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Amanda's Mirror

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Abstract

The purpose of this research project was to explore the problem-solving and positive self-concept techniques used in drama and dance programs. After studying the specific techniques of role play, pantomimes, and body control, the book Amanda's Mirror was written. The specific problem was can a children's book be written using problem-solving and positive self-concept techniques used in drama and dance programs.

Amanda's Mirror

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The purpose of this research project was to explore the problem-solving and positive self-concept techniques used in drama and dance programs. After studying the specific techniques of role play, pantomimes, and body control, the book Amanda's Mirror was written. The specific problem was can a children's book be written using problem-solving and positive self-concept techniques used in drama and dance programs.

The story involves eleven-year-old Amanda Woodman. She is the youngest and only girl of five children. Amanda is shy and ignored by her family but especially her father. She desires his love but is kept busy with household chores. Amanda's school is performing Alice in Wonderland and Karen, a friend, convinces Amanda to audition. Amanda gets the part of Alice and learns to like herself and gain confidence by getting involved with the drama and dance program. The Woodman family suffers hardships, but they manage to survive, and life starts getting better for Amanda.

The final product of Amanda's Mirror proved that drama and dance techniques can be incorporated into a children's book.

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Chapter 1

The terms drama and dance often evoke thoughts of pleasure, enjoyment, and entertainment for many people. They go to the theatre to marvel and admire the performances of artists. However, drama and dance are not simply an experience of pure entertainment. What occurs upon the stage has much more meaning, and we as educators can learn from this genre.

William Shakespeare said it so eloquently in the words, "All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances, And one man in his time many parts" (Shakespeare, 1966, p. 37).

This passage can mean many things, but this researcher believes it is telling us that what is occurring upon the stage is not purely make-believe, but a recreation of actual experiences of real life. Many authors and playwrights draw from personal experiences or actual happenings of the world. We, as members of an audience, often see what is being portrayed on stage and can many times relate it to our own lives, possibly helping to solve actual problems.

Researchers are exploring drama and dance therapy concepts and are applying them to problem-solving strategies. The role-play may be make-believe at the start, but the responses to the problems, conflicts,

and characters of the world are and must be real (Kukla, 1987, p. 73). David Booth (1985), professor of education at the University of Toronto, incorporated role-play and drama into the education of children. He came to the conclusion that, "Drama is a positive, joyful, and fulfilling way of learning - a model for education across the curriculum" (p. 78). Some adults and children may recall the fears they experienced when participating in a class play. Yet, most students have no idea what acting is when presenting a play or story. Teachers need to explain to students that "acting is bringing a story character to life, showing the audience how a character feels" (Bodel, 1987, p.77). Acting should and does reflect reality. If this approach is taken, then the fears of class plays can be replaced with fun, excitement, and, most of all, learning.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this creative project was to explore the problem-solving and positive self-concept techniques in drama and dance and incorporate them into the writing of the children's book, Amanda's Mirror.

The specific problem explored was can a children's book be written using problem-solving and positive self-concept techniques used in drama and dance

therapy? When the basics of drama and dance therapy were studied and understood, the resulting format was the book entitled Amanda's Mirror. The audience chosen for the book was fourth through sixth grade students, and the book has problem-solving and positive self-concept techniques within the story.

The primary assumption was that this researcher had the ability and knowledge to create such a story of literary quality. It was also assumed that for educational purposes, schools had the faculty for drama and/or dance programs. Finally, students reading the proposed book would be able to internalize the problem-solving and positive self-concept techniques in a work of fiction.

The importance of this project and related studies is an attempt to promote an educational system that gives students a complete and balanced education which will enable them to function in today's society. If the arts are incorporated into this system, this goal may be achieved.

David Rockefeller, Jr. (1977) believes that an emphasis on the arts in schools can help students learn more in other subjects (p. 278). Unfortunately, our Western society tends to educate towards the left brain or factual based knowledge (Druart, 1983, p. 2). Less time needs to be spent on academic or factual classes

and more time given to the arts, or work to combine them. Mimi Bodel is a second grade teacher at Garrison Forest School in Garrison, Maryland. She treats her dramatics instruction as a unit. This means that for one hour, three times a week for six weeks, Ms Bodel explores dramatics with her students. This also means that she does not give up language arts or mathematics and does not end up rehearsing every day for three weeks before performances (Bodel, 1987, p. 79).

