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# The relationship between author and audience: case study of a young-adult author and a student audience

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AUTHOR AND AUDIENCE:  
CASE STUDY OF A YOUNG-ADULT AUTHOR  
AND A STUDENT AUDIENCE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

by  
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May 2002

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother, Mildred Eileen Gunter Phares, who, with five children still at home, went back to college to become a teacher; my father, Donald Jones Phares, who served for many years on the local public school board; my grandfather, Albert Oscar Gunter, who was a graduate of Texas State Normal and taught school for a time in the tiny Louisiana town of Merryville; Dr. Norman E. Harper, whose vision it was to establish the Graduate School of Education at Reformed Theological Seminary and whose Philosophical Foundations course taught me the biblical underpinnings of Christian education; and above all, to Jesus Christ Our Lord: “For of Him and through Him and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.” (Romans 11: 36)

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## ABSTRACT

How does author relate to audience? This overarching question guided a case study focused on author Rick Norman and his novel *Fielder's Choice*. Specific questions were (1) What was, and is, this author's conception of his audience for the book? (2) How do members of the audience—specifically five high school students—respond to the novel? (3) How do the audience's responses relate to the author's stated intentions? Data came from the following sources: interviews with the author, the student readers, and the editor of the book; students' written responses to the book and the author's written reactions to those responses; an interactive dialogue between the author and the students; records and documents provided by the author; and reviews of the book. Data analysis employed Glaser and Strauss's (1967) comparative method and Spradley's (1979) developmental research sequence.

Findings include the following: (1) This author saw his audience, which he portrayed as multi-faceted and dynamic, through the lens of self. He attributed to his audience his own characteristics when he originally planned and wrote the book and also when he talked about it ten years later. Self was at the center of his generic audience as well as his defined audience. (2) The audience of readers in this study varied in the extent to which they connected with the author. Most of them did, however, speculate about his intentions relative to the content as well as to text features. (3) Author intention and audience response did not always match. When mismatches were revealed in written and oral exchanges, subsequent dialogue between author and audience was directed to mutual understanding. The author wanted to learn what there was in his writing that led the readers to unintended meanings, and the readers wanted to learn why the author wrote as he did.



This study, focused on author-audience relationship, fits into a growing body of work examining connections between reading and writing. Its uniqueness lies in its dual focus on both author intention and audience response and in the opportunities provided for author and audience to meet to discuss intentions and responses.

## CHAPTER 1: THE PUZZLE OF THE AUTHOR-AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIP

I think the summer after my senior year, somebody showed me some short stories, and they were really funny. I mean they were good and clean and funny, and I really enjoyed those. And so when I wrote this [*Fielder's Choice*], what I wanted to do was write a book for people who, like me, didn't read—a book that would be funny, because that's really what got me reading. Not only reading but also interested in educating myself. (R. Norman, personal communication, May 9, 2001)

Though the relationship of the audience to the author has been explored over the centuries, from the beginnings of classical rhetoric to twenty-first century composition theory, there is still much to learn about this relationship as evidenced by the continued interest in, and diverse opinions about, this subject. There is no consensus on the definition of audience or how best to help composition students relate to their audiences. For example, Babin and Harrison (1999) note that audience is “a term that can refer to a group of real readers to which the successful writer must adapt. It can also refer to readers who are ‘fictional’ or invented, as well as to a spectrum of meanings between the ‘real’ and ‘invented’” (p. 117). Strategies for helping students relate to their audience are also varied—audience analysis, peer editing, assignment of a specific audience, publication of student work, and so forth. For Mr. Norman, his strategy for relating to his audience seems reflected in the statement that “what I wanted to do was write a book for people who, like me, didn't read.” His relationship to his audience seems to be based upon his conceiving of his audience as being “like me.” This strategy and relationship is explored in subsequent chapters.

Since the advent in the 1960s and early 1970s of studies of the writing processes, a writer's relationship with his or her audience has been spotlighted. However, even with thirty-something years of research, the puzzle of the author-audience relationship has yet to be completed. Each study of this complex relationship adds to our understanding of this puzzle

either by fitting in a new piece or by showing us what pieces do not fit. It was the purpose of my research to add to our understanding of the author-audience relationship with my descriptive study of the relationship between a young-adult author and an audience of five high school students.

### **Importance of the Author-Audience Relationship**

The author-audience relationship, often considered the key to communication, is the heart of rhetorical concerns. The notion of the author-audience relationship as the key to communication dates back to antiquity, to the classical rhetorical tradition epitomized primarily by Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, who laid a foundation which places the author-audience relationship at its core. Traditionally, this relationship has been viewed as a rhetorical concern, as part of the rhetorical triangle, which is made up of topic, author, audience, and text (Nelson & Kinneavy, in press). These components are illustrated in Figure 1.

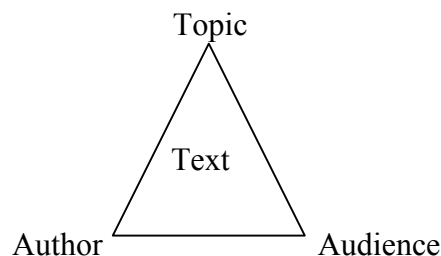


Figure 1. The rhetorical triangle.

In Aristotelian rhetoric, the speaker (author) would appeal to the logic inherent in the subject matter (*logos*), to the emotions of the audience (*pathos*), or to his own character (*ethos*) in order to affect a particular audience in particular ways. Dating back to about 350 B. C., Aristotle wrote in Book I, Chapter 1 (1356a) of his *Rhetoric* (1954):

Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word, there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself. (p. 24)

This foundational relationship is reflected in guidelines given to modern high school students. For example, *Standards for the English Language Arts* (1996), published jointly by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English, proposes that:

1. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
2. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences and for different purposes. (p. 25)

The second standard of the Louisiana English Language Arts Content Standards, found on the website (<http://www.doe.state.la.us/doe/publications/contents/elastand.htm>) for the Louisiana Department of Education states that “students write competently for a variety of purposes and audiences.”

W. Ross Winterowd and Patricia Y. Murray (1985), authors of a high school writing textbook series, believed so strongly in the importance of the author-audience relationship that in their preface they wrote:

Written and spoken messages are sent and received through a situation involving both writer and reader. That situation, or context, includes the worlds of both writer and reader, the world created by interaction between writer and reader, and the larger cultural and physical world in which writing and reading take place. What this means is that the writer intends some meaning and projects that intention through a language structure in a “scene” or context. The reader interprets the message from the signals sent and, in a very real sense, cooperates with the writer to construct meaning. If the writer misjudges the audience of readers, or the reader does not or cannot enter into the world of the writer and submit to his or her intention, then communication misfires or is lost. (p. T-8)

We may take umbrage at Winterowd and Murray’s assertion that the reader must be able to “submit to” the writer’s intention, but their focus on the author-audience relationship is, it seems to me, well placed. Nancie Atwell (1998), one of the most often quoted practitioner/researchers in English education, noted that “a sense of audience—the knowledge

that someone will read what they have written—is crucial to young writers” (p. 489). For Winterowd and Murray, and for Atwell too, the author-audience relationship serves as the heart of the processes of writing. As Winterowd and Murray put it, “it serves us by providing a framework to remind us of *all* the elements of writing” (p. T-9).

Though poststructuralists question the existence of an author as someone with a stable identity and some literary theories such as New Criticism and reader-response relegate the author to the distant background, there has been a revival of interest in the author-audience relationship. Timothy Shanahan (1998) points out that the notion that authors think deeply about their reading audience is well accepted by composition theorists. What has not been explored so deeply, notes Shanahan, is how the reading audience relates to the author. In surveying approximately 1,500 articles, I found that the studies of the author-audience relationship that have been done have primarily focused upon how that relationship affects the author’s *writing of the text* (e.g., Berkenkotter, 1981; Flower & Hayes, 1981a, 1981b; Kirsch, 1990) or how this relationship affects the *reading of the text* (e.g., Graves & Frederiksen, 1991; Miall & Kuiken, 1995; Vipond & Hunt, 1984; Wineburg, 1991).

The focus upon how this relationship affects the author’s writing of the text typifies the majority of composition research on audience (theoretical, empirical, biographical, autobiographical), which has relied primarily on the writer’s perspective (e.g., Berkenkotter, 1981; Ede & Lunsford, 1984; Flower & Hayes, 1981a, 1981b; Park, 1982, 1986; Paterson, 1991; Roth, 1987; Rubin, 1998). The vast majority of the empirical studies of writing have also been limited to student writers (e.g., Beach, 1976; Beal, 1996; Bridwell, 1980; Butterfield, Hacker, & Plumb, 1994; Emig, 1971; Perl, 1980; Redd-Boyd & Slater, 1989).

Researchers (e.g., Butterfield, Hacker, & Albertson, 1996; Flower & Hayes, 1981a) usually locate audience awareness within the writer's rhetorical problem (topic, audience, exigency or organizational schema). In general, studies have shown that the writer may perceive of his or her audience as self (e.g., Roth, 1987; Rubin, 1998), real (concrete or "addressed") or imagined ("invoked") (Ede & Lunsford, 1984), single or multiple (e.g., Rubin, 1998), or evolving (Roth, 1987). The amount of time writers spend considering audience varies, but many studies (e.g., Berkenkotter, 1981; Flower & Hayes, 1981b; Roth, 1987) show that audience consideration is recursive, occurring throughout the writing processes, so that there is an ongoing awareness of the audience on the part of the author. Evidence also seems to show that a writer's attention to and perceived relationship with his or her audience directly affects task representation, idea generation, goals, word choice, and so forth (e.g., Berkenkotter, 1981; Flower & Hayes, 1981a, 1981b; Kirsch, 1990).

Studies of student writers (e.g., Beach, 1976; Beal, 1990,1996; Kroll, 1985; Matsushashi & Gordon, 1985) have shown that the ability to identify with and write for an "other" audience generally increases with age and/or experience. Inexperienced students often need help with audience-awareness, and research (e.g., Redd-Boyd & Slater, 1989; Roen & Willey, 1988; Schriver, 1992; Traxler & Gernsbacher, 1993) has generally shown that strategies such as audience feedback and the assignment of a real audience, as well as other strategies, can be beneficial to some students.

Though the relationship between the reading audience and the author has not been studied as deeply as the relationship between the writer and his or her audience, there have been some studies of how this relationship affects the reading of a text. Some studies have shown that being able to attribute motives to authors seems to be a facet of "expert" reading (Graves &

Frederiksen, 1991; Haas, 1994; Wineburg, 1991). This “expert” reading sometimes seems to take the form of a “conversation” between the reader and the author. Remarks may be made about the author’s claims (Geisler, 1991), or about the author’s choice of wordings, phrasings, positioning of material, punctuation, or the effect on the intended audience (Wineburg, 1991). Some “expert” readers, particularly in the realm of disciplinary discourse, may even choose what they read based upon their knowledge of various authors (Bazerman, 1985).

Vipond and Hunt (1984) contend that authors have points to make, even as they produce writing that is classified as “literature,” and thus “point-driven reading” is a useful addition to a reader’s arsenal. A study of student readers by Miall and Kuiken (1995) seems to indicate that a heightened awareness of author and attention to the author’s purpose may be associated with an extensive reading of literature. In their study, students who scored high on the author factor (reflects interest in the author’s distinctive perspective, themes, and style) often read novels and poetry and were interested in fine arts outside literature. It seems, however, that few students read to discern authors’ points. Vipond and Hunt’s (1984) study of 150 undergraduates reading a short story indicated that only five percent of the students imputed motives to the author.

Are there certain textual features that make an author more visible to his or her audience? David Olson (1994) contends that literary devices such as figures of speech, sarcasm, irony, understatement, and hyperbole depend upon the reader’s ability to consider authorial intent, stance, voice, and tone. To these devices we might also add theme, imagery, reality devices, motifs, and foreshadowing. Studies of students’ responses to a “visible” author in academic textbooks, such as those conducted by Crismore (1990) and Nolen (1995), seem to indicate both positive and negative reactions on the part of students. If students perceive the “visible” author

to be generally supportive and helpful, then their response to the author is often positive. On the other hand, a “visible” author may also be seen as an obstacle.

### **Young Adult Literature: Identified by Audience**

Crismore (1990) notes that for a text to work for an audience, an author needs to think about his or her readers and adapt the text accordingly. One type of literature that is identified by its “intended” audience is that which goes by the label “young adult literature” or “adolescent literature.” Typically, young adult literature refers to literature that is published specifically for young readers or literature that has a teenage protagonist or is written from the teenage perspective. Generally, the books are of moderate length and are often written as a first-person narrative. Another typical feature of young adult literature is that of the “rite of passage.” Propelled by crisis, the young protagonist moves away from dependence upon parents and towards independent adulthood.

Though I have given a typical description of young adult literature, there is no absolute agreement on what defines or constitutes young adult literature (often abbreviated as YA literature) or its “intended” audience. Because of this, there are differences in what books are included in adolescent literature courses in colleges and universities. Even the terms used to refer to this body of literature vary. The terms “junior” or “juvenile” were first applied to young adult literature during the early 1930s. Rose Wilder Lane’s early novel *Let the Hurricane Roar* was marketed in 1933 by Longmans, Green, and Company as an adult novel. Later in that same year, Longmans, Green began to market the novel as their first in a series of “Junior Books.” Dwight L. Burton (1951) continued to use this term to apply to other books. However, G. Robert Carlsen (1980) wrote about “adolescent novels,” and many people today use the terms “young



adult novel” and “adolescent novel” interchangeably. The term “junior” or “juvenile,” however, is no longer used because of negative connotations.

Not all educators or writers define young adults or young adult literature in the same way. The age bracket for young adults varies somewhat—12-20 (Donelson & Nilsen, 1989), grades 7-12 (Crowe, 1998), 12-18 or 19 (Holland, 1980). Carlsen (1980) notes that YA novels are generally of moderate length, but the phenomenally successful Harry Potter books by J. K. Rowling have broken all the rules for YA book lengths, ranging from a mere 309 pages to a whopping 734 pages. Some (e.g., Carlsen, 1980; VanderStaay, 1992) seem to regard YA literature as primarily “rite of passage” literature. Writer Isabelle Holland (1980), however, resists the tendency to categorize books. She is reminded of the adolescent who said he did not know he was supposed to be having so many problems until he read what terrible problems adolescents have. Holland defines adolescent literature as whatever any adolescent happens to be reading at any time.

Despite disagreements regarding definitions, scholars and YA writers seem to be in general agreement regarding criteria for quality. Most agree that YA literature should be technically masterful, present a significant portrayal of human experience, and respect its audience as persons of complexity, individuality, and dignity (Burton, 1951; Carlsen, 1980; Donelson, 1980). I would agree with this definition, but I would also add that YA literature should be healthy for the moral, emotional, and intellectual development of young people as well.

Though the genre known as modern young adult literature traditionally began in 1967 with the publication of S. E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders* (Crowe, 1998; Donelson & Nilsen, 1989; Poe, Samuels, & Carter, 1993), the young adult market was targeted long before 1967, and even

before the teaching of adolescent literature courses in universities began in the 1930s when Dora V. Smith established the first such course at the University of Minnesota.

The development of young adult literature as we know it today began with the dime novels of the 1860s, novels that were originally aimed at adult audiences. Publishers soon realized, however, that their most avid consumers were boys, and they began concentrating on this market—dropping the price to a nickel and shortening the length from approximately 100 pages to 16-32 pages. Out of the dime novels came the series novels, which became *the* method of publishing most YA novels. In 1895, William Gilbert Patten (Burt L. Standish), a dime novelist, added a new twist to the series format by introducing a regular, almost mythic, sports character, Frank Merriwell. The introduction of Merriwell as a sports character was something new. However, his near-mythic proportions seemed to be a step backwards from the realistic portrayal of girls and boys initiated almost thirty years earlier with the 1868 publication of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* and Thomas Bailey Aldrich's publication of *The Story of a Bad Boy* in 1870.

According to Donelson and Nilsen (1989), the quality of YA literature steadily rose from 1941-1965—as opposed to the 1900-1940 period in the history of YA literature which was marked primarily by love, adventure, and a few good pacesetters. Series books died out except for the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew. However, as is often the case, there seems to have been a wide discrepancy between the quality books that were being published during this period and the books that were actually popular with young adults. During the 40s and 50s in particular, teenage romances, in imitation of Maureen Daly's (1942) *Seventeenth Summer*, were very popular.

Dresang (1999) notes that from the mid-1960s on, the previously silent voices of ethnic minority groups began to be heard. Contemporary authors Virginia Hamilton, Mildred Taylor, Walter Dean Myers, Lucille Clifton and Eloise Greenfield were the “image makers” from this era identified by Rudine Sims [Bishop] (1982) in her groundbreaking study of African-American literature for youth, *Shadow and Substance: Afro-American Experience in Contemporary Children’s Fiction*.

With the publication of S. E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders* (1967), the hard edges of reality—social and psychological—(unlike the earlier, softer reality of the “bad” girls and boys novels) became characteristic of the emerging adolescent problem novel (Booksearch, 1992). Prior to 1967, “hard-edge reality” novels were the exception, rather than the rule. Hinton’s novel was soon followed by other problem novels. These “hard-edge reality” novels further blurred the lines between adolescent and adult novels. First-person narration, diaries, and multiple point-of-view themes became central to the new YA literature. Writers of YA novels were less worried about taboos; thus, the changes in societal values were reflected in the books written for adolescents (Connell, 1983; Donelson & Nilsen, 1989; Ellis, 1985).

The 1980s initiated a more conservative political and literary climate. Publishers were more cautious in their selection of manuscripts, and there was an upswing in teen romance novels (Donelson & Nilsen, 1989).

This brings us to the twenty-first century, an age in which technological and informational changes are being reflected in the literature for young adults through changing forms and formats, changing perspectives, and changing boundaries. As Dresang (1999) has observed, changing forms and formats are reflected in the newly formatted graphics, synergetic words and pictures, nonlinear and nonsequential organization, multiple meanings, and interactive

formats. Changing perspectives are reflected in the multiple perspectives that include previously unheard or marginalized voices. Changing boundaries are reflected in the previously forbidden or overlooked subjects, settings, and communities, reinvented and more complex characters, and unresolved endings.

Dresang makes it clear, however, that these changes are not limited to books published in the digital age. She cites, among others, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1872) as examples of changing forms and formats; Arna Bontemps' (1948) *The Story of the Negro* as an example of changing perspectives; Mark Twain's (1877) *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as an example of changing boundaries.

### **Impetus for the Study**

Like the YA authors who experiment with changing forms and formats, changing perspectives, and changing boundaries, I too am interested in changing the forms and formats, perspectives, and boundaries of my teaching of writing. Thus I became interested in learning more about the author-audience relationship and decided to focus specifically on this type of writing—young adult literature—in which authors apparently have some sense of the audience's age range and general characteristics. This interest in marrying YA literature with a study of the author-audience relationship also grew out of my own lifelong love of reading, an interest in the South's rich culture, an awareness of the discrepancy between Louisiana's wealth of literary heritage and its seeming poverty in literacy, and my own experiences (often frustrating) in teaching writing in the high school classroom for a number of years.

The South as a whole and Louisiana in particular have always been meccas for writers and artists. Just a quick scan through the internet site for the Louisiana Authors Index (<http://www.lib.lsu.edu/la/la.html>) reveals hundreds of writers. Some of them, such as Truman

Capote, Ernest Gaines, John Kennedy Toole, Kate Chopin, Pinkie Rose Gordon Lane, Stephen Ambrose, John James Audubon, Cleanth Brooks, George Washington Cable, and Hodding Carter, are very well known. Many others in the Index do not have name recognition. However, they are just as representative—if not more so—of the richness and diversity of Louisiana’s literary heritage. For example, Francois Valcour Aime (1798-1867), a planter and philanthropist born in St. James Parish, is known for being the first to refine Louisiana sugar. But he was also a writer who kept a diary that was published in 1878. William Wells Brown (1815-1884) was born a slave in Kentucky and lived in Louisiana and St. Louis. In 1834 he escaped to Cleveland, Ohio, later becoming an agent, lecturer, and journalist for the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. His book *Clotel* (1853) is generally regarded as the first novel by an African-American. Leona Queyrouze Barel (1861-1938) was a New Orleans-born French language writer, poet, essayist and musician who published under the pen name of Constant Beauvais as well as her own name. The works of Ada Jack Carver (1890-1972), who was born in Natchitoches, deal primarily with the people of the Cane River country of western Louisiana. She achieved national acclaim for her work, winning the O. Henry Prize in 1925, 1926, and 1927. John William Corrington (1932-1989), an author and an attorney, wrote poetry, fiction, screenplays, and literary criticism. His short stories have won the National Endowment for the Arts Award and the O. Henry Award.

