear to be worthwhile and deserve elaboration, but they somehow disappeared or were forgotten in the process of thinking aloud and writing.

3.3 Reflecting on theme or main idea of the story

Few students reflected on theme, main idea, deeper meaning and/or 'moral' of the story. If they did so, it was only after reading the story as a whole. In general, the writing task did not elicit thoughts about theme more often than did the verbal response task after reading (Table 4).

Table 4. Reflecting on theme or main idea of the story

Student	Phase 1 During reading: verbal response	Phase 2 After reading: verbal response	Phase 3 After reading: written review
Bob	-	-	-
Charlotte	-	-	-
Darianne	-	+	+
Julia	-	+	-
Jurriaan	-	-	-
Maaike	-	+	-
Miguel		+	+
Naomi	-	-	+
Stefan	-	+	-
Stella	-	+	+

Stella suggested the following theme immediately after reading the story as a whole:

> "Something like, you will always find what you are not looking for."

In her written review she elaborated on this idea:

> "What you are looking for cannot be found, but if you are not looking for something, you will get it for free everywhere."

She then made a connection to avarice and the difficulty (and virtue) of not wanting anything, thus changing from 'theme' to 'moral lesson'.

3.4 Reflecting on literary aspects: genre, style and/or structure

About half of the students reflected on the genre of the story, especially in their verbal responses immediately after reading (Table 5). They came up with different genres: science fiction, a modern story, a children's story, a phantasy tale, a fairy tale, and a ghost story.

Table 5. Reflecting on the genre of the story

Student	Phase 1 During reading: verbal response	Phase 2 After reading: verbal response	Phase 3 After reading: written review
Bob	-	+	-
Charlotte	-	-	-
Darianne	+	-	-
Julia	-	+	-
Jurriaan	+	+	+
Maaike	+	+	+
Miguel	-	+	+
Naomi	-	-	-
Stefan	-	-	-
Stella	-	-	-

Table 5 shows that students did not reflect more often on genre in their written reviews than in their verbal responses. Moreover, students' thoughts about the story's genre did not change in the process of reading and writing. Jurriaan, for example, thought the story was a children's story from the very beginning ("Once upon a time…") and stuck to that opinion throughout his reading and writing.

In their verbal responses, students seldomly commented upon style or structural aspects of the story. They did so much more often in their written reviews (Table 6).

Table 6. Commenting on stylistic and/or structural aspects of the story

Student	Phase 1 During reading: verbal response	Phase 2 After reading: verbal response	Phase 3 After reading: written review
Bob	-	-	+
Charlotte	-	+	+
Darianne	-	+	-
Julia	-	-	+
Jurriaan	+	+	+
Maaike	+	+	+
Miguel	-	-	+
Naomi	-	-	+
Stefan	-	-	-
Stella	-	-	-

Some students noticed the open ending. Julia found the story easy to read, "written in short sentences", while Maaike found the language very difficult. In general students' comments were brief and rather shallow. Students did not elaborate on their remarks by providing examples, for instance.

3.5 Providing evaluative comments

Stating their opinion of (parts of) the story seemed to come easy to the students. All students made one or more evaluative statements about the story, in their verbal as well as in their written response (Table 7). Examples of such evaluative statements are: "The beginning is rather childish", "This was really one of the strangest stories I have ever read", "I liked the story, because you didn't know what would happen next to the three boys".

Table 7. Providing evaluative comments in student responses

Student	Phase 1 During reading: verbal response	Phase 2 After reading: verbal response	Phase 3 After reading: written review
Bob	-	+	+
Charlotte	+	+	+
Darianne	+	+	+
Julia	+	+	+
Jurriaan	+	+	+
Maaike	+	-	+
Miguel	+	+	+
Naomi	+	+	+
Stefan	+	+	+
Stella	+	+	+

In general, students showed a more positive attitude towards the story in their written review than in their verbal response. For instance, students more often called the story "funny" or "witty" in their written reviews than in their verbal responses (Table 8).

Table 8. Finding the story funny or witty

Student	Phase 1 During reading: verbal response	Phase 2 After reading: verbal response	Phase 3 After reading: written review
Bob	-	-	+
Charlotte	-	-	-
Darianne	+	+	+
Julia	-	+	-
Jurriaan	-	-	+
Maaike	-	-	+
Miguel	-	-	-
Naomi	-	-	+
Stefan	-	+	+
Stella	-	-	-

Students' opinion of the story appeared to have changed in the process of talking and writing in other respects as well. During reading, eight students called (aspects of) the story "strange", "weird", "bizarre" or "absurd", while in the written reviews only four students ventured that opinion (Table 9). Apparently, the writing task caused the students to experience and to present the story as less "strange" or more "normal".

Table 9. Finding the story (or story aspects) strange, weird, bizarre or absurd.