School administrators may fear that if more time is spent on the arts, the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic will suffer. In a study conducted by Junius Eddy (1977), there was no reduction in students' academic achievement in schools that had made the arts central to their curriculum. In fact, there are a number of cases where academic achievement improved. In New York City the Guggenheim Museum's "Reading Through the Arts" program and the "Open Door Program" in New York's Community School District No. 4, in Spanish Harlem, recorded reading score increases by participating students over those who did not participate (p. 11). The Interdisciplinary Model in the Arts for Children and Teachers (IMPACT) studies have been conducted in several parts of the country and have been teaching reading, mathematics and other subjects effectively.

After 4 years of Arts IMPACT the number of 6th graders with reading vocabulary above grade level rose 65%, arithmetic computation, 56%, arithmetic concepts 63%, reading comprehension 41%, arithmetic application 25%. (Dobbs, 1979, p. 136)

This same study discovered that teachers' attitudes and excitement about their jobs was very much improved with the incorporation of Arts IMPACT (p. 136). If teachers are excited about what is being taught, their enthusiasm is transferred to the students, and learning is made enjoyable.

Beyond academic improvement, students can grow and develop as persons. John Melser, principal of Public School No. 3 in Mahattan observed:

One can expect from an arts-based curriculum a fairly certain increment in the rate of development of basic skills, together with the development of a degree of confidence, resourcefulness, and willingness to work through difficulties, which helps the child become a more self-motivated and efficient learner. (Eddy, 1977, p. 6)

Therefore, students can improve general learning and self-concept, and begin to utilize all of their mental capacity (Druart, 1983, p. 2). Through the use of drama, role-play, and dance, students' perceptions can be altered and expanded (Booth, 1985, p. 194).

Students at the University School in Laramie, Wyoming, gained in such self-motivation when filming a production of their own. Elaine Mulherin (1973) offered an English elective course in mythology through

the University of Wyoming for tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students. One group wrote a myth and went through the entire process of a movie production. If there was a problem, the group would try to solve it themselves. The teacher was very pleased with the responsibility and self-discipline with which the students worked. After the project was completed, both teacher and students had learned more than they had thought possible.

Writing a book that incorporates the problem-solving and positive self-concept techniques in drama and the emotional release in dance could give students insight as to what the arts might do for them. It was what this researcher hopes will occur.

DEFINITIONS

The Arts - the medium of visual arts, dance, drama, music, and creative writing (Druart, 1983, p. 7).

Dance therapy - a promotion of an integration of mind and body which is necessary for psychological and physical well-being (Lefco, 1974, p. 1).

Problem-solving - skills involved in producing alternatives for a common situation and reducing those alternatives to a solution (Garner, 1985, p. 37).

Self-concept - one's image of oneself and one's identity, abilities and worth (Guralnik, 1977, p. 677).

Drama - a literary composition that tells a story by means of dialogue and action (Guralnik, 1977, p. 228).

Role-playing - an effective way to encourage students to think of solutions to situations, then assume the role of another person to better understand the attitudes and feelings of others (Brown, 1985, p. 105).

LIMITATIONS

This researcher chose to limit Amanda's Mirror to fourth through sixth grade students' reading level. This helped give focus to the audience for the book and aided in the plot and character development. This project was focused on the drama aspect, but dance therapy was an important element. Much of the dance therapy information found was limited to therapy used with the mentally and physically handicapped. The information and techniques were modified for students not having such handicaps. The setting of the book was limited to a school with a large enough program to offer drama and dance programs. A final limitation was

that this is the author's first attempt to write a book for children.