In stark contrast to the state’s rich literary heritage, many Louisiana public school students do poorly on standardized accountability tests designed to measure literacy. According to the 2001 LEAP (Louisiana Educational Assessment Program) test results, 44% of fourth graders have only a basic mastery of fundamental English language arts knowledge and skills;

24 % are approaching basic (partly demonstrating fundamental knowledge and skills); 17 % are unsatisfactory. These figures actually represent either improvement or no change in the scores from the 2000 LEAP test (39%, 24%, and 21% respectively). For eighth graders, the numbers are more dismal with only 35% achieving basic mastery in English language arts; 33% were approaching basic, and 18% were unsatisfactory. There was very little improvement for eighth graders from the 2000 test. In fact, there was a 4% increase in the number of students categorized as unsatisfactory.

The 1998 NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) statistics for The Nation's Report Card in reading (Donahue, P. L., Voelkl, K. E., Campbell, J. R., & Mazzeo, J., 1999) and writing (Greenwald, E. A., Persky, H. R., Campbell, J. R., & Mazzeo, J., 1999) show that Louisiana public school students in the fourth and eighth grades are significantly below the national average. The national average scale score for fourth graders in reading was 215; Louisiana's average scale score was 204. Forty-six percent were at or above basic, 15% were at or above proficient, and 2% were at advanced. On the writing assessment for eighth graders (not administered to fourth graders) the state average was 136 compared to a national average of 148. Seventy-five percent were at or above basic, 12% were at or above proficient, and 0% were at an advanced level.

Though the statistics I have quoted here come from public schools, I know from personal experience that private school students also often have difficulty with reading and writing. For many of us who are their teachers, helping students learn to write is one of the most difficult aspects of our job. When I say "learn to write," I do not mean it in the mechanical sense. That is the easy part of teaching writing. What I am referring to here is *writing*—a communicative dialogue between author and audience/reader—an audience that may be invoked (imagined),

addressed (concrete) (Ede & Lunsford, 1984), multiple or evolving (Roth, 1987), and/or the self (Roth, 1987; Rubin, 1998).

### **Brief Description of the Study**

Park (1982) suspects that writers rely partly upon conscious knowledge and partly upon intuitive knowledge of strategies for shaping texts and that mapping the territory of audience on a case by case basis should be of considerable practical usefulness to both teachers and students, particularly since we often want our students to write for a general audience.

There were questions in my mind about how a focus on the author-audience relationship might affect the teaching of writing. How does an author's awareness of audience help him or her accomplish his or her purposes? How can awareness of audience enable high school students to improve their writing at all levels?

I conducted a case study focused on a single novel, *Fielder's Choice*, by a single Louisiana young-adult author, Rick Norman (1991). Why did I choose this little-known author and his novel to be at the core of my case study that focuses on the relationship between author and audience? Though Norman's body of work is not large or well-known, *Fielder's Choice*, a deceptively simple "baseball" novel, offered rich possibilities for dialogue between author and audience. Throughout the narrative, Rick Norman touches upon a number of themes—the role of sports as a game to be enjoyed rather than as a contest, teamwork instead of star power, family relationships, authenticity of character versus a projected image, shattered dreams, man's inhumanity to man, war, and death. However, he strips these themes down to the most basic of all human themes, that of making choices or not making choices and living with the consequences.

I interviewed him about his perceptions of his audience, his purposes in writing *Fielder's Choice*, his strategies for accommodating his text for his intended audience, and so forth. However, I also wanted to see how actual readers responded to his writing, so I had five high school students read and respond in writing to *Fielder's Choice*. These students were members of my senior English class at a small Pre-K-12 community school in Louisiana. In addition to the students' written responses, I also elicited oral responses in follow-up interviews with them. These interviews were based upon an initial analysis of their written responses. A unique facet of this case study is that I had Mr. Norman respond in writing to the students' written responses. To extend the focus on the author-audience relationship, I also arranged for an interactive, face-to-face session between the author and four of the students. The dialogue of this interactive session focused upon the students' responses to both the text of *Fielder's Choice* and to the author himself as well as the author's relationship with this particular audience and his authorial intentions. At the end of the study, I conducted an e-mail interview with Judith Faust, the editor of *Fielder's Choice*. The focus of my interview with her was the publisher's perception of the audience of *Fielder's Choice*.

### **Research Questions**

In formulating my research questions, I wanted to be as open-ended as possible so as not to limit my results. At the same time, I wanted the focus to remain on my central concern for helping composition students write effectively for *their* audience. The following research questions reflect the perspectives of both the writer and the readers:

1. What was, and is, Rick Norman's conception of the audience of *Fielder's Choice*?
2. How do members of the audience—specifically five high school students—respond to *Fielder's Choice*?



3. How do the audience's responses relate to the author's stated intentions?

### **Potential Contributions of the Study**

My case study of the relationship between a published author and a student audience is somewhat unique because not only does it explore an author's conscious knowledge of strategies for shaping text—his constructive processes—but it also explores students' responses to his text and to the author himself. This study broadens the focus from simply the author's awareness of audience to the audience's response. A primary aim of this study is to contribute to a deeper understanding of the author-audience relationship by allowing *my* audience to identify with the experiences of both the writer and the audience. I would hope also that those who read this study will be able draw from it some applications to the teaching of writing in the classroom. Though my study is limited by the fact that I am studying only one author and five students as audience, it should, nevertheless, contribute to an extension of understanding of the author-audience relationship.

## **CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL, THEORETICAL, EMPIRICAL, AND AUTHORIAL CONSIDERATIONS OF AUDIENCE**

The aim of this chapter is to give the reader both a historical and contemporary overview of the shifting perspectives on the role(s) of the author and audience in the author-audience relationship. Taking a chronological approach, I trace these perspectives from ancient Greek and Roman rhetoricians through the modern “new rhetorics,” a term which Ohmann (1964) and others have used to describe multiple approaches to the author-audience relationship. I divide the historical rhetorical sections as follows: classical rhetorical tradition, “New Rhetoric,” historical-biographical criticism, New Criticism, reader-response, poststructural theories, and “new rhetorics.” Within the cognitive process “new rhetoric,” I include a review of empirical research that has been conducted on the author-audience relationship because it is the cognitivists who began the wave of empirical research into the author-audience relationship. Finally, since I conducted a case study which focused on the author-audience relationship of a published author, I include the perspectives of various published authors on the author-audience relationship.

### **Historical, Theoretical, and Empirical Treatments**

This section focuses upon various perspectives on the author-audience relationship. These perspectives are drawn from historical, theoretical, and empirical considerations by key figures throughout the various rhetorical movements.

#### **Classical Rhetorical Tradition: Centrality of the Author-Audience Relationship**

As mentioned in Chapter One, the classical rhetorical tradition has its roots in Greek and Roman thought as epitomized primarily by Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. Their conceptions dominated the study of rhetoric until the time of the Middle Ages and then experienced a

resurgence during the Renaissance. Today, the “new rhetorics” challenge and extend their work, but the foundation which they built is the starting point—a foundation which places the author-audience relationship at its core. Nelson and Calfee (1998) wrote that “the classical rhetoric of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian was then, and still is today, concerned with author and audience: an author producing a text intended to have particular effects on an audience” (p.4). This “author producing a text intended to have particular effects on an audience” is neatly illustrated in the study I report by Mr. Norman’s intended effect upon his young-adult audience: “to somehow entice a non-reader into reading a book and possibly make him feel a little better about himself or herself in the process” (R. Norman, personal communication, May 1, 2001).

The focus of classical rhetoric was persuasive discourse. Thus in ancient Greece and Rome, the author-audience relationship was critical, from the teacher of rhetoric, to the student of rhetoric, to the orator/statesman. Teachers of rhetoric would give *epideictic* (display) speeches to showcase their expertise and to attract potential students. Once a student began studying rhetoric, he “wrote persuasive texts, delivered them orally, listened to others’ speeches, and read persuasive texts written by others” (Nelson & Kinneavy, 2002). The persuasive focus of ancient classical rhetoric was generally put to practical use (in addition to displays of skill) in either the law courts (forensic) or political assemblies (deliberative), and the orators/statesmen employed various strategies to fulfill these different persuasive purposes and to appeal to different audiences. In Aristotelian rhetoric, these strategies involved appealing to the logic inherent in the subject matter (*logos*), to the emotions of the audience (*pathos*), or to one’s own character (*ethos*).

Aristotle recognized two general kinds of auditors: decision-makers and spectators. According to Hill (1983), decision-makers decide either what to do in the future or what

happened in the past; spectators only evaluate the rhetorical art. Strategies for the forensic, deliberative, and epideictic speeches were based upon the kind of audience as well as the time (past or future for the forensic and deliberative; present for the epideictic), ends (just and unjust, advantageous and disadvantageous, noble and shameful), and means (accusation and defense, persuasive and dissuasive, praise and blame). In addition to these general guidelines, Aristotle also provided more specific instructions for persuading audiences based upon their ages (young, old, men in their prime) and fortunes (well-born, wealthy, powerful, men of good fortune).

Greek orators as epitomized by Aristotle thought deeply about their audiences, and in return, it seems that on the whole Greek audiences had a profound respect for the position of a person desiring to speak to an assembly. Often the orator was accorded the audience's full attention (Murphy, 1983b).

Ochs (1983) noted that for the Roman orator Cicero, gaining the full attention of one's audience could be achieved by discussing something important, new, or unbelievable, or if the scope of the matter was discussed (*De Oratore*, Book III). Cicero was also concerned in *De Oratore* that the orator actually experience and feel the emotions that he tries to arouse in the audience. However, it seems that for Cicero, style was the primary key to persuading one's audience. In *Orator* he suggested using the plain style for proving a case, the middle style (more robust than the plain style—use of metaphor, metonymy, allegory, and so forth) for pleasing, and the grand style (ornate) for compelling an audience (Ochs, 1983).

Quintilian was certainly concerned with style, but Meador (1983) noted that his “emphasis on moral purpose as well as rhetorical skill distinguishes *Institutio oratoria*”(p. 155). Oratory was defined by Quintilian as “the good man speaking well,” and it is this “good” man's character (*ethos*) which persuades the audience. Quintilian's “good” man had such attributes as

respect for public opinion (xii.1.12), sincerity (xii.1.29), justice (xii.1.35), integrity (xii.1.16), honor (xii.1.24), and virtue (xii.1.31), among others. However, some of the actions of the “good” man seem to contradict some of his attributes. For example, he defends the guilty as well as the innocent (xii.1.33f), may conceal the truth from the judge (xii.1.36), may use methods close to fraud (xii.1.41), and may tell a lie even for trivial reasons (xii.1.38). For Quintilian, the measure of a “good” man seems to lie not so much in what we may define as strict morality as it does in how active a man was in the public life of his country (xii.2.7). Interestingly, Quintilian was writing at a time when Roman rule was no longer a democracy but a dictatorship. Author/orator and audience were no longer able to engage in a free relationship. Orators were limited in their topics lest they offend the Roman ruler, and the audience’s response to the author/orator had to be measured against possible consequences from the Roman authorities.

In his article “The End of the Ancient World: The Second Sophistic and St. Augustine,” James J. Murphy (1983a) wrote that “the clearest bridge to the Middle Ages . . . is found in the *De doctrina Christiana* (completed 426) of St. Augustine” (p. 183). In this work, Augustine argued that the rhetoric of Cicero should be used by the Church in its preaching and education. As a result of Augustine’s work, the Church adopted Ciceronian rhetoric as a guide to preachers. However, the Church was not exactly breaking new ground in allowing this use of classical rhetoric. Hundreds of years earlier, with the advent of Christianity, evangelists such as Paul had invoked the principles of classical rhetoric in the preaching of the Gospel, most notably in his address to the Athenians at the Areopagus.

There were others besides Augustine who also had an influence on medieval rhetoric. We should take note of two in particular: Martianus Capella, author of an encyclopedia of the seven liberal arts (*De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, 410-429?) and Flavius Magnus Aurelius

Cassiodorus, historian, founder of monasteries, and author of *Institutiones Divinarum et Humanarum Lectionum* (Introduction to Divine and Human Readings, 550?).

During the Middle Ages, rhetoric was one of the subjects of the *trivium* or three preliminary subjects of the seven liberal arts taught at the universities. The other two parts of the *trivium* were grammar and logic. Kinneavy (1971) noted that in the Middle Ages there was a shift in focus from persuasion, which had been the focus of ancient Greek and Roman rhetoric, to dialectical (pursuit of “truth”) debate. In fact, from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century, the orientation was toward the defense of ideas, and the audience was one’s colleagues or masters at the university. According to Kinneavy, there were oral debate exams at various levels of a student’s study of rhetoric. First, there was the “Responsions,” a dispute with a master in grammar and logic. Second, there was the “Determination,” a dispute with four masters. Finally, there was the “Inception,” an all-day debate with successive opponents. However, as Kinneavy pointed out, these eventually declined to the point that they consisted of memorized mechanical questions and answers on traditional topics. As such, they were so dull that they were often unattended by professors. The author/orator’s relationship with his audience seems to have been virtually nonexistent at this point.

The decline in the oral debate exams in the universities may have been a reflection of the diminishing influence of rhetoric as some of its traditional parts went to grammar and logic (Nelson & Kinneavy, in press). Classical rhetoric also lost much of its influence during the Middle Ages because of the lack of access to the full manuscripts of some of the ancient rhetoricians.

However, during this period, rhetoric did find practical application in the main rhetorical media of the Middle Ages: letter writing (emphasized in law schools) and preaching (training in

theology). As noted already, there was a whole type of rhetoric devoted to the art of preaching, and Augustine and others applied classical rhetoric to the study of the Bible. This particular attention to rhetoric continued into the Renaissance as, for example, the Renaissance Dutch scholar Erasmus made use of rhetorical theory in preparing sermons.

During the Renaissance rhetoric experienced a resurgence with the rediscovery of some of the classical sources, thanks in part to Petrarch (Nelson & Kinneavy, in press). Once again the study of rhetoric was based upon the works of such writers as Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. However, with the invention of the printing press, the oral media of classical rhetoric began to shift to the written media. Johann Gutenberg solved the problem of movable type around 1450, and once developed, printing spread texts to a wider audience. Texts, previously hand-lettered, were no longer the exclusive property of the intellectuals of the Church and court. As I have already noted, the shift from the oral to the written media meant a wider audience, but the emphasis on the live, face-to-face relationship with an audience was beginning to diminish. Thus the puzzle of the author-audience relationship became more complex.

New ways of approaching thought and language once again diminished the influence of classical rhetoric during the period commonly known as the Age of Enlightenment, a term used to describe an attitude and a method of thought (rather than a fixed set of ideas) during the eighteenth century, prior to the French Revolution of 1789-1799. Skepticism (all received ideas and values are questioned), empiricism (all knowledge is derived from sense experience), and rationalism (reason alone is a source of knowledge and is independent of experience) were three approaches to thought and language during the Age of Enlightenment. The focus on science and journalism, with their foundations in skepticism and empiricism, in particular contributed heavily

to a questioning of the efficacy of classical rhetoric, whose primary focus was on persuasion and the author-audience relationship.

However, it must be noted that classical rhetoric was not completely lost during this period, thanks primarily to Giambattista Vico, usually referred to simply as Vico. The chair of rhetoric at the University of Naples, Vico is best known for *The New Science*, a book he wrote in 1725. Vico (1725/1968) made a distinction between the truth that is derived from the divinely created natural world and the truth that is derived from what he saw as the humanly created world—government, philosophy, history, law, religion, poetry, art, morality, mathematics. Vico attributed these components of the humanly created world to the inventive force of human beings. Thus, he extended the centrality of the rhetorical concept of invention, which refers to the generation of ideas for a speech or composition. Vital to the generation of ideas for a speech or composition is the orator/author's awareness of audience.

#### **“New Rhetoric”: Psychological and Belletristic Perspectives on Audience**

Toward the end of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, the focus of rhetoric, which had begun to shift during the Renaissance, gave increasing attention to written language, rather than oral, and two Scottish rhetoricians, George Campbell (*The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, 1776) and Hugh Blair (*Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, 1783), became influential not only in Europe but also in America. In his book *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges*, James Berlin (1984) observed that Campbell served as America's philosopher of rhetoric in the nineteenth century rather than Aristotle, Cicero, or Quintilian (p. 18). There were others, however, such as Richard Whately (*Elements of Rhetoric*, 1828), who also had an influence on nineteenth-century American rhetoric. However, because



Campbell and Blair are representative of this period in the history of rhetoric, I have chosen to focus on them rather than any others.

Campbell and Blair were both heavily influenced by the philosophy of Scottish Common Sense Realism. According to Babin and Harrison (1999), the basic tenets of this philosophy were: (a) reality can be objectively observed through the five senses; (b) personal observation is essential in the pursuit of “truth;” (c) the world is readily observable to all who look; (d) a writer or speaker must only use the “correct” word, which corresponds to the external world. This philosophy fostered a sense of scientific objectivity and a strong authorial voice.

Campbell’s “new rhetoric,” more so than Blair’s, represented this “scientific” perspective of rhetoric. Johnson (1991) noted that Campbell was mostly concerned with identifying the dynamics of the mind that dictate the principles of rhetoric. Blair, on the other hand, popularized the belles lettres approach to rhetoric. As Johnson (1991) explained, “In the belletristic rationale for rhetoric, it is the critical ability to judge and appreciate the qualities of taste that ultimately confers success on the efforts of those writers and orators who strive to move the passions or the imagination” (p. 37). Though Campbell used models from poetry and drama to illustrate rhetorical principles, it was Blair who insisted that only in reading models of good taste in literature could a student learn to write well. According to Berlin (1984), Blair’s focus was on written rather than oral discourse, and his was a textbook of literary analysis.

In spite of their different approaches to rhetoric, both Blair and Campbell were deeply concerned about the author-audience relationship. In their article “George Campbell’s Audience: Historical and Theoretical Considerations,” Brown and Willard (1990) pointed out that Campbell placed great importance on the role of the audience in the shaping of discourse. “Discourse, he [Campbell] says, is a communicative act that aims to transfer meaning from the speaker or writer

to an audience. Its further purpose is to inform, convince, please, move, or persuade” (p. 62).

Nelson and Kinneavy (in press) observed that Campbell is known for his “interesting treatments of arrangement and of audience analysis, which he accomplished by applying the psychology of his day, associationism, to rhetorical matters.” Associationism assumed that the faculties of the mind—understanding, imagination, passions, judgment, and will—are predisposed to process ideas in terms of resemblance and association. The goal of the orator/author was to create an association between new ideas and experiences that the listener/reader had already accrued. According to Johnson (1991), Blair and Campbell essentially agreed that certain figures of speech (metaphor, allegory, personification, apostrophe, simile, antithesis) were best suited to stimulate the associative processes of the faculties.

Campbell believed that an orator had to appeal to the imagination and passions of the audience as well as to the rational mind.

If the orator would prove successful, it is necessary that he engage in his service all these different powers of the mind, the imagination, the memory, and the passions. These are not the supplanters of reason, or even rivals in her sway; they are her handmaids, by whose ministry she is enabled to usher truth into the heart, and procure it there a favourable reception. (p. 72)

Blair felt that a style which was clear and interesting would most effectively reach audiences.

For all that can possibly be required of Language, is, to convey our ideas clearly to the minds of others, and, at the same time, in such a dress, as by pleasing and interesting them, shall most effectually strengthen the impressions which we seek to make. (p. 102)

It is clear that the focus of both Blair and Campbell was the effect that the orators/writers would have on their audience. Campbell’s interest in the psychological effects of rhetoric on an audience, and Blair’s concern for the effects of art (literature) on an audience point to a very strong author-audience relationship.