Student	Phase 1 During reading: verbal response	Phase 2 After reading: verbal response	Phase 3 After reading: written review
Bob	-	+	+
Charlotte	+	+	+
Darianne	+	+	+
Julia	+	+	+
Jurriaan	-	-	-
Maaike	+	-	-
Miguel	+	-	-
Naomi	+	-	-
Stefan	+	+	-
Stella	+	-	-

In general students appeared to build in more nuances, more shades in their evaluations in their written than in their verbal response. Maaike, for instance, reacted to the story during thinking aloud as follows:

> "I don't know, I don't know. […] Yes, it is very strange, everything".

However, in her written review she nuanced her reaction:

> "According to me, the story was funny but a little bit vague. […] Sometimes, I did not fully understand what was meant by some things."

Stefan also seemed to play down his original evaluation in his written review. Verbally responding to the story's ending, he said:

> "[Sighs]. They have found something which cannot be found, I think. Or something like that, but it is rather complicated. [Cites] "The sea poured away". I don't know what they mean by that. Maybe it is a hurricane, or something, in the water. But I just don't know. [Cites] "Who are they with starfish in their hair?" I do not really understand the end of the story. What they mean by that?"

In his written review he simply wrote:

> "The last fragment is a bit vague."

It seemed that some students tended to tone down their evaluations in their reviews, for instance by adding words as 'sometimes', 'probably', and 'a bit'.

3.6 Substantiating one's opinion by using arguments

In their verbal responses students usually did not provide any argumentation to substantiate their judgments. Evaluative statements often referred directly to the part of the literary text at hand (e.g., "How weird", "This is funny"), without further explanation. In the written reviews, students used arguments more frequently, but their arguments were often shallow and not very convincing (e.g., "I liked the story,

because you didn't know what would happen next to the three boys"). Most reviews lacked a clear, well developed argumentation structure.

3.7 Individual differences

Some of the students appeared to have developed new ideas or insights about the story while writing their review. They seemed to have gained something by writing, while others did not. This may be illustrated by the responses of two students, Naomi and Stefan, both 'low achievers' according to their literature teachers. Naomi's response clearly changed by writing about the story. She reflected on theme and structure in her review, something she did not do in her verbal responses. So, in the process of writing she developed some new ideas.

Stefan, on the other hand, stuck to the same types of response throughout his reading and writing; mostly retelling, pointing out problems and evaluating. An earlier, half-hearted attempt at formulating a theme, did not reappear in his written review.

As to the differences between 'high' and 'low achievers'; the responses of 'high achievers', such as Darianne, appeared to be more varied than those of 'low achievers', not only in their writing but also in their verbal reports. For instance, Darianne's responses covered all six response types we distinguished, in contrast to Naomi and Stefan who produced responses of only three or four different types.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we reported the findings of a small scale, explorative study on the value of writing a review about a literary story, compared to students providing verbal responses during and immediately after reading. Based on previous writing-to-learn studies, we assumed that writing in response to a story may contribute to 'knowledge change': that is, some kind of adjustment or deepening in their initial verbal responses.

Contrary to our expectations, students did not respond more evaluatively or interpretively in their written responses than in their verbal responses. At least, we did not find any differences in the presence or absence of evaluative comments or reflections on theme or deeper meaning of the story between the verbal and written response mode. Nor did we find differences with regards to the presence of reflections on genre, or in personal responses.

In accordance with our expectations, more students remarked upon literary aspects of the story (such as style and structure) in their written reviews than in their verbal responses. Moreover, students showed a somewhat more differentiated opinion and more often provided (although weak) argumentation in their written responses than during the think aloud sessions. In their written reviews they also tended to tone down their initial evaluative statements, and to voice a more positive attitude to the story.

On the whole, our findings indicate that the students' written reviews were somewhat shallow and obligatory compared to their verbal responses. Students failed to incorporate interesting, original thoughts and associations, made during thinking aloud, in their subsequent writing. In this respect students did not seem to have gained by writing—the main premise of writing-to-learn theories (Klein, 1999)—but rather to have lost something in the process.

Possibly, students experienced an internal conflict during writing. On the one hand, the writing task urged them to produce a coherent and convincing argumentative text. As literary critics who were writing for peers who were unfamiliar with the story, they were supposed to play the role of experts (Kieft, 2006). On the other hand, they had to write about a complex literary story that often did not make sense to them and that was experienced as "strange" or "vague". To solve this conflict, students used different strategies. Some distanced themselves from the story, by placing it in a particular genre they did not like ("It is a modern story […] I myself do not like modern literature", "It is a children's story", "If you like fairy tales, then this story is probably worth reading"). Others focused on a retelling of the story; they provided detailed descriptions of the story's main events without reflecting on the absurdity of the setting and the events that were described. Half of the students just simply ignored or eliminated the absurdity and bizarre aspects of the story in their written review, aspects which had baffled them during reading and thinking aloud. Possibly, students considered showing uncertainty, doubt or wonder to be inappropriate for a written review, and therefore presented the story as more coherent and comprehensible than they actually thought it was.