Chapter 2

Related Literature

Recent studies in the drama and dance fields have explored the relationship of the arts and the education of students. Since the 1980's 'back to the basics' trend in school curriculums, the arts have been reduced if not completely eliminated. However, some educators are beginning to realize the value the arts can have in the development of a child, academically and personally. The first four studies explored some of the ways drama and dance have been used in school curriculums. They are followed by a case study conducted with dance therapy techniques and a study examining the effects of dance therapy on the concept of body image. The final article explains the ways children learn about themselves and others by reading fiction.

Druart (1983) conducted a study to determine if there is a relationship among involvement in the arts, self-concept, and cerebral dominance or left and right brain development. The specific questions researched were: 1. Is there a relationship between self-concept and curricular involvement in the arts? 2. Is there a relationship between cerebral dominance and curricular

involvement in the arts? 3. Is there a relationship between cerebral dominance and self-concept?

The sixty participants were given seven tests to determine right and left brain dominance and self-concept. The primary limitation was the fact that the participants were mainly volunteers and were offered no compensation for time spent. There was a question of gender balance, but the results were not skewed enough to cause misinterpretation.

The study did not find a significant difference between self-concept of students involved in an arts curriculum and those involved in a fact-oriented curriculum. Nor was there a significant difference between the self-concept of students and their right or left cerebral dominance. However, there was a significant difference between the right/left cerebral dominance of students who were involved in the arts versus fact curriculum. Arts students excelled at right cerebral activities and fact oriented students excelled in left cerebral activities. The researcher concluded that there is a relationship between students' curricular involvement and cerebral development. If a positive learning situation is created, it can positively effect one's self-concept (p. 14).

Kukla (1987) studied David Booth's work with drama in education. Educators who use drama in education hope to deepen children's understanding of themselves, others and the world in which they live. This will happen when improvised drama is built upon real experiences. Booth starts the process by reading a story, and the students choose and discover the central topic or issue. Then a role-play is developed, and the students enact the drama.

Kukla observed students in grades four, five, and six participating in Booth's drama lesson episode. Kukla saw students grow in an awareness of their thoughts, feelings, and language. Therefore, he saw the power of drama as a medium for learning. He also noticed a balance in the learning situation because it engaged the students' feelings as well as their intellects. It propelled them beyond facts and events, and they learned through direct experience in the drama. In conclusion, Kukla believes drama in education can be a model for education across the curriculum in the development of specific skills.

The article edited by Charles Thompson (1984), summarized two studies relating to education. The first study examined by Thompson was conducted by Natalie Susan Wilson. She described how counselors can utilize plays to help students learn problem-solving

strategies and to personalize their own guidance programs around the concerns of students in each group.

The program was presented in an open-ended format, which focused on academic and peer-relationship situations. Several class sessions were devoted to writing, rehearsing, and performing the plays. Through the process, students worked out problems without outside intervention. After the performance, the counselor and students explored what they learned through the activity and the kinds of problems encountered while working in groups.

The second study Thompson reviewed was conducted by Faye Deanes and Rosalyn Morris. They focused on social and communication skills, values clarification and decision-making skills, self-concept and self-awareness, and career and education goals. Kindergarteners and fourth grade students were paired in over twenty classes in four schools when working on social and communication skills. After a time of 'getting acquainted', the groups did a variety of activities utilizing social and communication skills. During the final session a play, written by the instructors incorporating the concepts learned, was performed by the students. The fourth grade students were amazed at the amount of knowledge kindergarteners possessed. The fourth grade students thought the

experience helped them to relate to younger siblings and children. The greatest benefit was that the activity brought together teachers and students from both grade levels.

In Gretta Berghammer's (1986) study, dramatic techniques were used to help students discover their own personal values, to help them understand how values shape their responses to certain issues and events, and to encourage the recognition and tolerance of differing values that exist within their culture. The program did emphasize that it was exploring values and not transmitting the values of the individuals conducting the study. The values explored were nuclear war, facts vs. assumptions, and self-esteem and self-concept. The children participated in role-plays and improvisational acting. They found themselves working together to solve a problem or deal with a problem within themselves.