## **Historical-Biographical Criticism: Emphasis on Author, De-emphasis on Audience**

Because my case study focuses on the author-audience relationship from both the writer's perspective *and* the reader's perspective, it is appropriate that I consider the role of literary theories such as historical-biographical criticism, New Criticism, and reader-response in this relationship.

Near the end of the nineteenth century, changes in curriculum precipitated a decline in rhetorical studies as English became a department in higher education, in which literary criticism was a major focus, and a subject in elementary and high school. Rhetoric became "rhetoric-composition." Nelson and Calfee (1998) noted that the emphasis shifted to mechanical correctness, and there was "little attentiveness given to strategies authors use in analyzing audiences and adapting to them" (p. 8).

One of the major approaches in the reading of literature was historical-biographical. At approximately the same time that Campbell and Blair were publishing their texts on rhetoric, the historical-biographical approach to literary criticism, beginning in the late eighteenth century and dominating until the early part of the twentieth century, foregrounded the author and the historical context in which he or she was writing. Interpretation of the text within this paradigm leaned heavily not only upon the historical context but also biographical facts about the author's life.

This historical-biographical criticism was quite different from Blair's literary criticism. In his critical examinations of various literary works, Blair certainly acknowledged the author's presence, but his focus was upon the author's style and the effect that this style has upon the reader—favorable or unfavorable (within the context of taste). The purpose of Blair's literary criticism was not so much interpretation as it was to relate literature to composition.

Historical-biographical criticism was a product of the preceding Romantic Period which glorified the author. In commenting on the Romantic Period, Spivey (1997) noted:

Authors were seen as gifted individuals, natural geniuses, who had special, sometimes divine inspiration, and this was a conception to which the authors themselves contributed, as they glorified the work of authors in general or of one author in particular or described their own creative process. (p. 215)

The critical writings of Coleridge, for example, stressed the parallel between divine creativity and the poet's godlike creative imagination.

Though Blair also acknowledged the existence of genius, his perspective was somewhat different from this glorification of the author-genius. Of the word *genius*, Blair wrote:

It is used to signify that talent or aptitude which we receive from nature, for excelling in any one thing whatever. Thus we speak of a genius for mathematics, as well as a genius for poetry; of a genius for war, for politics, or for any mechanical employment. (p. 29)

Blair also noted that "for as no human genius is perfect, there is no writer but may receive assistance from critical observations upon the beauties and faults of those who have gone before him" (p. 27). However, Blair's influence in America waned considerably after the Civil War, but the effects of the historical-biographical mode of literary interpretation remained strong on into the early part of the twentieth century until it was dethroned by New Criticism.

### **New Criticism: De-emphasis on Author and Audience**

New Criticism, a reaction against the prevailing interpretation of text based primarily on historical and biographical context, spread in the 1940s and took over the field of literary criticism in the 1950s. T. S. Eliot (1920) first raised concerns that attention should be focused on a poem itself, and I. A. Richards (1929) is generally considered to be responsible for the methods used to implement Eliot's concerns. John Crowe Ransom (1941) later coined the phrase "new criticism." However, it is Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren's (1938) *Understanding*

*Poetry* that is the single most important influence in putting this critical theory into classroom practice.

This view of literature gives little or no attention to the author-audience relationship since a piece of literature is considered to be a self-contained finished work of art which can be fully understood with no reference to the author. Nor is there need for an emotional response from the reader. A properly trained reader can trace images, plot, characterization, theme, and so forth, and arrive at a close reading of the text. “New Critics avoided what they called the *intentional fallacy*, trying to ascertain authors’ intent, and the *affective fallacy*, speculating about how texts affect readers” (Nelson & Calfee, 1998, p. 22). The terms “intentional fallacy” and “affective fallacy” are credited to Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946) and Beardsley and Wimsatt (1949) respectively. Within the domain of New Criticism, students wrote interpretive essays, which were then judged for their detail of the analyses and support for claims.

In spite of the New Critics’ avoidance of the intentional and affective fallacies, T. S. Eliot (1932/1981), who is often associated with New Criticism, seemed to acknowledge an author-audience relationship when he wrote this advice to readers:

The fiction that we read affects our behaviour towards our fellow men, affects our patterns of ourselves. When we read of human beings behaving in certain ways, with the approval of the author, who gives his benediction to this behaviour by his attitude toward the result of the behaviour arranged by himself, we can be influenced towards behaving in the same way. (p.146)

### **Reader-Response: Emphasis on Audience, De-emphasis on Author**

The reader-response theories countered the objectivist position of New Criticism. At the same time that Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren were publishing *Understanding Poetry*, Louise Rosenblatt (1938) was publishing *Literature as Exploration*. Rosenblatt argued that a reader should have an aesthetic experience with an artistic work. For her, creativity, not “objective” analysis, was the link between reading and writing. She encouraged students to

engage in their own creative writing. However, it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that reader-response theories were implemented on a widespread scale in the classroom.

In reader-response theories, the focus is on the individual readers' responses. The reader is an active participant in creating the text. The reader, *not* the author, is the source of meaning. Though the author-audience relationship is not completely ignored, the author is, however, primarily kept in the background. In considering reader-response theories, we must very briefly look at five major theorists: Louise Rosenblatt, Stanley Fish, Norman Holland, Wolfgang Iser, and David Bleich.

In 1978 in her influential publication *The Reader, the Text, The Poem*, Louise Rosenblatt proposed her transactional theory of reading and developed the ideas she had begun articulating in the 1938 book. For her, each reading is a particular event involving a particular reader and a particular text under particular circumstances. She makes a distinction between aesthetic (literary) reading and efferent (nonliterary) reading. In efferent reading the focus of the reader is on what will remain “as the residue *after* the reading—the information to be acquired, the logical solution to a problem, the actions to be carried out” (p. 23). By contrast, in aesthetic reading the reader's focus is on what happens *during* (emphasis in the original) the reading event. “*In aesthetic reading, the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text*” [italics in the original] (p. 25).

Theorists Stanley Fish, Norman Holland, Wolfgang Iser, and David Bleich also focused on the centrality of the reader. As a reader-response theorist, Stanley Fish (1970) saw meaning as an event, “something that *happens* to, and with the participation of, the reader” (p. 125). Fish's meaning of the word “response” went beyond a range of feelings to include any and all activities provoked by a string of words. He believed very firmly that “the place where sense is

made or not made is the reader's mind rather than the printed page or the space between the covers of a book" (p. 134). In keeping with other reader-response theorists, Norman Holland (1975) also saw the reader as the source of meaning. However, from his position as a psychoanalyst, he viewed reading as essentially a central relation between the individual, searching "for solutions within his identity theme to the multiple demands . . . on his ego," (p. 128) and an other. Holland derived four principles from his 1975 study of five readers: (1) style seeks itself; (2) defenses must be matched; (3) fantasy projects fantasies; (4) character transforms characteristically. The first principle refers to the notion that a favorable response creates a merging of what is going on in the work and what is going on between the work and the reader. The second principle hypothesizes that a reader finds something in the work that matches what he or she does to cope with needs or dangers. The third principle supposes that "each reader uses the materials he has taken in from the literary work to create a wish-fulfilling fantasy characteristic of himself" (p. 117). The fourth and final principle presumes that the reader transforms the material of the text into some literary point, theme, or interpretation and also works out his or her own personal style through the story.

In *Theory of Aesthetic Response*, Wolfgang Iser (1978) proposed that a literary work has two poles: an artistic pole (the author's text) and an aesthetic pole (the realization accomplished by the reader). A literary work cannot be identified with either the text or the reader's realization but must be located somewhere between the two poles. Realization accomplished by the reader is the result of interaction between the text and the reader. Iser makes a distinction between *reading* and *comprehension*. *Reading* is an aesthetic experience in which meaning is a result of ever-changing individual interpretation. *Comprehension* is a blend of the determinacy of the text and the indeterminacy of the reader. In *Readings and Feelings*, David Bleich (1975) extended

the centrality of the individual reader and emphasized negotiation of meaning among the members of the classroom community. Later, Stanley Fish (1980) similarly emphasized that meaning is negotiated within a discourse community. When we look at discourse communities later in this review, we will see Bleich's and Fish's theories reflected in the works of both Porter (1986) and Sperling and Woodlief (1997).

Teaching practices that draw on reader-response theories are response journals, attention to prior knowledge, and open-ended literature questions. In addition, the study of literature is not situated in the context of history, and like New Criticism, the author's intent is not an issue. Unlike New Criticism, however, student writing has an expressivist focus.

### **Poststructural Theories: “Death” of the Author, Life of the Text**

Like New Criticism and reader-response theories, poststructural theories, which rose concurrently with reader-response theories in the 1970s and 1980s, called into question the role of the author in the interpretation of texts. In fact, the poststructural theories, which have maintained a strong presence in the twenty-first century, have so blurred the lines between author and audience that any claim of “roles” played by the audience and the speaker/author would appear to be hopelessly outdated. The concept of intertextuality—the interconnectedness of texts, the appropriation of texts from various sources and the weaving of these strands, consciously or unconsciously, into a “new” text, the reader as writer of text—seems to call into question whether or not we can legitimately apply the term *author* to anyone.

In this section, I will first briefly outline the major tenets of poststructural theories. In this outline, I borrow heavily from Spivey's (1997) book *The Constructivist Metaphor: Reading, Writing and the Making of Meaning*. Then, I will very briefly trace the rise of the notion of intertextuality, which brings into question the existence of the author.



Within the poststructural paradigm, texts do not have determinate meanings, and reading involves the making of intertextual connections. The reader's understanding of a text is an ongoing process in which meanings change because meaning resides in ever-changing textual relations, not in an author and not in a reader. Deconstructionists contend that texts fall apart, and their gaps, revealing hidden ideologies, can be noted as they are read. In this paradigm, the text, not the author or the reader, is central, and it is the text that invents the reader. Teaching practices derived from this philosophy involve searching out the ideologies of power and authority that are embedded in texts.

The term "intertextuality" can be attributed to Julia Kristeva, who coined the word in her work "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," which was published in French in 1967 and later translated into English. In this paper, which she had presented in 1966 at Barthes's seminar in Paris, Kristeva introduced some ideas from the Soviet scholar, Mikhail Bakhtin (1965/1968, 1929/1973), whose work she had been reading in Bulgaria. She employed Bakhtin's dialogic conception of language—utterances "saturated" with the language of others—and elaborated that conception into her notion of intertextuality. She claimed that a text is "a mosaic of quotations" and is "the absorption and transformation of another (Kristeva, 1967/1986, p. 37). By "intertextuality," Kristeva (1986) means the "*passage from one sign-system to another*" [italics in the original], and it denotes the "transposition of one (or several) sign-system(s) [e.g., a carnival scene to the written text] into another" (p. 111).

Roland Barthes, who worked closely with Kristeva, explored the relationship of the reader to the text in *S/Z*, which first appeared in 1970. In *S/Z*, Barthes made a distinction between a writerly text and a readerly text when he declared:

The goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text. Our literature is characterized by the pitiless

divorce which the literary institution maintains between the producer of the text and its user, between its owner and its consumer, between its author and its reader. This reader is thereby plunged into a kind of idleness. . . . [H]e is left with no more than the poor freedom either to accept or reject the text: reading is nothing more than a referendum. Opposite the writerly text, then, is its countervalue, its negative, reactive value: what can be read, but not written: the readerly. We call any readerly text a classic text. (p. 4)

In 1977 Barthes declared in “The Death of the Author,” “We know to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the Author” (p. 148). In this dramatic way he was arguing against the notion of a single determinate meaning for a text tied to the intention of a single individual known as its author.

In “What is an Author?” Michel Foucault (1979) transformed the traditional concept of author, that is, the author’s name, the person we think of as having created the text, to what he termed the “author-function.” He explained this term when he wrote that it “is tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourse . . . [I]t does not refer, purely and simply, to an actual individual” (p. 130). As an example of the “author-function,” Foucault noted in this same article that authors such as Homer, Aristotle, and Hippocrates produced not only their work but also the possibility and the rules for the formation of other texts. For Foucault, authorship is more precisely termed “author-function,” which goes beyond a particular author, and texts created by particular authors move beyond particular authors because they generate other texts.

Since technology is the hallmark of the twenty-first century, it is impossible to omit the application of the poststructural perspective to new technologies of communication by George Landow (1992). Landow has explored how electronic linking seems to reconfigure the experience of both authors (authority) of texts we study and ourselves as authors. He has pointed out that hypertext provides for the multiple voices of Bakhtin’s (1981) *heteroglossia* and that its shifting center is dependent upon the reader. Hypertext blurs the boundaries of the individual

texts and the boundaries between author and audience, and between the “central” text and the marginal text.

Because of the interactive nature of hypertext, the whole notion of an author may be reconfigured. Landow has viewed the reconfiguring of the author in the following terms: the erosion of self, the creation of the virtual presence of all the authors who contributed material, and a collaborative authorship. The reconfigured narrative no longer has a fixed sequence with a definite beginning and ending, and the traditional conception of unity and wholeness of the narrative is called into question. Hypertext, what Barthes (1970/1977) would term writerly text, produces an active rather than a passive reader. Students who use hypertext act as both a reader and an author by choosing individual paths through linked primary and secondary texts and by adding texts.

Clearly, those working within the poststructural paradigm consider the idea of an author as someone with a stable identity to be problematic. Instead of an author-audience relationship, poststructuralists focus on the relationship between the text and the reader/writer in which language itself is central, not the reader/writer. However, it should be noted that even Bakhtin (1986), whose work from the mid-twentieth century is cited so often today and who inspired much of the poststructural thought, said that “the author of the work manifests his own individuality in his style, his world view, and in all aspects of the design of the work” (p. 75).

### **“New Rhetorics”: Multiple Approaches to the Author-Audience Relationship**

Along with the reader-response theories and poststructural theories of the 1970s and 1980s, there also arose what may be termed the “new rhetorics.” These “new rhetorics” include neo-classical rhetoric, which had its genesis in the 1950s; cognitive process rhetoric, which came to the forefront in the early 1970s; and the expressionistic rhetoric and social construction

rhetoric, which both began to be influential in the 1980s. All of these “new rhetorics” focus primarily on the author.

According to Babin and Harrison (1999), the “new rhetorics” make use of a multidisciplinary perspective, drawing upon the knowledge of such fields as social science, psychology, and linguistics. In broad terms, the “new rhetorics” seem to be reconceptualizations of classical rhetoric to fit the needs and perspectives of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, just as the “new rhetoric” epitomized by Campbell and Blair was an adaptation of classical rhetoric to fit the needs and perspectives of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

**Neo-classical rhetoric.** Just as Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian seem to represent the best of classical rhetoric, so too Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, Kenneth Burke, and James Kinneavy seem to represent the best of the neo-classical rhetoric. It is for this reason that I have focused upon their views of the author-audience relationship in this section.

Chaim Perelman and co-author Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca claimed responsibility for first introducing the concept of new rhetoric in their 1949 work *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (translated in 1969). Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) pointed to the situated and interactive nature of the author-audience relationship in *The New Rhetoric*. Like the classical rhetoricians, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca adhered to the notion that all argumentation presupposes a rational audience and that there will be intellectual contact between the rhetor and his or her audience. In addressing a “universal audience” that is nevertheless a situated audience, the rhetor must convince the audience that “the reasons adduced are of a compelling character, that they are self-evident, and possess an absolute and timeless validity, independent of local or historical contingencies” (p. 32). To convince this “universal audience” of a timeless validity, the rhetor must imagine his or her audience, think of arguments capable of

acting on the audience, show concern for him or her and be interested in his or her state of mind (p. 16). In other words, the rhetor must identify with the audience and the way to do so is to have a social relationship with the audience. Thus there must be interaction between the speaker/writer and the audience.

Many scholars now view identification rather than persuasion as a major characteristic of new rhetoric. In the composition classroom, identification is a term used to discuss audience, community, and discourse analysis. In their discussion of identification, Babin and Harrison (1999) note that in his 1950 *Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke argued that identification “should at least complement ‘persuasion’ as the key rhetorical term” (p. 189). Using the term “identification” as a key rhetorical term enables the recognition of “motives.” It is through identification of the audience with a speaker or writer that the audience becomes open to what the speaker or writer has to say. The writer uses his or her rhetorical skill to “persuade” the audience to identify with him or her, thus establishing common ground.

Burke maintained that identification can be achieved through “consubstantiality,” a term which he adopted and adapted from Christian theology. In Christian theology, the term refers to the apparent paradox of Christ as both divine and human and thus to the unity of God the Father, who is fully divine, and God the Son, who is both fully divine and fully human. Burke used the term “consustantiality” to explain how there can be unity among diverse humans through shared ideologies and how through identification, humans are joined yet separate.

James Kinneavy’s (1971) *A Theory of Discourse* focused on the *aims* of discourse rather than identification between author and audience. The aims of discourse determine the *modes* of discourse to be used by the speaker/author. Kinneavy termed the aims of discourse as persuasive, referential (including informative and exploratory discourse), expressive, and

literary. The modes of discourse are description, narration, classification, and evaluation. According to Kinneavy, these modes of discourse are ways of thinking about reality. The various aims of discourse emphasize different parts of the classical rhetorical triangle. The persuasive aim emphasizes the audience; the referential aim emphasizes the reality (subject matter); the expressive aim emphasizes the encoder (speaker/author); and the literary aim emphasizes the signal (the text, the work, the writing itself) (Nelson & Kinneavy, in press).

In his chapter on the aims of discourse in *A Theory of Discourse*, Kinneavy noted the following about audience:

Propaganda, science, literature, even expressive utterances are all destined for receptors of some sort. Any theory of discourse must grant this as axiomatic. But the last three, as it were, forget the audience and let the discourse speak for itself. Science achieves its communication successfully by assuming a specific kind of audience and then focusing attention on that which is being talked about—some aspect of reality. . . . Literature, likewise, assumes a reader or a theater-goer and then often seemingly forgets him in the discourse. . . . The addressee within the literary discourse is, as a matter of fact, often fictional or even nonpersonal. This is even more true of expressive discourse, where, in fact, the addressee may even be missing (diaries, journals, exclamations). But in propaganda and similar kinds of discourse, the addressee is crucial and omnipresent, often explicitly. (p. 59)

Here we see that Kinneavy seemed to dismiss the importance of an author-audience relationship in all forms of discourse except “propaganda and similar kinds of discourse.” However, as have other neo-classical rhetoricians, Kinneavy has pointed out that an author-audience relationship is axiomatic.

**Expressivist new rhetoric.** The terms “expressivist” and “expressionistic” are sometimes used interchangeably to describe a rhetoric that has as its core an active, student-centered philosophy, which emphasizes the individual author. Unlike classical or neo-classical rhetoric, which has very definite rules of engagement, writing from the expressivist perspective is seen as a creative art of self-discovery; thus, the implication seems to be that it cannot be

taught explicitly. Often, expressive writing is not meant for an audience other than the author himself or herself.

Theorists such as Peter Elbow (1973, 1981, 1987), Ken Macrorie (1968/1984, 1970/1985), and Donald Murray (1968/1985, 1982) have emphasized the need for students to connect their writing to their own experiences and to discover and develop an authentic voice. In *Writing with Power*, Elbow (1981) stressed that finding and mastering their own voices can help students connect with their audiences. However, in his article “Closing My Eyes as I Speak: An Argument for Ignoring Audience” (1987), Elbow recommended that attention to audience be saved for the revision process. He argued that focusing on the audience too early in the writing process might inhibit writers.

In his article “Teaching the Other Self: The Writer’s First Reader,” Murray (1982), described how integral a part “voice” is in the writing processes. He wrote,

The act of writing might be described as a conversation between two workmen muttering to each other at the workbench. The self speaks, the other self listens and responds. The self proposes, the other self considers. The self makes, the other self evaluates. The two selves collaborate: a problem is spotted, discussed, defined, solutions are proposed, rejected, suggested, attempted, tested, discarded, accepted. (p. 140)

Murray proposed that one self writes and the other self reads. However, this reading is a very sophisticated reading “that monitors writing before it is made, as it is made, and after it is made” (p. 141). He suggested that the reading self reads what is not on the page as well as what is on the page, what should be left out as well as what should be put in. Murray has subscribed to the notion that the “experienced writer is able, through the writer’s other self, to read what has gone before and what may come afterward during the writing that is done before there is a written text, and during the writing that produces an embryonic text” (p. 142).