It should be emphasized that this study is explorative in nature. Only ten students participated, all were students in tenth grade, and they responded to just one short story. Also, we did not systematically vary the mode, the moment of response or the instructions or prompts provided, as would have been possible in an experimental design. Therefore, our findings should be interpreted with caution. With more experienced readers in higher grades, and/or other stories, different results might be found. Especially so, since there appear to be large differences in response between individual students. Moreover, we know that there are significant story effects on the type of students' literary response, especially for high achieving adolescent readers. In a previous study these students were found to be more flexible, in the sense that they adapted the type of response to the particular story they were reading, while low achieving students did not (Janssen, Braaksma, Rijlaarsdam, & Van den Bergh, 2012). Our finding that participants in our study provided few personal responses, might be explained by the particular story we used, a post-modern fairy tale. Possibly the strangeness and/or difficulty of the story caused students to respond less personally.

It would be worthwhile to systematically examine the relationship between students' verbal and written responses to various literary texts, during different phases of responding, and with different tasks in future studies. Findings of such studies could be informative for literature teachers who have to decide which mode of

response to use and in which sequence, in order to reach a particular goal, and whether writing may have an added value for that goal. Such findings could also be relevant for design researchers who wish to evaluate the outcomes of literature interventions.

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APPENDIX A. FRAGMENT OF MIGUEL'S THINK ALOUD PROTOCOL

Title

[Miguel reads aloud] "The Three Friends"

First fragment

"Yes, this reminds me above all of myself. I used to have two friends myself. Or rather one good friend, there were only two of us. And then, at elementary school, a third one joined us."

Second fragment

"Ahem, not gold, not women, but they want to search for something they know nothing about. Well, I think I would rather go for gold and women. And that which cannot be found, well, I could take care of that later. Or maybe it comes along with the gold and the women. So, everyone has something of their own." [Laughs].

Third fragment

"They pretend to be in a castle that is preparing for war. The way things are told. [Cites] "chandeliers bright as swords" and how those forks and knives are displayed. […]"

Fourth fragment

"The story is getting a bit bizarre, I think. [Cites] "There was a trumpet sound and the guests began to enter the room through a trap door in the ceiling." So, this means they were falling upwards, or something like that. I guess. [Cites] "Some were suspended on wires, others walked across ropes slender as youth. In this way they were all able to join their place setting." Well, this probably means something profound."

Fifth fragment

"Yes, that's clever of them: taking all those golden plates. I would have done the same. And then resume the search. At least I could finance myself then, on my quest for that which cannot be found."

Sixth fragment

[Laughs]. "Yes, ahem. That's smart too: taking those women and letting the women carry the golden plates. Yes, actually it's the same story as previously."

APPENDIX B. MIGUEL'S POST READING VERBAL RESPONSE

[What do you think of the story as a whole?]

"The story as a whole. Well, maybe if I had read it at home or if I knew more about the author, or things like that, I would have had a clearer picture of the sort of texts she writes. Whether she writes philosophical or more psychological texts. I really don't know. Maybe this is very modern, because I don't understand it. But the story I have read? Well, it is not my way of philosophical thinking. I cannot enter that world and so I cannot understand it."

APPENDIX C. TASK DIRECTIONS FOR WRITING A REVIEW

Imagine the following:

It is customary at your school for students to make a literary journal. One section of this journal, "Should I read this or not?", contains short literary reviews written by students. The purpose is to give each other hints of stories and authors that are worth reading. Opinions of peers may help you to decide whether to read a certain story or not. Moreover, it is fun to read the personal responses of others.

But now you are asked to write such a review….

Your review must contain at least

- a description of the story;
- your personal opinion of the story;
- a foundation for your opinion.

Remember that you are writing for peers who are unfamiliar with the story. They want to know what kind of story it is, and if it's worth reading (or not).

Your review must comprise about half a page (single-spaced).

You may use the computer, or write your review by hand. Change, edit and paste until you are content and sure that your review may be published in the literary journal.

Is it all clear?

Good luck!

APPENDIX D. REVIEW WRITTEN BY MIGUEL

The story is about two friends who find a third friend. One of those friends then proposes to go on a quest. One says gold, the other one says wives and the last one says,

"let's search for that which cannot be found". They agreed to search for that which cannot be found. At the end of their journey they have found all earthly things, except what is mysterious. They come to a sea and call at a man in a tower "we are looking for that, which cannot be found", but the voice was distorted in the air. The man responded, "It has found you". In the distance they then see a ship with people in it who have starfish in their hair…

It is a modern story with much depth. I myself do not like modern literature and therefore have difficulties understanding it. People who do like modern literature will probably appreciate the story more than I do. I prefer classical/philosophical stories. But I think it is a very beautiful piece and actually I should delve into it more. It is a matter of: do I like modern literature or not?