The program is called Theatre in Education (TIE) and is defined as a theatre event that takes place in schools, composed of actors working through roles for and with children. TIE was conducted in three locations: 1. The Cockpit Theatre in London (1977), 2. University of Texas in Austin (1981), and 3. University of Northern Iowa (1985) (p. 12).

In London, the TIE program explored how human life would change in the event of a nuclear attack. Each participant was given a role card and then the students had to work together to solve problems of survival (p. 30).

In Texas, a group of graduate students used the TIE program to see if it could be developed and implemented within an established curriculum in area elementary schools. Second-grade students learned how to define the difference between a fact and an assumption as well as realizing the differences that were important in academic and social learning. Then skits were performed dealing with the 'right' and 'wrong' actions (p. 31,32).

Finally in Iowa, the purpose of the TIE program was to unite students from various areas of study and to provide them an opportunity to work collectively to meet the needs of young people in area schools. The focus was based on emotional child abuse and the effects it has on self-esteem and self-concept. A course, "Seminar in Theatre in Education", was offered, and the fifteen students who enrolled learned the basics of TIE. The class then conducted a 45 minute presentation which was composed of five scenes written by Ms. Berghammer. Each illustrated a different way

someone can hurt another's feelings and identified options for dealing with that hurt (p. 32,33).

The TIE program has been found to effectively create a process for value discovery by integrating subjects such as history, English, social studies, language arts, and geography with drama. This linking of theatre with 'content' curriculum has allowed a simultaneous study of facts and subjective responses to those facts.

The case study by Helene Lefco (1974) examined her dance therapy used in a clinic in New York City. The process Lefco went through was to learn the basics of dance therapy used in New York, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C. state and private hospitals. Then she went into practice in a clinic in New York.

This case study focused on six of Lefco's long term patients, who had varying forms of mental handicaps. The ultimate goal of dance therapy was that through the release of dance and therapists' observations, the patient may gain awareness of self and an understanding of the part that emotions play in the stance, form, and involvement of the body (p. 2).

At the end of the study, the patients were asked several questions. The major thread through most of the responses was how relaxed their bodies became and the tension that was released.

Christrup (1973) studied the effect of dance therapy on the concept of body image. The problem specifically examined was the effectiveness of dance therapy through the use of systematic observations made during the sessions as a means of measurement and through the use of projective drawings as a criterion (p. 153). The projective drawing tests were administered to the experimental groups of schizophrenics. Then the experimental groups were placed in dance therapy sessions. After the sessions, the drawing tests were re-administered, and changes were made in observations. It was concluded that dance therapy did produce a change in the concept of body image among some of the subjects. The most significant improvement occurred in subjects most involved in the sessions. For some reason, females showed more change than men. Christrup believed this would be worth further study.

In the article "Reading is a Problem-Solving Process," Garner (1984) explained the process of reading and problem-solving strategies. First, the reader samples the book by seeing the first few lines. Then they start predicting what the story is about from the opening passages. As they continue reading, they confirm whether they were correct in their predictions. The fourth step is anticipation which means the reader

now has gained enough knowledge about the plot and characters to want to know what the outcome will be. Finally, the reader is free to correct any interpretations as well as mispronounced words and meanings of words (p. 36,37). Once the reading material is completed, the reader can apply the problem-solving skills in his or her own life. The value of reading is more than learning language, it is exploring the world through the words on the page.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Young readers all love, hate, hope, fear, envy, and admire different people and objects around them. The only difference between children and adults is the fact that children have not lived as long (Irwin and Eyerly, 1988, p. 7). Children need to learn how to handle these adult feelings. A book can be an effective tool for the development of thinking skills to deal with such feelings. As children read, they translate the experience being read about into their own context and internalize the feelings, attitudes, and ideas concerning everything from the author's values to their own life situations (Booth, 1985, 193,194). The tool this reasearcher created was the book Amanda's Mirror. Hopefully, the readers internalize what was written and apply it to their own lives.