Within the expressivist classroom, often called a writing workshop, the role of the teacher is to provide an atmosphere that is conducive to self-discovery—an atmosphere that is warm, nurturing, and non-threatening. Teacher conferences (with the student, not the teacher, at the center) and peer response groups help create an interactive atmosphere. Within this atmosphere students move back and forth between the roles of reader and writer. The student as author “owns” the work, deciding what to write, using his or her own knowledge in writing it, and deciding when it is finished. Typically, students write personal responses to books, movies, and music, personal narratives, and journals. This movement has become very strong in today’s elementary and secondary classrooms.

**Constructivist (social construction) new rhetoric.** In constructivist rhetoric, a movement which arose in the 1970s, reading and writing are seen as constructive processes. Attention is given to the guidance that writers provide their readers for organizing, selecting, and connecting with content. Nelson and Calfee (1998) noted that the constructivist rhetoric studies “the same issue that interested the Scottish rhetoricians in the eighteenth century: how particular choices made by a writer influence readers’ understandings” (p. 27).

Constructivists focus upon the constructive, meaning-making processes of either the individual or of groups. Spivey (1997) has maintained that whether the focus is upon the individual or the group, the construction process is essentially social:

Individuals belong to social groups, and they reveal and construct their social identities through their ways of speaking, thinking, and knowing. Individuals bring to their social acts of communication much knowledge, including discourse knowledge, topic knowledge, and world knowledge, that they have developed in prior social experiences. Individuals “read” the immediate social context from their own position within a larger socio-cultural-historical context, and they construe their audiences when they write. (p. 123)



Social constructivists who focus on groups often use the term “discourse communities.” Stanley Fish (1980), who was initially identified with the reader-response movement, later came to be considered a social constructivist with his emphasis on the role of the “interpretive community” (a term he coined in *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*) in reading. The emphasis is upon the social construction of meanings for texts as well as the social construction of genres, conventions, and even knowledge. A discourse community is a group of people held together by a common interest. Individuals within the discourse community adhere to the group’s particular conventions and present their contributions through that particular group’s forums. The speaker/writer and audience are part of the same discourse community. Those wishing to be part of a particular discourse community must adapt to the group’s ways of speaking, writing, and knowing.

In studying two classroom discourse communities—one urban and one suburban—Sperling and Woodlief (1997) found that classroom discourses that foster peer response groups are highly dependent upon the teachers’ and students’ values for writing and their connections to one another and to the world outside the classroom. Thus the goals and strategies of peer response groups, located within the larger discourse of both the classroom community and the community at large, will vary from classroom to classroom and are not necessarily interchangeable.

In “Intertextuality and the Discourse Community,” James Porter (1986) examined how audience, in the form of the discourse community and its intertextual expectations—the readers—create and shape the discourse and the development of the writer. In this sense, there are constraints put upon the writer if he or she is to become a member of a particular discourse community. The immediate goal of teaching composition intertextually is to produce a

“socialized writer,” one who has learned the conventions of the discourse community to which he or she desires to belong and can carry on a dialogue within that discourse community. The long-range goal is to produce the successful “post-socialized writer” who has identified “the self within the constraints of some discourse community” (p. 41) and has gained the authority to produce changes within the discourse community’s conventions or dialogue without fear of excommunication. “The writer is constrained by the community, and by its intertextual preferences and prejudices, but the effective writer works to assert the will against those community constraints to effect change” (p. 44). In order to become this effective, successful writer, Porter suggested that it is more effective to analyze the intertext of the discourse community rather than to analyze the demographics of the reader.

Whether the focus is upon the constructive processes of the individual or the group, the author-audience relationship within the constructivist (social construction) paradigm is viewed as being essential. It is clear that neither the reader nor the writer functions within a vacuum but each is strongly connected to the other.

**Cognitive process new rhetoric and empirical research.** The social factors at work in reading and writing have also been a focus for the cognitive process theorists (e.g., Berkenkotter, 1981, 1983; Emig, 1971; Flower, 1979; Flower & Hayes, 1981a, 1981b; Perl, 1980; Sommers, 1980) and their empirical research. The rhetorical relationship between writer and reader in particular has been of interest. This relationship includes both the writer’s perception of audience and the reader’s perception of author and how these perceptions affect the writing and the reading of the text. In Chapter One, I mentioned studies relevant to both the writer’s perception of audience and the reader’s perception of author. However, even though my case study does include the author-audience relationship from the perspective of student readers, the

focus is upon how this relationship may benefit student authors in a relationship with their audience. Consequently, I have chosen to highlight cognitive process studies which focus on the perspective of the writer. First, however, I will discuss the various meanings of “audience” and the general consensus concerning the development of audience awareness.

As I have mentioned previously, the audience/reader in these empirical studies can be the self (e.g., Roth, 1987; Rubin, 1998), a concrete audience that is “addressed,” an imagined audience that is “invoked” (Ede & Lunsford, 1984; Rubin, 1998), single or multiple (e.g., Rubin, 1998), and even evolving (Roth, 1987). In their article “Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy,” Ede and Lunsford (1984) noted that “those who envision audience as addressed emphasize the concrete reality of the writer’s audience” (p. 156). Those in the “audience addressed” camp also assume that through analysis and observation they can know the audience’s attitudes, beliefs, and expectations and that this knowledge is essential. On the other hand, “those who envision audience as invoked stress that the audience of a written discourse is a construction of the writer” (p. 160). Those in this camp say that there is no way for a writer to know the reality of his or her audience in the same way a speaker knows the physical reality of the audience. Consequently, the writer creates a role for the audience through semantic and syntactic cues for the reader. Even though some writers declare that they write for themselves and not a reader and Walter Ong (1975), who is clearly in the “audience invoked” camp, questions the extent to which writers actually consider audience, every writer is ultimately writing for an audience—even if that audience is self. Roth (1987) noted:

Writing for oneself and writing for others may be more interdependent than we have realized, then. Indeed, a chameleon-like readiness to project oneself onto one’s audience or to somehow blend in with potential readers may be just the capacity needed to

successfully reread one's own emerging text in what George Herbert Mead calls "the role of the other." (p. 51)

Although effective writing is predicated to a large extent upon the writer's being able to identify with the reader, young writers have limitations in audience awareness. In general, studies show that the ability to set aside "egocentrism," a Piagetian concept defined by Barritt and Kroll (1978) as "a cognitive state in which a person fails to perceive others' perspectives" (p. 54) increases with the age and/or experience of the writer (e.g., Beach, 1976; Beal, 1990, 1996; Kroll, 1985; Matsuhashi & Gordon, 1985). Beal (1996) observed that it is not until the end of elementary school that most children are able to "evaluate the communicative quality of text accurately and to recognize the types of potential comprehension problems that would signal the need for revision" (p. 221).

The components of writing are nested hierarchically (e.g., Emig, 1971; Flower & Hayes, 1981a) one within the other and thus cannot really be divided into discrete stages or components. When one writes or speaks of one component, one must necessarily include to some extent other components. Researchers (e.g., Berkenkotter, 1981; Flower & Hayes, 1981b; Roth, 1987) have found that writers' consideration of audience leads them to idea generation and back to exploring the topic itself. Concern for the reader impacts not only the ideas and focus of the text, but also decisions about word choice, nature of the discourse, and the general impression that the text creates.

Researchers (e.g., Butterfield, Hacker & Albertson, 1986; Flower & Hayes, 1981a) have usually located the rhetorical problem of audience awareness in the writing task environment. The task environment generally includes the rhetorical problem (topic, audience, exigency or organizational schema) and the text produced so far. Witte (1987) would also include in the task environment pre-text—"a writer's tentative linguistic representation of intended meaning, a 'trial

locution' that is produced in the mind, stored in the writer's memory, and sometimes manipulated mentally prior to being transcribed as written text" (p. 397).

Just as there is no agreement in the theoretical views of the author-audience relationship, so also there is no agreement as to precisely what role audience awareness does or should play in the writing processes. Some researchers (e.g., Flower & Hayes, 1981b) have stressed that "expert" writers spend a great deal of time considering audience—developing "reader-focused" plans that consider the readers' assumptions, objections, or needs. Others (e.g., Berkenkotter, 1981; Kirsch, 1990) have found that a writer's level of expertise is not necessarily the primary factor in how much time is spent considering the audience. Kirsch hypothesized that self-confidence, authority of the writer, perceived disposition of the audience (friendly or antagonistic), and conception of what the act of writing entails all determine a writer's degree of audience awareness. In her study, *all* of the writers were considered experienced, yet not all of them spent a great deal of time considering audience.

In one study, Berkenkotter (1981) focused on whether or not experienced writers who had formal rhetorical training, with its emphasis on audience, thought about their audience more than those who do not. She found that rhetorical training had less impact than "1) how the writer perceived the composing task, which determined the kind of discourse he or she produced, and 2) whether the audience was explicitly stated or was implied by the kind of discourse the subject chose" (p. 390).

In another study, Berkenkotter (1983) studied Murray, a recognized authority on the subject of revision. She compared what he had to say about his composing process with what she could discern about it through analysis of his oral verbalization of his thoughts as he wrote. Several years earlier, Murray (1978) had argued that for professional writers, revision is most

often “internal,” discovering what he or she wants to say and how to say it, rather than “external,” tidying up the text for the reader, a process which often becomes merely editing surface errors. Interestingly, Berkenkotter found that Murray’s think-alouds suggested “that he is wrong in his assertion that writers only consider their audiences when doing external revision, i.e., editing and polishing. To the contrary, his most substantive changes, what he calls ‘internal revision,’ occurred as he turned his thoughts toward his audience” (p. 166).

Though researchers may not agree on the importance of the time spent on considering audience or when consideration of audience is most productive, most would agree that consideration of audience is important and that it is not limited to planning. Instead, consideration for audience is recursive, occurring throughout the writing processes. A study by Roth (1987) focused on how an audience might emerge throughout the writing processes of three successful college writers who were asked to write a publishable essay. He found that they employed several strategies to create their own audience even when no audience was specified. These strategies included the following: (1) keeping audience definitions flexible, multi-dimensional, and variable; (2) considering many different potential readers at different times and in different contexts; (3) challenging themselves to examine their own position in the light of possible opposing viewpoints; (4) writing for themselves.

Roth asked David, Laura, and Johanna to write an essay on any subject they chose. This essay would be published and distributed primarily through freshman English classes on campus. No other audience was specified. David wrote a purposeful, rhetorically effective narrative by thinking consistently in terms of the effect of the writing on himself and not on another reader. For Laura and Johanna, their conceptions of their audience evolved. Roth noted that Laura and Johanna created audiences that were consistent with their own needs—readers that resembled

themselves. “Creating one’s audience, then, may mean projecting an ideal reader out there who is in essence one’s own best self” (p. 50). Johanna’s audience both multiplied and evolved. She kept in mind the possibility that her essay might find an audience other than the intended freshman English classes. Roth observed that early in Johanna’s audience revision process, she addressed the reader’s best self.

As I discussed earlier, audience-awareness is generally considered to be a developmental process. Some mature writers can “write with their eyes closed” (Elbow, 1987) to audience, saving their conscious audience awareness until making revisions. However, many students need help with audience awareness. Various composition textbooks provide audience analysis schemas for students. Audience analysis refers to “those methods designed to enable speakers and writers to draw inferences about the experiences, beliefs, and attitudes of an audience” (Ede, 1984, p. 140). For example, Hairston (1986) asked students to consider these questions: “Who are my readers? What is important to my readers? What do my readers already know about this topic? What attitudes will my readers have on this topic? Why are they reading? What questions will my readers want answered?” (p. 88). However, Hairston also pointed out that audience is not always readily identifiable:

When writers write for readers who are less familiar to them . . . they have to use more thought and imagination to analyze their audience. What they do—and what we all do to some extent when we write for people we don’t know well—is to create their readers. (p. 84)

Flower and Hayes (1981b) also recognized that the writers they observed did not create their reader-focused plans as a result of simple initial audience analysis. The writers also *imagined* their readers.

Interested in how a writer plans for an audience, Schriver (1992) discovered that a reader-protocol method of anticipating the audience seemed to increase the accuracy of college juniors

and seniors in predicting places where their freshman audience had difficulties. The reader-protocol method used typed protocols of freshmen's reflections on their difficulties understanding the texts. Student writers who were taught with the reader-protocol method increased their accuracy from pretest to posttest at predicting places where the freshmen had difficulties. By contrast, students using the audience analysis did not improve their predictions.

Although planning for audience is important, a number of studies have shown that attention to audience during revisions is also beneficial to students. For example, Roen and Willey (1988) found that students who were told to attend to audience during either drafting or revising produced better quality texts than students not assigned an audience. Redd-Boyd and Slater (1989) found that students gave more audience-oriented reasons for making revisions when they were assigned a real audience. The persuasive essays (the product) and the writers' perceptions of revisions they made while writing (the process) were both positively affected by the assignment of an audience.

Audience feedback is perhaps the best strategy for enhancing both students' and experienced writers' awareness of audience. It is for this reason that so many composition teachers have set up their classrooms as writing workshops in which students receive feedback not just from the singular teacher audience but also the multiple peer audience. In one interesting study, Traxler and Gernsbacher (1993) found evidence that audience feedback increases the accuracy of descriptive compositions. College students wrote and then revised descriptions of geometric figures. The original and revised versions were read by other students for the purpose of selecting the described figure from several similar figures. The readers' accuracy in selecting the described figures was used as the indicator of the adequacy of the descriptions. Students who read the revised descriptions by students who had been given



feedback from the audience identified more of the figures correctly than those students who read the originals or the revisions by students who had no feedback.

In a case study on the collaborative nature of revision, Reither and Vipond (1989) detailed how changes were made in an article that Russell Hunt and Douglas Vipond co-authored. As part of the revision process, trusted colleagues provided feedback by reading and commenting on successive drafts. Their comments were used to guide changes in the piece. However, the greatest impact which these colleagues had upon the co-authors was to persuade them to reconceive their audience, “to reconsider the field of knowledge in which their article might fit” (p. 858).

Students who are termed “basic” often have more difficulty considering their audience than more experienced writers (Flower, 1979; Perl, 1979, Rafoth, 1985; Rubin & Rafoth, 1986). Rubin and O’Looney (1990) noted that basic writers “tend to think infrequently of their readers, and fail to use information about their readers even when it is available to them” (p. 281). In their 1990 study, Rubin and O’Looney looked at the use of techniques that explicitly prompt (cue) writers to make decisions at various points in the composing processes (procedural facilitation techniques). This particular study was aimed at helping less successful writers manage the demands of audience awareness during revision. Each of the participants (extremely marginal admissions to a university) wrote three essays, each of which was revised under one of three revision conditions: (1) prompts to “revise your essay to make it better,” (2) revision prompts that were categorized as “non-audience cued” (e.g., “This may not be very important”), and (3) prompts that were categorized as “audience-cued” (e.g., “Mr. Lewis may think this is not very important”). Acknowledging that intrusions into the students’ natural writing processes produced distortions and that these revisions were limited to retranscriptions, Rubin and

O’Looney nevertheless found that for these students the audience-centered intervention appeared to have a beneficial effect on their composing processes. They warn, however, that such an intervention may have a negative effect upon the composing processes of more advanced writers.

Empirical studies seem to show that successful writers do pay attention to audience during the writing process and that this attention is recursive. Evidence also seems to show that a writer’s attention to and perceived relationship with his or her audience directly affects task representation, idea generation, goals, word choice, and so forth. Successful writers seem to be able to imagine an audience but allow their audience definitions to be flexible, multi-dimensional, and variable.

Researchers working with students who have difficulty writing for the “other” have found that strategies such as reader-protocols (rather than audience analysis) and “audience-cued” procedural facilitation techniques seem to help. For students of various writing levels, audience feedback and the assignment of a real audience are helpful.

### **Published Authors’ Descriptions of Audience**

Whether the text is a poem printed in crayon on a paper bag or a hypertext with multiple links, a real human being willfully and purposely wrote each. We have seen how some major composition theorists and researchers view the author- audience relationship, but how do these willful and purposeful authors themselves view their audience(s)? There is a large body of work based on self-descriptions of published authors who provide accounts of their composing processes. Some of the best known are the *Writers at Work* series, published by the *Paris Review*, and interviews in such literary journals as *The Kenyon Review* and *The New Yorker*. Interviews with young-adult authors have been featured in works such as *Speaking for Ourselves*, published by the National Council of Teachers of English, and the American Library

Association's *Booklist*. Some authors such as Eudora Welty (1983), Katherine Paterson (1991), and M. E. Kerr (1998) have written about their own writing processes. This work is relevant to my own study reported in subsequent chapters, since I based my case study, to some extent, on interviews with a single published author, Rick Norman.

With respect to authors' accounts, Gallo (1994) has pointed out that we must be cautious about extrapolating *a single* process from an author (or authors) because there is no *one* writing process that authors use every time they write. Nevertheless, through his own gathering of evidence by talking with and listening to professional writers and by compiling notes from books and journal articles, Gallo has noted *patterns* that may be useful to students. In my own search for patterns, I have therefore chosen to look briefly at six award-winning authors. Three of the authors—Katherine Paterson, Alan Garner, and M. E. Kerr—are specifically young-adult authors. The other three—Tobias Wolfe, Robert Coles, and John Updike—have written in various genres, both fiction and non-fiction, and generally for adult audiences.

Of the six authors, M. E. Kerr seems to have the strongest overt sense of audience. In her book *Blood on the Forehead: What I Know About Writing*, Kerr (1998) gave advice to young people wanting to write. In one chapter she advised them:

Your first three chapters hook your reader into your story. Work hard on them, rewrite, get them as good as you can. . . . Try to provide enough suspense at the end of each chapter to make the reader want to go on to the next. Don't tell everything too soon. A good story doesn't rush at the reader; it unfolds gradually. (p. 92)

Consideration for her audience affects the viewpoint from which she chooses to write her novels. She explained that she wrote *Little Little* (1981) from alternating male and female viewpoints so that the reader has both perspectives. Her later books are almost exclusively from the male viewpoint because teachers have told her that boys prefer books only from the male viewpoint, but girls enjoy both. "So if I use a male voice, then everyone's happy" (p. 207).

In her essay “The Aim of the Writer Who Writes for Children,” Katherine Paterson (1991) asserted that she is not initially aware of her audience. Instead, she is aware of story. Her first audience is her “own young self” (p. 45). After her idea has become a recognizable story, she turns her attention to how best this story can be shared, seeking to “enlist the imaginative cooperation of the intended reader” (p. 45), aiming to do her part so well “that the young reader will delight to join me as coauthor” (p. 46).

Editor Jay Woodruff (1993), in *A Piece of Work: Five Writers Discuss Their Revisions*, interviewed Robert Coles about only one piece, so we cannot in any sense of the word generalize about Coles’s consideration of audience. Nevertheless, I believe it is enlightening to see what he had to say about his essay “Don’t Worry, Dad” (1986/1988). This essay first appeared in the March 1986 issue of *New Oxford Review* and was later included in a collection of Coles’s *New Oxford Review* columns, *Harvard Diary*.

When questioned by Woodruff about his adding the word “three” in a revision to the phrase “the boys are gone,” Coles acknowledged,

I do remember putting the “three” down, because I felt the reader should know that there were three sons. At first I was writing for myself—“the boys are gone”—and then I remembered that someone’s going to read this and I should give them some facts.  
(p. 110)

Coles says he was writing this essay for himself, that “this is a confessional essay. I’m trying to level with myself, and I ask the reader to join in” (p. 113). Nevertheless, this essay started out because he was asked to write “for Dan Menaker and for the collection of pieces that were going to be written by *New Yorker* editors who were parents and writers as well as editors” (p. 113). It seems that Coles’s audience was what Roth (1987) would describe as an “evolving” and multiple audience.

In an interview with Charles Thomas Samuels for the *Writer's at Work* (1976) series published by the *Paris Review*, John Updike seemed to describe a specifically imagined reader:

When I write, I aim in my mind not toward New York but toward a vague spot a little to the east of Kansas. I think of the books on library shelves, without their jackets, years old, and a countryish teen-aged boy finding them, and having them speak to him.  
(p. 431)

In writing for his audience, which often included people whom Updike had known and who fancied themselves in his pages, Updike counted on these “people to know the difference between flesh and paper” (p. 431). Updike felt that in general his audience could make this distinction between reality and fiction, an ability which Rick Norman seemed to feel was lacking in some members of his teenaged audience.