Irwin and Eyerly (1988) believe that when starting to write a book, the author should be able to put the theme or what the book is trying to say in one sentence (p. 56). Therefore, the theme of Amanda's Mirror is how a child can gain recognition and a strengthening of self-concept by participating in a drama that uses role-play and problem-solving strategies during

rehearsals and performances. Using role-play with children allows them to explore situations different from their own lives or similar problems. Either way, the cast of Alice in Wonderland deepens the understanding of themselves and others around them through drama and role-play.

The theme is centered around the main character Amanda. She is the youngest child and only girl after five boys. Amanda gets involved in a play in school and is cast as the female lead, which places her in a point of focus. This allows her to experience something she has never felt. During rehearsals, the director selects a central theme for the role-play, and the cast examines the underlying values and explores the way society reacts to the specified problem or value. Amanda learns to release some of her feelings of frustration and gains self-confidence through her role as Alice in the Alice in Wonderland play.

Amanda also learns through the dance techniques that are used in the play. The dance instructor teaches Amanda how to release tension and move more freely. Amanda and the cast learn that the body is the instrument that conveys the character and his/her temperament. Amanda learns about the character of Alice by the way she relates to other characters as well as Alice's feelings, thoughts, and sensations

behind even the smallest movements (Wetheral, 1973, p. 3).

Using drama in education can propel children beyond the facts and events of a story, and they can learn through direct experience (Kukla, 1987). Amanda and the cast start developing a positive self-concept which can foster such qualities as following through on commitments, minimal need for supervision, and ability to assume more responsibilities (Griggs and Price, 1980 p. 604). However, the most important purpose when using drama in an educational setting is to emphasize the fact that talent is not the primary concern. The purpose is to explore the thoughts, feelings, and language of yourself and others. If children are taught to explore these elements through drama, they will be able to communicate with others more effectively.

The setting of Amanda's Mirror is a city in the Mid-West. The city's name was not established, but it was based upon Waterloo and Cedar Falls, Iowa. Amanda is attending Grant Elementary School, which has a drama and dance program. Specifically, she is in the sixth grade. The time is the present, during the school year in early spring. The reason for this time is the weather shifts represents the mood of Amanda and her self-concept. For example, the opening scene is be a

rainy day, and Amanda is late for class. The rainy day parallels Amanda's mood of sadness and frustration. This choice of season relates to the situation that Amanda works through.

CHARACTERS

The way a character looks is only one portion of a person's description in a book. Amanda has dark hair and is rather short. However, the way she walks, talks, sits, and the actions or choices she makes gives the reader a clearer picture of her character. The dialogue of the characters was carefully chosen as well. "What a character says must be so individual, that no other person in your story could possibly say the same thing" (Irwin and Eyerly, 1988, p. 98). The dialogue of Amanda and the other characters portrays their age and intelligence, unless they are advanced for their age. Finally, the narration plays an important role in characterization. Those words tell the reader what is happening, how something is said, and where the action is taking place. The following descriptions are the general characteristics of the primary characters Amanda encounters and learns from as well as Amanda herself.

Amanda is the main character and is eleven years old.

She is the youngest of six children and the only girl. She has little recognition at home and has a low self-concept. Her shyness makes her easily influenced by her brothers, friends, and especially her father. The mirror she has is her grandmother's, and she prizes it very highly.

Jeff is cast as the White Rabbit in the play and becomes friends with Amanda. He has been in productions before and tries to help Amanda get accustomed to the routine of rehearsals. His kindness and positive self-concept help Amanda gain in her self-concept. Jeff is twelve years old.

Karen is Amanda's best friend and convinces her to try for the role of Alice. Karen knows Amanda's family situation and tries to help as much as she can. Karen gets a small part in the play, which makes her a little jealous of Amanda. This tests the friendship, but in the end Karen sees how much the play is helping Amanda. Karen is eleven years old.

Mr. Harmin is the director and dance instructor. He is small and very energetic. Though he seems strict

at times, he cares about the students learning rather than the quality of the play. The students like him except for Victoria. He hopes Amanda will gain from being involved in the production. Sometimes he pushes her to do things that she might not like.

Bruce is Amanda's oldest brother, who is twenty-one.