Though he seemed to have a relationship with a specifically imagined audience of teenaged boys, Updike also seemed to connect the author-audience relationship to the text. When questioned about whether or not he thought the use of his work in college courses was going to interfere with “the reader’s comprehension or feeling” for the work, Updike replied, “No. . . . The college course is just a way of delivering you to the books, and once you’re delivered, the writer-reader relationship is there” (p. 438).

On the question of authorial presence in a work, Updike noted:

I find it irksome when an author is there as a celebrity. In Salinger’s later works and most of Mailer’s work the author appears as somebody who counts, somebody who has an audience of teen-agers out there waiting to hear from him . . . . The proper pose may be the Homeric bard’s one—he is there, but unimportantly there, there by sufferance of the king. (p. 450)

Alan Garner, in Gallo’s (1990) *Speaking for Ourselves*, and Tobias Wolfe, in Woodruff’s (1993) *A Piece of Work*, asserted that they write only for themselves. Wolfe maintained that it is at the point that a writer stops trying to please an editor that he or she becomes interesting as a writer.

Wolfe noted:

[W]hat Edmond Wilson said is true: “No two readers read the same book.” In the end you have to be the arbiter of your fiction, the judge of your fiction, the harshest judge of your fiction, as you are your own best reader. Who else is there in the end that you have to please? (p. 25).

Though there are certainly differences among these six writers, there seems to be a pattern as well. This pattern seems to show the importance of maintaining a delicate balance in the author-audience relationship—a balance that seems to be achieved primarily through awareness of the self as reader and the other as reader. Yet the question remains. What strategies most effectively help writers maintain this balance?

### **Conclusion**

Nystrand (1990) noted that “writers and readers each proceed in terms of what they assume about the other” (p. 7). For the reader, this assumption is usually dependent primarily upon the textual features that the author provides. The reader cannot fully know the author, nor can the author fully know the reader. Yet as teachers of composition, we must encourage a sense of audience awareness in our students. Douglas Park (1982) observed that “for the teaching of writing, audience is obvious, crucial, and yet remarkably elusive” (p. 247). It is this elusiveness of the sense of audience that frustrates both teachers and students of composition. Park goes on to write:

Although the whole question of how writers perceive audience in the process of composing does not seem susceptible to highly detailed description, it ought to be possible, through introspection, interview, and case studies at least to describe the kinds of issues writers deal with consciously, as opposed to intuitively; to describe the kinds of questions writers ask themselves about audience and the kinds of solutions they propose in different rhetorical situations.” (pp. 254-55)

Though my case study did not focus on an author “in the process of composing,” it is precisely this describing of audience-related issues that writers deal with consciously, as well as

describing how a specific audience responds to a specific author, that I sought to do in my own case study of an author. Perhaps through concretizing the strategies of one writer, I have in some measure lessened the elusiveness of the sense of audience.

The literature review in this chapter provided both a historical and contemporary overview of the shifting perspectives on the role(s) of the author and audience in the author-audience relationship. I included both empirical research into the author-audience relationship as well as perspectives of various published authors on this relationship. This literature has informed my methodology, and in the next chapter I detail the methods used in my case study in which I sought to provide empirical evidence for the perspective of a published author, as well as the perspective of an audience, on the author-audience relationship.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Building upon the body of literature which I discussed in Chapter Two, I conducted a case study of a single Louisiana YA author, Rick J. Norman, in which I examined the nature of the relations he has with his audience(s). Though I examined all of his published writings (except a treatise on corporate law), the focus was upon only one novel, *Fielder's Choice*. My sources also included a pre-publication draft of *Fielder's Choice*, editorial comments, reviews, and interviews with the author. I also added a unique facet to this case study by having students (as audience) read *Fielder's Choice*, eliciting their interpretations in written form, and obtaining Mr. Norman's responses to the students' interpretations. Though not crucial to the study, I also arranged a meeting between Mr. Norman and four of the student participants in order to examine the interaction between this particular author and individuals from this particular "live audience."

### Participants

The participants in my case study consisted of Mr. Rick Norman, the author of *Fielder's Choice*; five high school students from my senior English class; and Judith Faust, August House editor of *Fielder's Choice*. I began by recruiting first Mr. Norman, then the five high school students, and, finally, Ms. Faust.

### The Author

There were several criteria I had in mind for the participating author and his or her work: (1) a Louisiana native (although I did consider some Mississippi authors); (2) quality fiction (e.g., believable characters and scenarios, depth of meaning); (3) geographical accessibility; (4) accessibility to author's materials (e.g., drafts and so forth).

I located Mr. Norman through a web site called Center for the Book, which has been created by the Louisiana State Library. Though far from exhaustive and complete, Center for the



Book provides a twenty-three-page listing of Louisiana authors. This resource can be searched according to author, state, city, genre, and audience. My research focused upon city, genre, and audience. Each author has a connecting link which gives further information: address, e-mail address, place of birth, educational background, honors and awards, occupation, published works, works in progress, availability as a speaker or writer, and fee. This was most helpful in narrowing the field. As I combed through the YA and Adult/YA authors, I eliminated many of them for the following reasons: quality of work lacking (e.g., shallow characterization, contrived plot, and so forth); subject matter unappealing to me or outside the parameters of my study—dime store romance, pop culture, horror, and so forth; and lack of recent publications.

Eventually, I narrowed my Center for the Book list to twenty-one possible candidates, Rick Norman among them, who are designated as YA or Adult/YA. Center for the Book's YA designation, however, is a very loose classification (reflecting the fluid boundaries between adult and YA literature). The adult/young-adult authors on my list included such writers as Moira Crone, Ernest Gaines, Miles Richardson, Tim Gautreaux, Burton N. Raffel, and C. C. Lockwood. In addition to the list of twenty-one from the Center for the Book, I also considered authors who had been suggested to me.

As I considered various authors, I read selected works of authors who particularly interested me and whose work I had not read previously. Among the ones I read were Berthe Amoss, Gloria Teles Pushker, Malcolm Karl Shuman, Tim Gautreaux, Martha Lacy Hall, Robert Funderburk, and Gilbert Morris.

Another means I used to narrow my search was going online to Amazon.com to see if I could find information about the authors who remained on my list. Since quite a few of them are listed with Amazon.com, I was able to get a feel for what some of their books are about and

whether or not they may be suitable (i. e., technically masterful, meaningful, and healthy for the moral, emotional, and intellectual development of young people) for my study. These are the authors who remained on my list: Ernest Gaines (for *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, 1971), Rick J. Norman (for *Fielder's Choice*, 1991), Myra Owen Rowe, Malcolm Karl Shuman, Gorla Saltz/Gloria Teles Pushker ( for the Toby Belfer stories), Glen A. Pitre, William Edgar Stephens, and Burton N. Raffel.

Three factors contributed to my decision to ask Mr. Norman to participate in my study. First, when searching a library's online catalog for World War Two novels for my seniors, Rick Norman's *Fielder's Choice* surfaced. Since he was already on my "short list," I decided that his baseball/World War Two novel was definitely worth checking out. Second, a close reading of *Fielder's Choice* convinced me that it would be better than a series of books by an author that I was still considering, particularly if I wanted to use senior high students. Third, I learned from a school librarian in Lake Charles that Mr. Norman had often gone to schools to speak to classes and had generously donated copies of *Fielder's Choice* to several area schools. Bolstered by that information, I decided to call him the next day. When I explained the nature of my request, he unhesitatingly agreed to work with me. Moreover, he boxed up personal materials of his that he thought I might like to photocopy and shipped them to me. I finally had an author for my case study.

In addition to being an author, Rick Norman is a practicing trial lawyer in Lake Charles, Louisiana. He is a former federal prosecutor and lecturer on the legal seminar circuit. A native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Mr. Norman played baseball in college "before it was discovered—and repeatedly proven—that he could not hit a good curveball" (book jacket of *Fielder's*

*Choice*). He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Louisiana State University in 1976 and received his J. D. in 1979 from LSU Law School.

According to the Louisiana State Library's Center for the Book, Mr. Norman is generally classified as a fiction writer whose audience is young adults. His novel *Fielder's Choice* gained generally favorable national recognition at the time of its publication (e.g., *Library Journal*, *Publisher's Weekly*, *The Bloomsbury Review*, *Southern Living*) and was nominated for the South Carolina Young Adult Book Award by the South Carolina Association of School Librarians (1993-94). In addition to writing for young adults, he also makes himself available as a motivational speaker for young adults.

### **The Students**

The student participants in this study were five high school seniors—three males and two females—who were members of my twelfth-grade English class at Manillis Academy (a pseudonym) in a rural parish in Louisiana. In general, the students in this private school came from middle to upper middle class white families. Though there were some younger students who came from other ethnic backgrounds, there were none in the forty-two-member senior class. The students in the study ranged from A students to solid C students, but each of these students was academically competent to provide the depth of responses necessary to make this a rich study of the author-audience relationship.

Thelma, Chatrick, Bob, Goose, and Loki (pseudonyms) made up a very diverse group of student participants. I have included here a brief description of each of the students. These descriptions contain information and observations that are pertinent to understanding their responses.

**Thelma.** Thelma, who seemed to be very self-confident and articulate, earned straight A's in senior English and was a member of the Honor Society. She loved to read—especially mystery novels—and write, and her writings seemed to reflect the ability to write for an “other” audience, particularly her descriptions. Until her senior year, Thelma was very active in extracurricular activities, including sports, but minimized her participation in her senior year in order to enjoy a “leisurely” last year in high school. She was a great fan of baseball—especially LSU baseball. Thelma's roots ran deep in the parish in which the study was conducted. Both of her parents graduated from Manillis Academy, and her father served on the school board at the time of the study. Her maternal grandfather had served as principal of one of the local public elementary schools for many years before his retirement.

**Chatrick.** A gifted conversationalist, Chatrick was an A-B English student his senior year and was able to write quite competently. Like Thelma, he was also an Honor Society member. However, unlike Thelma, he admittedly did not like to read and felt intimidated by long books. Interestingly, though, he had read at least some of the lengthy Harry Potter books. In a school where sports—especially football—predominated, Chatrick was totally uninterested in sports. Instead, he was very active in 4-H and, interested in fashion design, worked part-time in a clothing store. The only one of the participants who did not live in the parish and the only one who came from a home in which the parents were divorced, Chatrick commuted to Manillis Academy from a neighboring parish where he lived with his mother.

**Bob.** Bob was a quiet fellow whose dry wit popped out at unexpected moments. Although he read rather slowly and labored over his writing, he worked hard in my senior English class, moving from C's to B's on his report card. An outdoorsman, Bob enjoyed hunting and fishing. He was also an avid baseball player (the only team sport he played), who had

played catcher for many years on school and summer league teams. As an experienced catcher, Bob was talented enough to attract the interest of college scouts, and he hoped to play college baseball and perhaps eventually pro ball. Like Thelma, Bob also had deep family ties to the parish. His mother was a graduate of Manillis Academy and a teacher at Manillis at the time of the study, and his father had graduated from the local public school.

**Goose.** Another baseball player who participated in the study was Goose. He had in his own words “basically lived, breathed, and worshipped baseball” since he was a child, acquiring the nickname of “Goose” at about age fourteen. In addition to playing baseball, Goose also ran cross-country and served as president of his senior class. In spite of being an Honor Society student—a straight-A student in senior English—Goose hated to read and considered himself to be a “non-reader.” An intelligent and personable young man, he had figured out ways of succeeding academically with only a minimum of reading. Like Thelma and Bob, Goose was a “native” of the parish, a member of a large extended family that had been in the area for several generations.

**Loki.** Loki was a generally quiet but extremely intelligent student who was also a member of the Honor Society. She had the ability to handle quite easily material which most students find challenging, reading widely and deeply in areas that are generally not within the scope of a high school senior. More importantly, Loki was able to analyze what she had read and then synthesize it in a coherent format that reflected her thoughtful approach, particularly adept at doing so in writing. Her compositions were organized, precise, and polished. In addition doing so well in her expository writing, Loki was also quite gifted in creative writing. Though Loki was the acknowledged “intellectual” of the senior class, she also participated in track and field—specifically in field events—and was knowledgeable about other sports. A

“native” like Thelma, Bob, and Goose, Loki had grown up in a family whose roots in the parish go back several generations. Her grandfather and father together operated their service station, often servicing eighteen-wheel rigs.

### **The Editor**

Judith Faust, editor of *Fielder’s Choice*, was born and reared in Memphis, Tennessee.

She learned to read under the knee-hole of her grandmother’s library table:

I have an electric fragment of memory of the moment when I connected the letters on the spines of those books with the words on the pages of the storybooks I so treasured and the sounds they made when the adults who loved me read them aloud. (J. Faust, personal communication, July, 27, 2001)

In 1967 she graduated with distinction from the University of Kansas with a B. S. in journalism and philosophy, and in 1971, she obtained a Master of Social Work degree with a major in community organization and planning from Tulane University. Over a period of thirty years, she has been active in nonprofit management, public management and public policy development, program development, writing and editing, and social work education. In 1992, she was recognized by Arkansas Business as one of ten “Women to Watch” for the nineties. Then in 1993, she was awarded Social Worker of the Year by the Arkansas Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, the Wilbur Cohen Scholarship by the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and the Community Service Award by the Arkansas Association of Marriage and Family Counselors.

Ms. Faust’s writing and editing experience is varied. For five years she was a volunteer editor of the monthly newsletter for WORDS: The Arkansas Literary Society. She was the editor of *Nonprofit Resources*, a highly regarded newsletter for Arkansas nonprofit executives and board members. This newsletter averaged eighteen pages per issue. As managing editor of August House Publishers, she edited twenty-one books, both fiction and nonfiction, including

Rick Norman's 1991 novel *Fielder's Choice*. Mr. Norman later hired her to edit *Cross Body Block* (1995), the sequel to *Fielder's Choice*. Ms. Faust's duties at August House required her to see the books through from acceptance of the manuscript to the finished book ready for distribution. From 1994-1996, Ms. Faust also wrote a monthly column in *Arkansas Women's Journal*.

### **Setting**

The study took place in the spring of 2001 at Manillis Academy, which is located in Limer (a pseudonym), Louisiana. Manillis is a small Pre-K-12 community school, which imposes no academic entrance requirements. However, the majority of students take college preparatory courses and go on to earn college degrees. Its enrollment at the time of the study was approximately 540 students, many of whom were sons and daughters of Manillis alumni. At the time of the study, the school was a member of the Mississippi Private School Association (MPSA), a service agency for member schools in the four-state area of Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Manillis was also accredited by the state of Louisiana. Though the school is located in Limer, a number of students came from other small towns within and outside of the parish.

The community-at-large in which the school is located is primarily rural. The town of Limer itself has only approximately 2,000 residents. However, in spite of its rural locale, the community is in close proximity to a large city, and many residents work in the city. In the last ten to fifteen years, there has been an influx of "non-natives" to this area whose roots go deep into Southern history. It is difficult to say what the average income of the area is, but there is a wide range of income levels—from the very poor to the very wealthy.

## The Author's Corpus and Focused Texts

Mr. Norman's corpus consisted of two novels, *Fielder's Choice* and *Cross Body Block* (1995), an unpublished screenplay of *Fielder's Choice*, and a collection of radio shorts for National Public Radio's "Only a Game." The focus text for my study was *Fielder's Choice*, and the focused excerpts within *Fielder's Choice* were four rhetorically significant passages. This section is organized in the following manner: a brief summary of the two novels and an overview of the screenplay and radio shorts; an analysis of the characteristics of Norman's corpus; an analysis of literary devices used in the focused text; the focused passages from *Fielder's Choice* and their connection to the rhetorical triangle mentioned earlier.

### Corpus

Within this section, I provide summaries of *Fielder's Choice* and *Cross Body Block*, a brief overview of the screenplay and the NPR radio shorts, and a comparison/contrast of the characteristics of *Fielder's Choice* and *Cross Body Block*. I have purposely limited the length of my summary of *Fielder's Choice* because I go into much greater detail about this novel later in this chapter.

**Summary of *Fielder's Choice*.** *Fielder's Choice* is Rick Norman's first published novel. It is a retrospective first-person narrative by the twenty-two-year-old protagonist Jax "Gooseball" Fielder who, as the story opens, is defending himself to an Army major against charges of aiding and abetting the enemy while being held prisoner by the Japanese near the end of World War Two. Jax's defensive strategy is to explain to the Major, who is questioning him, all the events leading up to his current predicament. These events begin in his baseball-dominated childhood in Smackover in southern Arkansas and progress to his experiences as a pitcher with the St. Louis Browns' major and minor league baseball clubs. His brief major



league career culminates with his balking home the winning run for the New York Yankees, allowing the Yankees to take the 1941 American League pennant. Life falls apart for “Gooseball,” and he escapes to the military after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. But life in the military has its own twists and turns, as does his account to the major. Initially, Jax trains to be a pilot like his beloved older brother Jugs, but he begins to doubt his ability so much that he settles for the position of turret gunner instead. On a bombing run over Tokyo, Jax’s B-29 is shot down, and he is the only survivor. “Gooseball” goes from being a top turret gunner in a B-29, to a prisoner of war, to a gardener for a Japanese admiral and pitching coach for the admiral’s son. It is his relationship with the Admiral and Yoshi that is the crux of the charges against him.

**Summary of *Cross Body Block*.** Like *Fielder’s Choice*, the sequel *Cross Body Block* is a retrospective first-person narrative by Jax Fielder. He is twenty-five years older and married to Dixie, who was formerly married to his two brothers. But the marriage is far from idyllic since the loss of their ten-year-old daughter. As we peer through Jax’s eyes into his family life, we find that Norman seems to use Jax’s troubles with his wife and remaining children, stepson Little Jackson and sons Knuck (short for knucklehead) and Francis, as a springboard for critiquing religion, corporal punishment, and football.

Jax and Dixie have grown apart because of her devotion to Catholicism, and he is estranged from Little Jackson. Knuck seems to be the epitome of the “meathead jock” whose aim in life seems to be to “stick the opposition,” even if this means ripping another player with a metal cleat or crunching his knee with a vicious hit. Francis, on the other hand, appears to be the “good” boy who plays sports to please his father. Instead of aggressively dishing out the hits like Knuck, Francis is the one who takes the hits. This dysfunctional family is on the edge of annihilation. Knuck is killed and Francis is charged with the attempted murder of a neighbor,

Steel Mill Johnson, head of the high school booster club (the Horse Backers) and one who has regularly beaten his own sons. Jax does the only thing he knows to do. He flees to Canada with his son Francis and Andy, Steel Mill's youngest son, whom Jax and his family have befriended.

Norman seemingly uses the world of high school football as a commentary on violence against children—violence that is committed in the name of discipline. Coach Grote, whom Jax replaces as football coach, counsels Jax, “Fielder, don’t be afraid to whip the kids regularly. Even if you don’t know why, they do. And believe me, they respect you for it” (p. 18).

**Screenplay and radio shorts.** In addition to his published novels, *Fielder’s Choice* and *Cross Body Block*, Mr. Norman has also written an unpublished screenplay of *Fielder’s Choice* and a number of radio shorts for National Public Radio’s *Only a Game* from WBUR-Boston. Though the screenplay is titled *Fielder’s Choice*, it actually blends elements from both novels and undergoes other changes to accommodate a viewing audience. For example, the screenplay opens with a shot of Jax manning his blister gun in the B-29 turret. The glove on his right hand “has been amateurishly cut and sewn to fit his partially amputated right index finger” (p. 2). By page four, the camera “falls into” a pear tree in a backyard and hones in on a hand holding a pear. The young boy’s hand is missing the last joint of the right index finger. This cues the viewing audience that the person manning the blister gun and the young boy holding the pear are the same person.

The radio shorts for NPR provide “comic relief” for *Only a Game*, a one-hour, weekly magazine format directed at the “thinking” sports fan. These brief scripts are usually recorded several at a time and then saved until they can be linked to a feature story. “Consequently, my segments must be time unspecific and generic in content.” He notes that his purpose in writing

these brief radio monologues and dialogues is “to make people think and laugh” (R. Norman, personal communication, July, 2001).

**Characteristics of Norman’s corpus.** Though I have briefly mentioned Mr. Norman’s screenplay and radio shorts, I limit the present section to his two novels since my case study focuses on the young adult novel genre and an audience of readers rather than an audience of viewers or listeners.

Structurally, *Cross Body Block* parallels *Fielder’s Choice*. Both novels begin with a reality device, a note from a witness to some of the events being recounted by Jax, but who learns the truth of the rest of the story from the novel. In the case of *Cross Body Block*, the note is from a 1970 graduate of Nathan Bedford Forrest High who played for Coach Grote and Coach Fielder. Both stories are told from a retrospective first-person point of view, both make heavy use of foreshadowing to tease the reader on, and both make use of the Southern landscape as a setting.

Like *Fielder’s Choice*, *Cross Body Block* ends with a newspaper article. In *Fielder’s Choice*, the injustices done to Jax by the Army and the St. Louis Browns are rectified, but we get a hint that all is not well between Jax and his adopted son and namesake, Little Jackson. The newspaper article in *Cross Body Block* informs us that the district attorney has decided not to seek extradition of Jax, Francis, and Andy, and he has dismissed the charges because of extenuating circumstances. However, unlike *Fielder’s Choice*, *Cross Body Block* does not have a “happy ending.”

The framework of *Cross Body Block* is very similar to *Fielder’s Choice*, but the elements do not seem to work as well as in *Fielder’s Choice*. Jax’s first-person narrative is much more didactic and heavy-handed than in *Fielder’s Choice*. It is almost as if Norman feels the need to

constantly “club” readers over the head to make sure we get the point. In *Fielder’s Choice*, he is a bit more subtle. Though *Fielder’s Choice* also deals with some heavy issues, there is more comic relief in that novel than there is in *Cross Body Block*. In *Cross Body Block*, even the humor is tinged with blackness and violence.

Another element which works for *Fielder’s Choice* but which does not seem to work as well for *Cross Body Block* is the use of the first-person narrative. It works in *Fielder’s Choice* because the conflict there is primarily internal—Jax’s struggle to make decisions. However, in *Cross Body Block* we do not see as much of an internal struggle as we do the external consequences of Jax’s ineptness and, in his words, spinelessness. As a reader, I found myself wanting the perspectives of Dixie, Little Jackson, Knuck, and Francis without having everything filtered through and commented upon by Jax.

Like many sequels to successful novels and films, *Cross Body Block*, as a whole, does not live up to its predecessor, *Fielder’s Choice*. It has not garnered the acclaim given to *Fielder’s Choice*.

### **Overview of the Focused Text**

In this section I present a literary analysis of the devices which Norman has used in *Fielder’s Choice*. These devices include reality devices, characterization, themes, imagery, motifs, and foreshadowing.

**Reality devices.** There are several devices which Norman uses to convince his audience of the “truth” of this tale, contrary to the disclaimer on the copyright page, which declares that this story is “the product of the author’s imagination.” The first reality device that he employs is the dedication. Each person mentioned in the dedication is a real person who played for a real major league baseball team and pulled a real bonehead play.

Another reality device which Norman employs is a note from Thomas M. “Neckless” Womack, Jax’s roommate with the St. Louis Browns. In this note, which is placed just before the first page of the story, Neckless essentially tells the reader that he or she can accept this story as fact because Neckless, who knew Gooseball Fielder, accepts the veracity of it.

Author/trial lawyer Rick Norman sets up the framework of the story as a legal confrontation between the narrator/defendant (Jax) and the listener/prosecutor (Major). Norman creates the Major as an immediate, concrete audience for Jax’s tale. Periodically throughout Jax’s account, Norman has him directly address his audience, ostensibly the Major, as “you,” and calls upon him to remember.

Norman seems to build the credibility of the story in Mark Twainian fashion by creating the illusion that *everyone* knows about Gooseball Fielder and his debacle. In recounting his infamous balk, Jax tells the Major, “That’s when it happened. I started my windup. That’s right. Can you believe it? Shoot, what am I talking about, you probably remember it near about as good as me” (p. 86). Later in the narrative, Norman reinforces the truth of the tale when Jax says, “Anybody old enough to talk plain knew the story of Gooseball Fielder and the ’41 pennant boner” (p. 103).

The mention of real newspapers (e.g., *Memphis Commercial Appeal* and *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*) that supposedly printed articles about Gooseball Fielder is another reality device used by Norman, as well as a wrap-up article twenty-two years later. The final article reports that major league baseball and the U.S. Air Force have corrected the injustices done to Jax by the Army’s 1945 investigation and baseball’s subsequent blacklisting. Norman employs real people—Commissioner of Baseball William D. Eckert, Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, and Governor Orval E. Faubus of Arkansas—to officiate at ceremonies honoring Jax prior to a

Yankees-Senators game. And then in what seems to be a sly poke at politicians, Norman slips in Mayor Ernest Musso of Toledo, Ohio. Musso is a pompous fictional character who was on the Toledo Mudhens farm team. It was Jax and his teammates who perpetrated a carefully orchestrated “joke” on Musso, a “joke” that was calculated to rid the team of him.

**Characterization.** Because *Fielder’s Choice* is a first-person narrative, all of the characters, including the narrator, are seen through the eyes of Jax. Rick Norman uses virtually no visual description in building his characters. For example, about all the visual description we get of Jax (through his own eyes) is that he was a skinny kid and, according to his father (according to Jax) had a potato-shaped head. Instead, Norman seems to rely upon three approaches: inference through Jax’s narrative, judgment by Jax, and connotative names (e.g., Andrew Jackson “Jax” Fielder, Isaac “Jugs” Fielder, Jude Fielder). Because the reader/prosecutor sees all of the characters through Jax’s eyes, it is critical that Norman present a credible, realistic narrator who is very human and very fallible but very reliable as a witness. Otherwise, his judgments are suspect. Jax plaintively asks the Major, “How can them folks believe I aided and abetted the enemy? The Army don’t know me” (p. 10).

Norman then proceeds to allow Jax to tell his story to the Major so the Army (and the reader) *can* get to know Jax as a credible character. As Jax’s story unfolds, a portrait of him begins to emerge: he seems honest—“I want to tell you up front that I *did* more than likely say to Colonel Cole I was gonna ‘play ball,’ but I never said ‘with the Japanese’” (p. 9); he admits fallibility—“Hard as I tried, the older I got, the more I messed up” (p. 17); as a teen, he is shy around girls; he is dutiful to his mother—sitting at the bedside of his dying father, arranging his funeral, and evicting his father’s mistress from the funeral; he is, in the words of the St. Louis Browns’ manager, a nice kid who hesitates, afraid of making a mistake or offending somebody;

he is a superstitious major leaguer who keeps a special four-leaf clover in his wallet; he is constantly underestimating himself and his abilities; he is generally easygoing in nature, but he is not above a good hard fistfight; he believes that “even a bad life is better than none” (p. 154).

Throughout his narrative, not only does Jax reveal his own character but he also reveals and comments on other characters. For example, at the very beginning of the narrative, Jax tells the Major that his younger brother Jude has “been a skunk all his life and would do anything to get even with me” (p. 10). At this point, the reader knows nothing about Jude except this comment from Jax. As the narrative continues, the reader sees more of Jude through the eyes of Jax. A particularly revealing incident is recounted towards the end of the narrative. Deputy sheriff Bubba Broadax, who seems to have a grudge against Jax, nevertheless corroborates Jax’s assessment of Jude:

He [Little Jackson, Jax’s nephew] squirmed when I [Jax] held him because of the whelps on his legs.

Bubba seen it the same time as me. “Who did this to you, son?” he asked real soft.

“Jax! Jax hit him. He’s crazy!” says Jude.

“Jax nothing. I asked the boy!” Bubba snapped out. By the way he said it, I knew he knew. He was just gathering evidence. (p. 187)

In addition to revealing his characters through Jax’s narrative and comments, Norman also reveals his characters through the use of connotative names. Some of the names, such as Isaac “Jugs” Fielder and Jude Fielder, seem to be transparent windows into the characters who bear these names. Isaac means “laughter,” and “Jugs” is a reference to his ears that look “like a couple of jug handles” (p. 12). Jax’s older brother Jugs is the quintessential jokester whose humor knows no bounds. As he had lived laughing, so he also died laughing. Jax finds out that Jugs’ final radio transmission before his plane explodes is “Don’t worry about me, fellows, I can walk back from here” (p. 101).

Jude conjures up images of Judas, the biblical betrayer of Christ. Jude Fielder is also portrayed by Jax as a betrayer. In Chapter One, Jax tells the Major, “First time I can remember my brother Jude trying to get me killed was when I was about nine” (p. 10). Later we learn that Jude is at least partly responsible for Jax being investigated by the Army.

Other connotative names, however, seem to have an ironic twist to them. For example, Andrew Jackson is a name that calls to mind a strong, fiery tempered fighter whose roles as lawyer, judge, soldier, and president required him to make difficult choices on a daily basis. Jax, on the other hand, admits to the Major at the beginning of the inquiry that “I got so bad at making decisions, I quit altogether. If I had no choice but to make a choice, I tried to have something to blame when things went wrong” (p. 10).

**Choice as a theme.** The title of the novel, *Fielder's Choice*, is a baseball term which apparently illustrates this theme of making a choice. In the game of baseball, which Norman seems to use as a symbol for the game of life, “fielder's choice” refers to the situation in which there is a runner on first and the batter hits a ground ball to the infield. The infielder must make a choice as to whether to throw the runners out at first or second. If he chooses to throw the runner out at second, the batter reaches first base on the “fielder's choice.” The obvious consequence of the infielder failing to make a choice is that both runners gain a base.

The evolution of the theme of choice in this novel seems to parallel Jax's evolution into a man who can make decisions. However, Jax's progression towards being a decision-making man seems to be a seesaw affair in which the pendulum swings between decision and indecision. Rather than going into a lengthy discussion of each incident which seems to illustrate the theme of choice, I have chosen instead to summarize briefly some of the more important incidents, listing the chapter in which they occur.



Chapter One: Jax begins his defense by telling the Major, “But I ain’t ashamed of the choices I made that wound me up here. They might be the first decisions I ever really made. They surely are the first ones I made for the right reasons” (p. 10).

Chapter Two: Jax allows his older brother Jugs, whom he adores, to do his on-the-field thinking for him. After recounting a particularly humiliating incident, Jax tells the Major, “My big brother was always my hero, but I believe it was that game I begun thinking I might just as well be doing my own thinking” (p. 23).

Chapter Six: Though Jax feels a powerful physical attraction for Dixie, whom Jugs has married, he resists the temptation to put his feelings into action when an opportunity to do so arises. Jax comments to the Major, “It was the one time I believe I made the right decision, especially the way things was to work out” (p. 54).

Chapter Eight: In the deciding game of the 1941 pennant series, Jax unintentionally commits a balk when he cannot decide whether to pitch or throw a baserunner out who is stealing home. A balk occurs in baseball when a pitcher makes an illegal motion or feint. This is penalized by awarding a runner or runners the next base.

Chapter Nine: After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Jax “decides” to join the Army Air Corps and help his brother Jugs fight the Japanese. However, he admits to the Major that this was no decision; he was simply running away.

Chapter Twelve: During an April Fools Day bombing run over Tokyo, Jax is blown out of the top turret of his B-29, captured, and imprisoned in a Japanese prisoner of war camp. Almost immediately the ranking American officer in the camp, Colonel Cole, targets Jax for a foolish wild-goose mission. Though Jax does not buy into Colonel Cole’s pep talk of contributing to the war effort there in the camp, he agrees—because it is easier than taking a

stand—to “liberate” one of Cole’s officers who has been caught trying to escape and has been in solitary for four days.

Jax accomplishes his “mission,” but as a result he is confined to solitary in a metal pipe. By the third week of confinement, he has decided to die. When a wave of Allied bombers passes over the camp, he is literally shaken back to life. He decides he will live and begins pitching games in his head to stay alive and sane.

Chapter Thirteen: When he lands in a Japanese hospital after having his face smashed by a guard, he knows that he is out of the war and decides that it is time to ask Dixie to marry him. (Jugs had been killed in the war.) This is a major step forward for Jax. He had wanted to marry Dixie shortly after Jugs was killed, but he hesitated. Now, however, there is no hesitation. He dictates a letter to Dixie and sends it via the Red Cross. He does, however, have second thoughts the next day when he sees his mangled face in a mirror.

Chapter Fifteen: Just as he had “decided” to join the Army Air Corps to escape the humiliation of his balk, Jax “decides” to go back to St. Louis when he learns that his younger brother Jude has beat him to marriage with Dixie.

Chapter Seventeen: Jax’s experience in “The Pipe” has stiffened him in some respects, and when he finds out that the Army has decided to investigate him for “playing ball” with the Japanese, and the Browns have dismissed him, he is determined not to spend any time confined to a jail cell. He tells the Major, “I made a lot of promises to me and to God while I was in that pipe, but the main-most one to us both was that nobody would ever lock this cracker up again. This one I will keep, no disrespect intended, sir” (p. 184).

Before escaping to Mexico to avoid a pre-court martial meeting with the Major, Jax decides that he must say good-bye to Dixie and to Little Jackson, Dixie and Jugs’ son. Jax is

confronted with irrefutable evidence of Jude's abuse of Dixie and Little Jackson and, in spite of his fear of being apprehended by the law, he makes a conscious decision to rescue Dixie and Little Jackson. At this climactic moment, Jax does not balk.

**Sub-theme of anti-war sentiment.** Because *Fielder's Choice* is set during World War Two, the whole theme of war is naturally a major part of this novel. Through Jax, Norman seems to take the stand that war is the ignorant coward's way of settling issues that could and should be settled in a civilized manner if we would just remember that we are all human beings. After Jugs is killed, we would expect Jax to become motivated by revenge. But that is not the case. Instead, he does not even want to fight because he can never get back at the Japanese for what they have done.

The anti-war sentiment begins to build. When Jax hits the ground after being blown out of his B-29, he does not feel like fighting. All of a sudden he is excruciatingly tired of war. He is not scared when he is captured by the Japanese; rather, he is simply aggravated that they treat him, one lone airman, as if he is the first wave of an invasion. And he is just plain tired.

Jax is no coward, but he sees no point in continuing the struggle in the prisoner of war camp. Nevertheless, Jax backs himself into a corner when he goes along with Colonel Cole's scheme. When he is in "The Pipe," Jax thinks about how bad it is for Maw to lose two of her sons to a war "where we was fighting people that played baseball just like us" (p. 121). But Jax is not a complete pacifist, at least not yet. When the Admiral first visits him in the hospital, Jax's first instinct is to jump up and salute him. But then he stops. He remembers that it was the Japanese who had started the war; it was the Japanese who had put him in "The Pipe"; it was a Japanese who had smashed his face. He chooses not to make any move to salute the Admiral.

In his first real conversation with Jax at his home, the Japanese Admiral comments, “War is a terrible thing” (p. 140). Later, when Jax is talking to the Major, he says, “The Admiral was right, and it ain’t news: war is all the most terrible things rolled up in a great hurricane and turned loose on the world. But I don’t have to tell you that, sir. I see you been there” (p. 142).

The culmination of Jax’s anti-war sentiment grows out of his frustration with both the Admiral and with Yoshi when he fails to talk them out of Yoshi becoming a kamikaze pilot. Jax has come to love Yoshi as a teammate, as a friend, and as a little brother, a love he does not have for his real little brother, Jude. He cannot understand how a father, who obviously loves his son, can essentially murder his son by allowing him to go on a suicide mission. In his account of this to the Major, Jax tells him, “Major, I made up my mind in the Admiral’s front yard that I would never send my son off to war, at least not until the Huns crossed the Mississippi” (p. 156).

**Southern (and beyond) imagery and image-making.** Having set *Fielder’s Choice* in rural Smackover, Arkansas, a town which even today has only about 2,000 inhabitants, Norman drew on the rural Southern white culture of the 1930s and 40s as his backdrop for Jax’s story. The dialect is liberally sprinkled with such Southernisms as “pert near,” “happy as a tick on a speckled pup’s ear,” “chewed the fat,” “toting,” “scared spittleless,” and “fair-to-middling.” Just as in every small Southern town during this time period, the Civil War and the Confederacy are not ancient history, rather, they are an integral part of the fabric of life. This is reflected in many of the names and similes that Norman weaves into Jax’s tale. For example, the woman who is the “Fielders’ (Jugs, Jax, Jude) choice” of a wife is named Dixie, and the deputy sheriff is a man named Bubba. Smackover’s “serious cross-county rival” (p. 21) is Jefferson Davis High. When Jax goes to the Browns’ rookie camp, he describes himself as being “lost as Grant’s Bible” (p. 55). In rookie camp, he is so nervous that his pitches are “wilder than cannonballs at

Gettysburg” (p. 56). Connie White is described as having “been the manager of St. Louis since the Civil War” (p. 67). When he recounts a childhood incident in which he and Jugs are convinced they are going to die of Alabama Spotted Blue-Tick Fever—*the blue plague*—Jax “sat down and started whimpering like a gutshot Yankee” (p. 99). In giving his testimony to the Major about Colonel Cole, Jax observes that “I could tell he was a Yankee quick as he opened the side of his mouth” (p. 116).

Jax is “the spitting image” of a Southern boy, yet like every young man growing up in Smackover, he cannot wait to escape the narrowness of life in the tiny town. Though Jax temporarily moves beyond the narrow geographical confines of southern Arkansas when he goes to St. Louis and later joins the Air Corps, he finds that narrowness is not necessarily geographical and goes far beyond the confines of the South. It is interesting to note that though Jax has been accustomed to allowing others, especially his brother Jugs, to do his thinking for him, and he seems unable to make split-second, under-pressure decisions, he can make some very mature decisions. For example, he decided long ago not to drink or smoke because these habits would get in the way of his dream of pitching for a major league baseball team. He also shows some maturity of thought when he chooses to question labels that are put upon people—either by themselves or by others. For example, Jax chooses to treat with kindness the woman whom his mother labels a “prostitute,” “a woman of the night,” because her husband has had an affair with her. In reality, Lilly is merely a bank clerk. Jax also questions the wartime propaganda that labels *all* Japanese as “yellow, buck-toothed, conniving devils what ate their own young and anybody else’s they could get hold to” (p. 105). This misgiving about the evil nature of all Japanese is reinforced when he witnesses the loving relationship between the Admiral and his son Yoshi.

Jax realizes too that he cannot judge a person strictly by his or her outward behavior or appearance. He finds out that “Curly,” the guard at the Admiral’s house, torments him at every opportunity because of his bitterness at losing his family to Allied bombs. Before the war “Curly” had been an acclaimed comic book artist. Just as “Curly’s” bitterness masks his true self, so also Jude seeks to mask his true self. To the narrow little world of Smackover, Jude presents a “sophisticated” man-about-town image. “He was dressed in a suit, and had a little Clark Gable mustache under his nose—looked like he’d been drinking chocolate milk” (p. 161). Jax is not impressed. Jude’s true nature is evidenced by his evasion of military service, his cheating of returning GIs, and his abuse of Dixie and Little Jackson.

In the final confrontation between Jax and Jude, Jax sees a side of Bubba he has never seen. Bubba does not take advantage of the situation to get even with Jax for a childhood incident as Jax had assumed he would do. Instead, he understands the situation for what it is and Jude for what he is. Bubba’s response in this situation snaps Jax’s conception of him as the stereotypical Southern deputy sheriff named Bubba.

**Motifs.** Motifs are words, characters, objects, images, metaphors, or ideas that recur in a work or several works. There seem to be five major motifs in *Fielder’s Choice*: the pipe motif, the “rat killing” motif, the maggot-eaten kitten motif, the “dropped melon” motif, and the “dropped babies” motif.