He works with his father at John Deere Farm Machinery Plant. He wanted to go to college, but the family could not afford it. He favors Amanda because she is the youngest, and he understands her struggle with the father. Bruce is shy and does not want Amanda to be manipulated by their father as he was.

Kathy is Amanda's mother, who works as a cook at a local cafe. She is tired most of the time so has little time to be with Amanda. Her marriage to Joe is suffering because of financial burdens, and she can not get all of the housework done while she is working. Kathy is very loving and tries to protect Amanda. She pushed to get Amanda into the dancing classes and prevents Joe from taking Amanda out of the play. However, she is dominated by her husband most of the time.

Joe is Amanda's father, who works at John Deere Farm Machinery Plant. He is very strict and often yells at Kathy. The main reason for his anger is his job and then his being laid off. He worries about money and tries to keep his life simple. He is a large man with dark hair like Amanda. He loves Amanda, but finds it difficult to show it.

Victoria is another enemy Amanda has to face. She expected to get the part of Alice in the play and is angered when Amanda gets the part. She is selfish and tries to prevent Amanda from keeping the part. Though she is pretty, she is vain. Victoria is twelve years old.

FLOT

The best fiction for children is about children, and one good story is worth hundreds of non-fictional topic books (Hildick, 1970, p.7,8). The plot of Amanda's Mirror is centered around Amanda's family and the play in which she is participating. As mentioned before, Amanda is the youngest of six children and the only girl. Her brothers are very active in a wide range of activities and interests, and Amanda is often forgotten and simply not noticed. Some of this rejection is because she is a girl. Since her mother

works, Amanda has many household chores to do. The only things that make her happy are her talks with her oldest brother, Bruce, her dance lessons, and the mirror her grandmother gave her. Amanda is often found dancing in front of the mirror pretending to be a great dancer.

The conflict is among Amanda and her family, primarily the father and herself. The inciting incident or the action that gets the action going is when Amanda arrives at her dance class late because one of her brothers hid her ballet shoes and it had started raining as she walked to school. There she learns that the school is going to present the play Alice in Wonderland with the help of Mr. Harmin, the dance instructor. Karen convinces Amanda to try for the part of Alice. Amanda gets the part only to create an enemy, Victoria, and a series of other problems. Amanda almost quits the play because her father will not let her participate. However, her mother steps in, and Amanda can keep the part. Amanda is frightened but refuses to give up, and with Jeff's help rehearsals are bearable. A few days before the play, Amanda starts doubting her ability to carry out the part. Rehearsals are terrible, and Karen will not speak to her. That night, Amanda travels through the mirror and finds the

real Alice and White Rabbit. There she learns she is loved and should be proud of her work in the play.

The night of the play, Amanda's father has to work and will not come. Her brothers think the play is stupid, but with the help of Bruce, the rest of the family is there. The play goes well with only a few problems. At the end of the play, Amanda receives flowers from the White Rabbit. As the cast takes a final bow, Amanda sees her father in the back of the auditorium.

The climax of a story can be different places for different people. Some believe it is the height of action and others believe it is when the main character has made a change. The latter interpretation of climax is the one this author used. The point where Amanda makes her change is after her journey through the mirror and when she realizes she can do well as Alice, no matter if her father comes or not. The ending or denouement is the family coming to the play and the father leaving work early so he sees the end of the play. Now Amanda feels like her life is not so bad after all.

WRITING PROCESS

Much of what happens to Amanda is as real as it can be with the exception of the journey through the

mirror. Yet, it was presented in a manner so that the reader may not be positive if it really happened or was a dream. As May Masse said, "The right story of fantasy has its feet on the ground" (Yolen, 1973, p. 58).

Readers of my selected audience of fourth through sixth grade students still enjoy and learn more about the characters or story from the illustrations. The story can be enhanced as well with illustrations placed at key points of the story. The cover of the book was illustrated by Diane Gronewold of Minneapolis. Ink pens and colored pencils were used for the original illustration. This researcher explained what was needed on the cover and a description of storyline was given. The illustrator was given creative freedom to present these basic requirements in the final product. If efforts are made to publish Amanda's Mirror, additional illustrations may be included.