The pipe motif occurs at least four times throughout the novel. The first occurrence is in Chapter One when Paw is bent over connecting the hose pipe to the faucet. Jugs, armed with a slingshot and a marble, uses Paw’s backside as a target. Paw takes no prisoners and whips Jugs, Jax, and Jude “with a switch till our bottoms looked like six Jap flags” (p. 12). The pipe motif recurs in Chapter Three when Jax explains to the Major that he got into the majors because of his

gooseball, and his gooseball came from a game he and Jugs played in the pipeyard. The next point at which the pipe motif occurs is in Chapter Twelve when Jax is placed in solitary confinement in “The Pipe” in the Japanese prisoner of war camp. In some ways “The Pipe” is similar to those in the Smackover pipeyard, and it is in here that Jax, once he has decided to live, literally has “pipe dreams” (p. 124) of pitching again in the majors. Finally, the pipe motif occurs again in Chapter Seventeen when Jax spins a yarn for Jude, who prods Jax to tell him what is going on with the Army investigation. Jax does not trust Jude, so he tells him he would get terrible headaches when he was stationed on Tinian. A tail-gunner kept pestering him with questions. One day they found what was left of the tail-gunner, and a bloody pipe was found under Jax’s bed. But Jax swears he has no memory of what happened. Wide-eyed, Jude quickly leaves.

Intertwined with the pipe motif is the “rat killing” motif. The pipeyard pitching game was something Jax and Jugs did in between rat killings. Jax applies this image to Jude in Chapter Nine when he decides that he will “whomp him like a rat at a rat killing” (p. 90) the first time Jude opens his mouth about Jax’s balk. Ironically in Chapter Twelve, Jax himself begins to feel like the rat being killed when he tries to back out of “The Pipe” and Japanese guards whack at his bare bottom with bamboo sticks, and again in Chapter Seventeen when Army investigators are detailing his war crimes.

The maggot-eaten kitten motif first occurs in Chapter Five when Jax recounts a childhood incident in which he found a maggot-eaten kitten, buried it alive, dug it up again, and finally put it out of its misery by hitting it repeatedly with a shovel. The reader is reminded of this incident in Chapter Twelve when Jax feels things crawling on him in “The Pipe,” and his mind keeps

going back to that childhood incident. When he is finally pulled from “The Pipe,” the other prisoners of war look at him in horror the way he had looked at the kitten.

An unusual motif that runs through *Fielder's Choice* in one form or another is the “dropped melon” imagery. This image first occurs in Chapter One when Jugs takes the arrogant Bubba down a peg or two by dropping a melon on Bubba from atop the water tower, embarrassing him in front of the whole high school baseball team. Initially, everyone thinks that Bubba’s “greeny-gray brains flew everywhere” (p. 15). The ball team, the listener (the Major) and the reader, as well as Bubba, have been set up because Jax has already recounted the rumor “they” had heard about Bubba being involved with his father’s death. He tells the Major, “[W]e heard Bubba spent the rest of the afternoon cleaning his father’s brains off the kitchen ceiling”(p. 13).

The “dropped melon” motif also figures prominently in another motif—the “dropped babies” motif. In Chapter Thirteen, as a result of a blow to the head, Jax has a dream in which babies in an apple tree “come falling out of the tree and hit the ground with a sound like a watermelon when it drops off a truck” (p. 130). Jax attempts to catch the babies, but he cannot decide which one(s) to catch, so he catches none of them. The dream recurs in Chapter Fourteen the first night Jax is at the Admiral’s and again after Yoshi, the Admiral’s son, has gone off to become a kamikaze pilot. Just as Jax “dropped” Little Jackson after Jugs’ death, he has dropped another baby, and Yoshi is dead. In Chapter Fifteen, on his way to rejoin the Allies after the war is over, Jax sees a real baby after it has been “dropped” by war, a baby that is literally blown away from the waist down. Its mother is crying for help, but Jax talks himself into believing that the Japanese do not bury their dead. He has dropped another baby, and unlike the maggot-eaten kitten, he does not have the courage to bury it. The final reappearance of the “dropped baby”



motif occurs in Chapter Seventeen when Jax decides to rescue Little Jackson from Jude's abuse. He tells the Major, "I was not going to drop no more babies. I was going to stop Jude, once and for all" (p. 185).

**Foreshadowing.** A close reading of *Fielder's Choice* reveals that Norman allows hints of things to come throughout Jax's narrative. The trick for Norman is not to reveal too much too soon in Jax's retrospective story. There are quite a few incidents of foreshadowing, but there are three major ones on which I wish to focus.

The first major incident in which we see foreshadowing occurs in Chapter Two when Jax pulls a bonehead play in the championship baseball game between Smackover High and Little Rock, allowing Little Rock to win. There is nowhere to hide, and Jax remembers, "I somehow knew I was not going to die nor descend into the bowels of the earth nor get fetched off the mound by an armed escort" (p. 19). Jax's bonehead play that costs Smackover the championship points to the 1941 balk on the mound that costs the St. Louis Browns the pennant. Ironically, Jax *is* fetched off the mound by the Yankees fans, but they are not a friendly escort. This incident in Little Rock also points to Jax's descent into the bowels of "The Pipe" from which he *is* resurrected by the armed "escort" of bombers flying overhead.

The importance of the Smackover pipeyard to Jax's life foreshadows the importance of "The Pipe" in the Japanese prisoner of war camp. It is in the Smackover pipeyard that Jax and Jugs invent the gooseball, the pitch that sets in motion many of the events of Jax's life. This pipeyard pitch enables Jax to realize his "pipe dreams" of pitching in the majors. But the realization of these dreams is short-lived, and Jax eventually winds up in "The Pipe." However, "The Pipe" is the setting for more "pipe dreams." After he is jarred back to life, Jax makes plans to marry Dixie and take care of Little Jackson. He also plans to resume pitching, if not in the

majors then in the minors. If he cannot pitch in the minors, he is going to coach; if he cannot coach, he is going to teach gym. If he cannot do any of this, he will at least teach Little Jackson how to throw the gooseball. He *will* live, and he *will* accomplish something.

The final major incident which foreshadows another crucial event in Jax's life is his becoming a "hero" for the wrong team in the loss to the Yankees. Likewise, Jax is accused by the Army of playing ball for the wrong team while being held prisoner by a Japanese admiral—who just happens to be a Yankee fan who witnessed Jax's infamous balk. Just as he runs away from the Browns after he loses the pennant, Jax also tries to run away from the Army's accusation. Though Jax is a war-weary twenty-two-year-old veteran and not an untried nineteen-year-old adolescent, he has not lost his desire to flee from tough situations. It is a battle, it seems, that Jax will fight all his life.

### **Focused Passages**

Using the rhetorical triangle (shown in Figure 2), as a framework, I chose four passages (See Appendix G for publisher's permission.) to examine for authorial intent and audience interpretation. These passages address the aspects of characterization, motif, theme, and reality devices, and they also emphasize different components of the rhetorical situation: author, audience, topic, and text. I was interested in answering the following questions with these passages:

1. What will Mr. Norman say about his intent with respect to these passages?
2. What will be the response of the students to the passages?
3. Will their response "line up" with the authorial intent as explained by the author in my interviews with him?
4. How will the author respond to the students' responses to these passages?

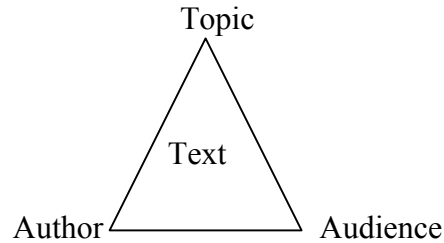


Figure 2. The rhetorical triangle.

**Passage A: Baseball, an orangutan, and Jax’s revelation.** An author’s credibility (his or her *ethos*) is tied to the believability of the characters that he or she develops. For Rick Norman, then, Jax must be believable. I selected the following passage to represent the author end of the triangle because it lends a believability to Jax’s character as he questions the validity of wartime propaganda.

On a bombing mission over downtown Tokyo, Jax notices baseball diamonds:

All at once, I got to thinking that maybe the Japs was human beings. Ever since they bombed Pearl Harbor, we’d been told they was yellow, buck-toothed, conniving devils what ate their own young and anybody else’s they could get a hold to. But if they played baseball, didn’t they *have* to be just a little bit human?

Once, on a long train ride back from somewheres, I asked Neckless how he ever come to take a monkey for a pet. He said he’d been crazy about monkeys since he was a little fellow, and him and his paw used to go every fall to the Louisiana State Fair in Baton Rouge and hang out at the Orangutan Wrestling tent.

To hear him tell it, there was this orangutan about four-and-a-half foot high and four-and-a-half foot wide, weighing in at five hundred pounds or so, with arms six foot long each. Grown men paid ten bucks to go in the cage on the chance they’d win a hundred if they could last three minutes. You didn’t have to pin him or nothing; you didn’t even have to stay *alive*; all you had to do was just keep from getting thowed out. The cage was about fifteen foot around and six foot high with a big creosote pole in the middle holding up the tent. The pole was wore a little thin toward the bottom.

There wasn’t but two ways to win the prize money, which no one ever done in all the years Neckless went to the fair. You could run around like a chicken with its head cut off—but the ape was quicker and it wouldn’t be long before you was flying over the bars hoping to land on the fattest man in the bleachers. The other way was to latch on to the pole with all four sets of nails—but it wouldn’t be long before the monkey pried you loose and sent you sailing. If you hung on *too* tight, you run the risk of the monkey tearing off a loose body part, which tended to break a man’s concentration.

When you paid your money to wrestle, the monkey man give you a yellow coat to wear supposedly so as you wouldn’t ruin your clothes, but really it was how he made the

monkey patriotic. Neckless said as time went by they give you a football helmet, too, because the monkey got lazy and figured out if he just tore off a ear, chances were the human being would climb out the ring on his own.

Neckless said he quit going altogether after he snuck into the tent early one afternoon and seen the monkey man training the poor old orangutan. Seems he would put on the yellow coat and the helmet and whup the chained-up ape with a baseball bat.

I know the Japs picked the fight with us and no doubt there was some bad ones amongst 'em. Still, I got to thinking that all that yellow-devil talk about how evil they all was might be somebody's way of putting the yellow coat on them. (Norman, 1991, pp. 105-107)

**Passage B: Dropped babies.** I selected another passage to illustrate Mr. Norman's rhetorical connection to the audience—the audience end of the triangle. In this example, he makes the pathetic appeal (*pathos*) to connect with his audience on an emotional level. In literary terms, this emotional appeal is also called *pathos* (quality in drama, speech, literature, music, or events that arouses pity or sadness). It involves the baby motif discussed earlier.

When Jax blacks out after a Japanese guard shatters his face with a blow from a rifle, he dreams he has died. The passage that follows is part of that dream:

As I come up under the tree, I seen the most terrible sight. There was dead babies lying all under the tree. There was live babies in amongst the branches. The branches was loaded with babies and apples. The babies would reach for the apples, and when the stem would turn loose, the babies would come falling out of the tree and hit the ground with a sound like a watermelon when it drops off a truck. It made me sick.

I couldn't let them babies die. I seen one start to fall, and I went after him, hoping to catch him before he hit. But as he fell, I caught sight of another baby closer to me, and I forgot the first one and went after him. Then I heard one crying louder, and went for him, forgetting the one before. It was raining babies, and I couldn't catch a *one* because I couldn't make up my mind which one to catch. So I caught none. They just fell all around me. After a few minutes of doing no good at all, I started crying myself, but I couldn't give up. I kept trying, and I'd always get distracted. One baby hit right at my feet. I bent down over his crumpled little body, and I was crying hard as an April rain. My face started hurting. (Norman, 1991, pp. 129-130)

**Passage C: Love is all.** A third passage emphasizes the topic end of the triangle—the “lesson” which he seems to be desirous of “teaching” his audience. As I have previously discussed in the section on theme, Rick Norman seems to emphasize that choices must be made

for the right reason, and that reason is love. By using the term “reason,” he seems to appeal to the inherent logic (*logos*) of this “lesson.”

Jax begins the conclusion of his defense to the Major with these words:

I’ve had a thousand choices to make in my time. It took me twenty-three years to figure out that a fellow’s got little control as to whether a choice he makes turns out to be the right one. All he can do is make sure he done it for the right reason. And there’s not but one reason. Same one why your mama sat up with you when you had the croup; same one why your pappy rubbed your head when he come home; same one why you let your dog lick you on the mouth. Love is all. (Norman, 1991, p. 191)

**Passage D: Newspaper epilogue.** This final passage seems to illustrate Mr. Norman’s attention to the form of the text itself—the center of the triangle. As illustrated in my earlier discussion of the author’s use of reality devices, he seems to use this particular textual form of a news report to assert the veracity of his story.

#### Gooseball Flies Again

WASHINGTON, Sept. 4, 1966 (MNS)—Major league baseball and the U.S. Air Force took a long overdue step to correct a twenty-year-old injustice when they co-sponsored a Fan Appreciation Day for Andrew Jackson “Gooseball” Fielder before the Yankee-Senators game today.

As a rookie reliever for the St. Louis Browns during the 1941 American League pennant race, Fielder became an overnight sensation throwing his patented “gooseball,” described by one contemporary sportswriter as an “underhand riser-curve.”

His instant fame turned to infamy just as quickly when he balked home the winning run for the Yankees in the Browns’ final game of the ’41 season. Fielder’s balk gave the American League pennant to the Yanks, who went on to take the World Series from Brooklyn.

Along with DiMaggio’s 56-game hitting streak and Williams’ .406 batting average, Fielder’s fatal mistake made 1941 one of the most memorable years in baseball.

Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor later that year, Fielder enlisted in the then Army Air Corps, becoming a gunner on a B-29. Highly publicized allegations of treasonous conduct while a prisoner of war in Japan resulted in Fielder being blacklisted by the major leagues in 1946. Although a formal investigation conducted by the Army found no substance to the allegations, Fielder was never again allowed to play professional baseball.

Commissioner of Baseball William D. Eckert, retired lieutenant general of the Air Force, is credited with having arranged the ceremonies, which included presenting Fielder with an apology and the Air Force Medal of Valor. Also on hand for the ceremonies were Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey; Governor Orval E. Faubus of Arkansas, Fielder’s home state; Mayor Ernest Musso of Toledo, Ohio, Fielder’s mentor

earlier in 1941 when they played for the Toledo Mudhens; and a number of teammates from the 1941 St. Louis Browns.

Fielder, now 44 and somewhat heavier than his playing weight, evoked a hearty laugh from the capacity crowd when he stumbled in the middle of delivering the opening pitch, a move reminiscent of the infamous balk immortalized in familiar newsreel footage. He received a standing ovation when he delivered a reasonable facsimile of his gooseball into the strike zone to start the game.

Also in attendance was Fielder's 24-year-old adopted son and namesake, Andrew Jackson Fielder II, who just completed a successful third season with the Yankees' AA farm club in Columbus after an All-American stint at the University of Arkansas.

When asked for a reaction to his son pitching one day for the Browns' archrival, the Yankees, Fielder said, "I spent all those years trying to teach him how to throw my gooseball and I reckon I ought to have been teaching him how to keep better company." (Norman, 1991, epilogue)

### **Methods of Data Collection**

In this section I describe my methods of data collection. Data that were collected included the following: students' written responses to *Fielder's Choice* and to the specific passages I have detailed above; two interviews with Mr. Norman; an interview with each of the five student participants; an e-mail interview with Judith Faust, editor of *Fielder's Choice*; a written response by Mr. Norman to the students' responses; an interactive interview between Mr. Norman and four of the students; and records and documents provided by Mr. Norman as well as reviews taken from Amazon.com.

### **Students' Written Responses to Text**

The students who participated in the study read and responded in writing to *Fielder's Choice*. The initial time frame for the students to read and respond was from March 28, 2001, to April 6, 2001. They were given most of the fifty-minute class period during that time to read and respond, but they were encouraged to read outside the classroom as well. Because a number of school activities were occurring during that time period, I extended the deadline until Monday, April 9, 2001. In reality, the last of the responses was not given to me until April 12, 2001. In a journal, which was provided for them, they wrote responses approximately one page in length to

each chapter. Each chapter response was headed with the date and the chapter number. These responses were free; that is, there were no prompts to guide the thinking of the students since I did not want to interfere with their natural responses. However, these responses were monitored to make sure responses were made after each chapter. Focused written responses to designated passages were also elicited (in addition to the chapter-by-chapter responses) from the students. These too were approximately the same length as the chapter responses and were also free responses. In addition to the journal entries, students were also asked to make notes in the book as they read. Students were given some class time to do their responses, but some of the reading and responses took place outside the classroom. Below are the directions which were given to the students:

1. Before you begin reading *Fielder's Choice*, read the front and back covers, the dedication page, and the last page containing a brief note about the author. In your journal, write a page or more of response and predictions of what you expect from this novel and its author.
2. As you read, make brief written responses and interpretations in the book. These responses can be in the form of notes, questions, exclamations, and so forth.
3. Throughout the novel, I have marked special passages with red dots—two at the beginning and a line at the end of the passage—and labeled the passages A, B, C, D. When you come to a marked passage, pay special attention to it. After reading a marked passage, respond to and interpret it in your journal—before continuing to read. Date and label your journal responses “Passage A” and so forth. Responses and interpretations should be a page or more in length. These are free responses, so there will be no prompts to guide your thinking.
4. After reading each chapter, write a page or more of responses and interpretations. Each chapter response must be headed with the date and the chapter number. Again, these are free responses so there will be no prompts to guide your thinking.

### **Interviews with the Author**

Qualitative researchers make use of a variety of techniques in interviewing depending upon their purpose, but there are three basic choices: the informal conversational interview

(questions are not determined a priori and simply emerge naturally from the conversation), the general interview guide approach (topics and issues are determined a priori but specific questions and wording are not predetermined), and the standardized open-ended interview (exact questions and sequencing are determined a priori). In the two interviews that I conducted with the author in my case study, I used the general interview guide rather than the conversational interview or the standardized open-ended interview. The general interview guide technique was most appropriate for my purposes because it enabled me to think through the topics of the interviews in advance; thus, I was able to accomplish, as Patton (1990) advised, the best possible use of the limited amount of time I had to interview the author. The general interview guide also gave me the flexibility I needed to keep the interview conversational and to pursue unanticipated relevant issues which came up. For these author interviews, I used a modified version of Patton's typology of questions. These questions incorporated the funnel technique; that is, the questions began with broad areas before narrowing to specifics. The primary focus of the first interview was to get to know Rick Norman as a person and as an author. In the second interview, I focused almost entirely on various aspects of the author-audience relationship. Below are some of the topics that I used when interviewing the author using the general interview guide approach.

Topics from the first interview included the following: Norman's connections to baseball, his family, his body of work, reviews and others' interviews about *Fielder's Choice* and him, his development as an author, his perception of his young-adult audience, his experiences in speaking to young-adult audiences, the connections between writing for and speaking to young-adult audiences, his opinion of critical choices facing young adults today. (See Appendix A for more details on the first interview with the author.)



Topics from the second interview with Mr. Norman included the following: the different audiences for *Fielder's Choice*, his perspective of the audience when writing *Cross Body Block*, the author's awareness of audience, audience-related difficulties while writing both novels, solutions to audience-related difficulties, authorial intentions for each of the specific passages to which the students responded, the author's relationship with a Southern audience (Southern references in both *Fielder's Choice* and *Cross Body Block*), his fictional audience, and changes from the original manuscript. (See Appendix A for more details on the second interview with the author.)

Each of the two interviews, which took place in settings of the author's choosing, lasted approximately ninety minutes. The first interview took place on Thursday, March 29, 2001, in an empty office on the ground floor at Manillis Academy in Limer, Louisiana, and extended from approximately 10:30 A.M. until noon. The second interview took place on Tuesday, April 24, 2001, in the Rapides Parish Library in downtown Alexandria, Louisiana, from 1:30 P. M. until 3:00 P. M. During each of the two interviews, I audiotaped and took handwritten notes. These handwritten notes were particularly critical for my first interview since approximately halfway through the interview the taperecorder malfunctioned. We did manage to get it working again, but I was missing a good portion of the interview on tape. However, I was able to fill in the gaps from my notes.

### **Interviews with Students**

Each student participant took part in one interview as a follow-up to the written responses. For these interviews too, I used taperecording. In addition, I took notes during the interviews. These conversational interviews took place in my classroom at Manillis Academy and lasted approximately forty-five minutes. The questions in these interviews were aimed at

gaining extensions to the students' written responses. As with the interviews with the author, I used the general interview guide. Prior to the interviews, I did an initial analysis of the students' responses, using Glaser and Strauss's (1967) constant comparative method, and the topics of the interviews reflected this analysis. For the most part, these questions focused upon the following areas: (1) response to the dialect of the narrator; (2) specific issues raised in *Fielder's Choice* to which they responded (e.g., making choices, family relationships, war); (3) overall response to the main character and to the text; (4) perception of their relationship to the author.