Reading can take us out of ourselves and usher us into a new world or simply provide an escape from an unpleasant reality (Hildick, 1970, p. 8). However, to obtain a book to experience, the author needs to consider several technical aspects of writing children's literature. This author has had a playwriting class and play analysis classes where the elements of a play were studied. The elements of a

play are different from those of a book only in the aspect that the narration expresses the actions and feelings not expressed in the words of the characters in plays.

As Amanda's Mirror was written, several general guidelines were followed. First, if someone wants to be a writer of children's books, he or she needs to be a reader of children's books. Through the classes Library Materials for Children, Library Materials for Young Adults, and Individualized Readings, several techniques of writing children's books were studied. Current trends and requirements of children's literature were identified as well. Another element considered was to pretend the story would be read aloud, and the book is readable (Yolen, 1973, p. 43). With this researcher's experience in speech and drama performing, an understanding of how words sound and work together was developed.

Writing for a fourth through sixth grade reading level was one element that this researcher found to be a difficult task. Books for nine through twelve-year-old children range from 1000 to 1800 words (Hinds, 1966, p. 93). However, the primary guide came from reading other books at this level. Several children's books have been read to gain a feel for word use and sentence structure. Reading books about

writing for children was done as well. After reading and studying these sources, the writing of Amanda's Mirror occurred. Finally, the author ran a series of reading level tests to determine if the book actually fits the age group reading level.

A child can gain so much from reading and participating in drama; schools should not deny them this experience. "The writer lights many candles in a good fantasy novel. The shadows cast in a child's soul will last for the rest of his life" (Yolen, 1973, p.67).

Chapter 4

Summary

The writing of a book can be frustrating and rewarding. At times the ideas came freely and quickly. Then there were times when nothing would appear on the page. This researcher now understands the meaning of "writer's block".

The best way to make a book believable is to write from personal experience. What happens to Amanda in the story is what has happened to this author and other persons involved in the theatre. Another aspect of believability is dialogue. Many actual dialogues contain slang, improper grammar, and incomplete sentences. Therefore, the dialogue in the book was written to present a proper use of the English language and only a few uses of slang.

Through the writing process, some details of the plot were slightly altered. First, one of Amanda's brothers was eliminated. The plot became too complicated with five brothers. Since the character of Joel was not vital to the storyline, this brother was dropped.

A second minor change was the action of Mr. Woodman at the end of the book. He was unable to attend the play because he started back to work that

night. Previously, it was proposed that Mr. Woodman would attend the play. The reason for this change was for the book's believability. If everything turns out the way Amanda wants, the book becomes too idealistic. This change may make the ending a little more realistic.

A final adjustment was made in the ninth chapter which describes the activities of the rehearsals. Descriptions were simplified and the focus was upon the drama and dance techniques used to gain self-confidence, body control, and simple role-play through pantomimes. A reader of the fourth through the sixth grade reading level would become bored with lengthy details. This researcher believes the indication of the techniques was sufficient for the book.

Eight readability tests were conducted to examine the actual reading level of Amanda's Mirror. The results ranged from a 2.4 to a 9.8 reading level. Each test does vary; however, the fourth through sixth grade reading level that was the focus range does fit within the results. This also shows the variance in the author's writing.

For further study on this project, Amanda's Mirror could be given to a stratified sample of readers. The sample could include males and females of the fourth

through sixth grade reading level. Also, the sample should include readers with and without drama and dance programs in their schools. Finally, the sample could include adults familiar with drama and dance programs to get their reactions to the book.

A new study that could be conducted would be a content analysis of the use of drama and dance in children's books. That could be an area of children's literature that needs more examination.

The writing of a children's book was a challenge. The limitation of this author came in the form of the technical aspects of writing. The author had the ideas, but getting them upon the page in proper form was the main limitation. A further study for this author is to reinforce these skills through personal study or through a formal writing class.

In conclusion, this researcher found the writing process enjoyable, rewarding, and hopes to continue to study writing techniques and possibly write other stories.

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