Immediately after the recorded interview, I reviewed the tapes and the notes, searching for ambiguity and uncertainty, and checking the quality of the information. It was also important for me to clarify with the respondent any areas of ambiguity and uncertainty. After the interview I also recorded my observations about the interview: who, when, where, the relationship between myself and the interviewee, my role in the interview, and so on. As Patton (1990) has pointed out, "This period after an interview or observation is a critical time of reflection and elaboration. It is a time of quality control to guarantee that the data obtained will be useful, reliable, and valid" (p. 353).

### **Written Interview with Judith Faust**

I contacted by e-mail Judith Faust, who edited *Fielder's Choice* for the publisher, August House. She agreed to be interviewed. She did, however, have reservations about how thorough or trustworthy her memories of the editing would be since it had been over ten years since she edited the book. On the other hand, I did have access to some of her correspondence with Rick Norman during the editing process. Because I used e-mail to interview Judith Faust, I used the standardized open-ended interview format in which the questions and their order are prepared a priori. Prior to the interview, I had read some correspondence between her and Rick Norman that

the author had shown me. Based upon this correspondence and also upon the interviews I had already done with Rick Norman, I focused upon the following topics in the interview: perception of the audience of *Fielder's Choice*, audience consideration in the style of the author, audience-related difficulties and solutions, role of the audience in editing the dialect, changes in the original manuscript, use of Mr. Norman's manuscript to teach young writers. (See Appendix A for more details of the interview with the editor.)

### **Author's Responses**

In addition to the "face-to-face" interviews with the author and students, I mailed copies of the students' responses to the author. These were copies of responses contained in their journals. At this point, Mr. Norman did not know the pseudonym or gender of any of the student respondents. I typed each student's responses and identified him or her only as Student #1, #2, #3, #4, or #5. Mr. Norman had the freedom to respond as he wished. He chose to respond by writing general comments to all the student "reviewers" and then to each of the students individually. I received his responses via e-mail. I then distributed a copy of the general comments to each of the student participants. Each student also received a copy of the comments that were directed specifically to him or her.

### **Interactive Interview Between Author and Audience**

After I received the author's responses to the students' responses, I arranged to have four of the student participants meet with the author. The fifth student was unable to participate in the meeting. The dialogue of this interactive session focused upon the students' responses to both the text of *Fielder's Choice* and to the author himself as well as the author's relationship with this particular audience and his authorial intentions. This meeting took place on Wednesday, May 9, 2001, on a university campus. The session lasted approximately ninety minutes, from

3:00 P. M. to 4:30 P. M. During this meeting I took notes and audiotaped and videotaped the interactions between the author and the students. The videotaping was done by the mother of one of the student participants. The students were aware that this mother would be with us, and there were no objections. This mother was very discreet and understood the need to protect the anonymity of the students. The data were then transcribed from both the audiotape and the videotape. At one point, the audiocassette ran out of tape, and this was not discovered for approximately thirty minutes. However, the videotape filled in this gap. Each of the participants was given a copy of the transcript and asked to check the accuracy of his or her part in the discussion before returning the transcript to me. Though there was no way for me to record everything in my notes, I used Merriam's (1998) checklist of things to observe: the physical setting, the participants, activities and interactions, conversation, and subtle factors.

This interactive session was relaxed and informal, and my role was primarily that of an observer. According to Patton (1990), experienced observers often use "sensitizing concepts" to help orient fieldwork. "Sensitizing concepts provide a basic framework highlighting the importance of certain kinds of events, activities, and behaviors" (p. 216). For example, the sensitizing concepts that I used included the following taken from Merriam's (1998) list: activities and interactions, conversation, subtle factors. (See Appendix B for sample observation chart.)

Because Mr. Norman had experience speaking with students, I gave him the freedom to conduct this session as I observed the interaction between him and the students. Occasionally I would interject a comment or he would draw me into the interaction to explain more about the study I was conducting.

## **Records and Documents**

Mr. Norman gave me access to a wealth of records and documents which I used in my research. These documents included: the pre-publication manuscript of *Fielder's Choice*, a multitude of book reviews from around the country (e.g., *Publishers Weekly*, *Kirkus Reviews*, *Bloomsbury Review*, *Southern Living*, *USA Today*, *School Library Journal*), published interviews with the author, articles about the author, notes from his editor at August House, August House promotionals, a paper on *Fielder's Choice* written by Professor Douglas A. Noverr (1992) at Michigan State University, a teaching guide to *Fielder's Choice* and to *Cross Body Block* (written by the author), an unpublished screenplay of *Fielder's Choice*, and copies of the radio scripts. To these documents I added the online reviews found at Amazon.com. These materials provided additional information about Mr. Norman's relations with his audience.

## **Timeline for Data Collection**

The timeline and procedures were as follows:

1. Students read and responded in writing to *Fielder's Choice* and to selected passages from *Fielder's Choice*. (March 28-April 12)
2. I conducted the first interview with the author during the time period in which the students were responding to the novel. (March 29)
3. I did an initial analysis of the students' written responses. (Approximate time frame—April 2-April 14)
4. I mailed the students' responses to the author. Mr. Norman responded as he wished to the students' responses. He then e-mailed his responses back to me. (Approximate time frame April 15-May 1)
5. I did the student interviews. (April 10-April 26)

6. I conducted the second interview with the author. (April 24)
7. I held the interactive session between the author and four students. (May 9)
8. The editor responded by e-mail to questions I had sent her. (July 27)

### **Methods of Data Analysis**

Two very thorough approaches to content analysis are available in the constant comparative method of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and in the developmental research sequence of Spradley (1979). I utilized a blend of both these methods for the analyses of the following data: transcripts of the interviews with the author, his written responses to the students' responses, the students' written responses, the interviews with the students, and the interactive meeting between the author and four students. The rhetorical triangle was the framework upon which I based my analyses. The question of Mr. Norman's concept of audience connects the bases of the rhetorical triangle, author and audience. An author's concept of audience informs both topic and text (e.g., Berkenkotter, 1981; Flower & Hayes, 1981a, 1981b; Kirsch, 1990). The question of how members of the audience responded to *Fielder's Choice* connected all aspects of the rhetorical triangle: topic, author, audience, and text. The question of how the audience's responses related to the author's stated intentions also connected all aspects of the rhetorical triangle.

I began my analyses with the constant comparative method, unitizing the data by breaking it into manageable units and categorizing these units of data. The units of data were generally "chunks" such as sentences or several sentences. For example, in utilizing the constant comparative method of analyzing a student's written responses, I would take the following "chunk" and categorize it. "I like the fact that the characters are from New Orleans and the South in general. I think this will make them easier to identify with." Initially, based upon my tacit knowledge, I categorized this "chunk" as "identification with character" and as "Southern

connection.” This “chunk” refers to the characters that the author has created; thus, in the final analysis, I placed it in the “author” category of the rhetorical triangle, since one way an author gains credibility is through the credibility of his or her characters. Once I had performed the constant comparative analysis, I found it helpful to do a taxonomic analysis (Spradley, 1979) in the form of an outline. For the observational data, I utilized only the taxonomic analysis since the categories had been established a priori. Neither the artifacts supplied by the author nor the information supplied by Judith Faust was formally analyzed since they were used as background or supplementary information only. In the following sections, I explain more explicitly the analysis codes and the methods I used.

### **Written Responses and Interview Data**

Below are the analysis codes which I used to analyze the data generated by transcripts of the interviews with the author, his written responses to the students’ responses, the students’ written responses, the interviews with the students, and the interactive meeting between the author and four students. The defined and general audience categories are derived from the “addressed” and “invoked” terms used by Ede and Lunsford (1984). According to them, an “addressed” audience is a concrete audience that exists outside the text; the writer has knowledge of this audience’s attitudes, beliefs, and expectations and addresses these. The “invoked” audience is imagined by the writer. The writer cannot know the reality of the audience in the way speakers can, so the writer invokes the role for the reader via the text. I prefer to use the terms “defined” and “general,” however, because as I was combing through the data using the constant comparative method, I found that the “invoked” and “addressed” terms did not work for me. These terms are not mutually exclusive since a writer cannot fully know the attitudes, beliefs, and expectations of his or her “addressed” audience. The topic, author, audience, and

text categories are based upon the rhetorical triangle, as are all of the analyses, which I discussed earlier.

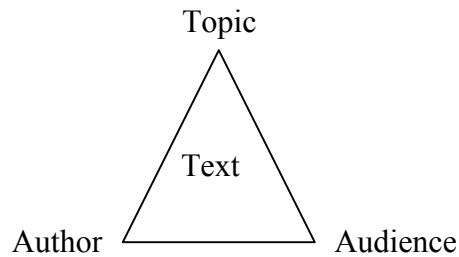


Figure 3. The rhetorical triangle.

### **Analysis Codes**

In this section, I describe my coding categories, organized by the question I was attempting to answer for the data being analyzed.

#### **Categories for Norman’s Conception of Audience**

##### **What was, and is, Rick Norman’s conception of the audience of *Fielder’s Choice*?**

**Defined audience:** the specific audience(s) that the writer has in mind during one or more of the recursive writing processes—pre-text, transcription, editing (by self and others). The writer has some limited knowledge about the specific characteristics of this audience, but this knowledge is filtered through the writer’s own perception. Categories of Mr. Norman’s defined audience which emerged from the data of the interviews are **young adults, adults other than self, and self**. Subcategories of young adults included the following:

**Young adults limited in literary experience:** young adults who do not like to read and consequently have difficulty following dialogue and plot twists; young adults who need to be hooked into reading through humor.



**Young adults limited in worldly experience and knowledge:** young adults limited in understanding how to cope with personal problems and resulting feelings of isolation; young adults limited in knowledge of World War Two and baseball.

**Young adults able to distinguish reality from fiction:** young adults able to detect reality devices used by authors to create realistic fiction.

Subcategories of adults (other than self) which emerged are:

**Adult friends and acquaintances:** those whom Mr. Norman knew prior to and during the process of writing *Fielder's Choice*.

**Adults plagued by the memory of their mistakes:** this focuses on, but may not be limited to, those who committed major errors during sports competition.

Subcategories of self which emerged are:

**Self plagued by the memory of his mistake:** the self plagued by the memory of an error committed during sports competition.

**Teenage self:** the seventeen-year-old Rick Norman.

**Students in the study:** a special defined audience comprised of the student participants in the study as a whole rather than individually.

Subcategories of the author's conception of his relationship to the student audience (applied to the student audience as a whole rather than individually) which emerged from the written responses of the author and the interactive interview are (in order of author to audience):

**Teacher/parent to students/children:** an audience to be "taught" or "parented."

**Mea Culpa "apologist" to "offended":** an audience to be "apologized" to when they were "offended" as expressed by confusion or "negative" comments.

**“Apprentice” writer to “expert” readers:** an audience to be “mined” for answers to the author’s questions about what readers want from an author.

**Teacher/defendant to students/“plaintiffs”:** an audience to be “taught” and “justifications” made to when they “complained.”

**General audience:** what may be termed a “generic” audience. This is a non-specific audience that is outside the targeted audience. The writer has some limited knowledge about the general characteristics of this audience, but this general knowledge is also filtered through the writer’s own perception.

### **Categories for Audience’s Responses**

**How do members of the audience—specifically five high school students— respond to *Fielder’s Choice*?**

The students’ written responses were coded according to the following categories. Although there are “subcategories” (for example, anger, sympathy, and so forth, for the *audience* category), I chose not to subdivide the topic, author, audience, text in a formal manner. Instead, these “subcategories” are addressed in discussion of the students’ responses case by case and in discussion of the students’ responses as a group.

**Topic:** topics in *Fielder’s Choice* included themes (for example, making choices, war). An author will sometimes appeal to the inherent logic (logos) of the topic.

**Author:** Rick Norman himself; the character(s) the author creates. One way in which an author of fiction appeals to his or her own credibility—ethos—is through the credibility of the character(s) he or she creates (cf. Shanahan, 1998).

**Audience:** appeal to the emotion(s) of the audience. One way in which an author of fiction appeals to audience is through emotion (pathos); (for example, “I do not like;” “When he gets ready to pitch, my stomach gets in knots;” “sadness;” “not very likeable;” “awful”).

**Text:** features of the text (for example, foreshadowing, newspaper format, dialect, reality devices, use of the Major as a pseudo-audience, the opening and ending of the novel, pace).

### **Categories for Audience’s Responses to Author’s Intentions**

#### **How do the audience’s responses relate to the author’s intentions?**

Because an author’s intentions are directly related to an author’s perception of his or her audience, I used Mr. Norman’s perceptions of his audiences—defined and general—as my categories for the data (interviews with the author, students’ responses in book notes, journals, follow-up interview, interactive interview) relating to this question. Since Mr. Norman’s perceptions of his adult audience and his audience of self did not directly apply to the students’ responses, I limited my categories and definitions (based upon Rick Norman’s perceptions) to the following:

**Young adults limited in literary experience:** young adults who do not like to read and consequently have difficulty following dialogue and plot twists; children who need to be hooked into reading through humor.

**Young adults limited in worldly experience and knowledge:** young adults limited in understanding how to cope with personal problems and resulting feelings of isolation; young adults limited in knowledge of World War Two and baseball.

**Young adults able to distinguish reality from fiction:** young adults able to detect reality devices used by authors to create realistic fiction.

**General “generic” reader:** a reader who wants things causally connected, wants the author to enable him or her to connect seemingly unconnected concepts and ideas via a new twist, and wants characters who are either extremely interesting or extremely likeable.

Analysis of the transcription of the interviews and written responses began with the individual cases (i.e., author, editor, each student participant). After analysis of the individual cases, I then did a cross-case analysis by grouping together responses from Mr. Norman and the five students to the focused passages and analyzing different perspectives on central issues (Patton, 1990). The analysis of the different perspectives made use of Spradley’s (1980) componential analysis.

### **Observational Data**

Analysis of the observational data (generated from the session between Mr. Norman and four students) was accomplished with a taxonomic analysis (developmental research sequence). I did not use the constant comparative method because those data were categorized a priori. The categories were based primarily upon the sensitizing concepts, borrowed from Merriam (1998), that guided my observation notes—physical setting, participants, action and interaction, conversation, and subtle factors. The “physical setting” category refers to a description of the room, equipment, seating arrangements, and any other physical characteristics that were pertinent to analysis of the interactive interview. The “participants” category identifies the participants by name or pseudonym and describes their roles. The “action and interaction” category describes such behavior as the laughter and eye contact between the author and the students and between students. The “conversation” category refers to conversation between the author and students and between students. The “subtle factor” category describes such things as the body language of participants and the general atmosphere.

### **Artifacts Supplied by the Author**

I chose not to do a formal analysis of the artifacts supplied by the author because the focus of my case study was the relationship between the five high school students I had chosen and Mr. Norman rather than his general audience. Instead, I read through them a number of times in preparation for the interviews which I conducted with both the author and the editor. Consequently, some of the questions in the interviews with Mr. Norman and Ms. Faust reflect the background information which I gleaned from these artifacts.

### **Verification Steps**

**Credibility (internal validity).** To establish credibility, I employed such means as disclosure of researcher biases, prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reflecting upon and disclosing any experiences, biases, or prejudices which may have influenced my relationship to respondents and interpretation of data was important. I needed to be aware of those areas in my life and the limitations they may impose upon my ability to be a neutral (Patton, 1990) researcher, and these were recorded in a computer file which I labeled Case Study Notes. However, it is impossible as human beings to be completely neutral; thus, it was imperative to include in the data any impediments to neutrality.

The first major “bias” which I must disclose is my Christian world view. It is through this view, which holds that God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is the Creator and Source of Love, Truth, Reality, Meaning, and Salvation, that I consciously try to filter everything. It is a view which also sees every human being as created in God’s image—though an image marred by human sin—and as such is of infinite value. This world view most certainly impacted my relationship to respondents and my interpretation of data.

A second factor, particularly in my relationship with respondents, is that I am a “native” of the parish in which the study was conducted and a graduate of Manillis Academy. As such, I am a participant-observer of the Southern setting which plays a dominant role in both *Fielder’s Choice* and *Cross Body Block*. In addition, the first nine years of my teaching career were spent at Manillis Academy. During this time, I taught the uncle of one of the student respondents. I also have a close relationship with the parents of one of the student participants and am acquainted with at least some of the family members (besides the uncle of one of the respondents) of the other “natives” who participated in the study. The fact that each of the student participants was a member of my English class also had to play a role in my relationship with them. There were times, particularly in the interviews, when I knew some were trying to give the “right” answer even though I was trying to convey that there were no “right” answers.

Prolonged engagement in the field, taking whatever time is necessary to gather the data, was another means of establishing credibility. I began the initial analysis of *Fielder’s Choice* and *Cross Body Block* in December 2000 and collected the final data from the editor in late July 2001. Within this seven-month time frame, various aspects of the research project were ongoing. The students’ reading and responding to *Fielder’s Choice* covered a period of sixteen days—from March 28-April 12 (though the original deadline given to the students was April 6). During the same period in which the students were reading and responding to the novel, I conducted my first interview with Mr. Norman (March 29). As each student turned in his or her novel and journal, I began the initial analysis of the responses prior to the interview with each student. Within a few days after I received the last book and journal from the student participants on April 12, I mailed the typewritten student responses to Mr. Norman. His responses to the students’ responses were e-mailed to me on May 1. The interviews with the students took place

over sixteen days—from April 10-April 26. Within this same time period, I conducted my second interview with Mr. Norman (April 24). On May 9, the interactive session between Mr. Norman and four of the students took place. Within approximately two weeks of this interactive session, I mailed a thirty-five-page transcript to each of the participants to check for accuracy. I received the last corrected transcript in early July. In June I received from Mr. Norman a copy of his screenplay, and in late July I received a copy of his radio shorts. In late July I also received from Judith Faust, the editor, an e-mail response to my interview questions.

Triangulation—looking at a research problem from different angles—was achieved by using different data collection modes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)—interviews, observation, and document analysis. Member checks were also performed throughout the data collection and data analysis processes. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that this process, in which the researcher tests the adequacy of field results with those from whom the data were originally collected, is the most crucial for establishing credibility. Member checks consisted of the following activities: (1) clarifying with respondents (responding to the text or to interview questions) any areas of ambiguity and uncertainty; (2) providing respondents with transcripts of interviews and asking them to check their accuracy; (3) providing the author (Rick Norman) and editor (Judith Faust) with my analyses and requesting their feedback.

**Dependability/consistency (reliability).** The techniques which I used to achieve dependability were triangulation (interviews, observation, document analysis) and the audit trail. Lincoln and Guba (1985) advocate the use of the audit trail to establish dependability and confirmability (as well as credibility) and explain that the function of the auditor(s) is to examine both the *process* and the *product* (data, findings, interpretations, recommendations) of the inquiry. The items which I included in my audit trail were raw data (e.g., electronically recorded

materials, field notes), data reduction and analysis products (e.g., write-ups of field notes, summaries), data reconstruction and synthesis products (e.g., structure of categories, findings and conclusions), process notes (e.g., methodological notes, audit trail notes), materials relating to intentions and dispositions (e.g., inquiry proposal, personal notes), and instrument development information (e.g., interview guides, observation formats).

Professor Nancy Nelson, who was very familiar with the nature of my study, served as my auditor. I made her aware of my record-keeping system, and she was familiar with the audit trail as it actually materialized. Confirmability was assessed by checking to see if my findings were grounded in the data. Logic of inferences, utility of the category structure, researcher bias, appropriateness of inquiry decisions, and any methodological shifts were monitored.

### **Transferability (Generalizability/External Validity)**

Robert Stake (1978) pointed out that the purpose of an inquiry is to benefit a certain audience, to help persons toward further understandings of social problems and social programs. Since the aim of my study was to extend understanding of the role of an author-audience relationship as it pertains to the writing process, my audience is primarily teachers and students of writing. It was my job in writing this document to communicate in such a way that those reading my work can identify with the experiences of those who participated in my case study. It was my aim that my description provide a useful understanding, a full and thorough knowledge of my particular case study, so that my audience can take my research and apply it in new and different contexts—what Stake (1978) calls *naturalistic generalization* [italics in the original].

At the heart of Stake's *naturalistic generalization* and what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call transferability is the use of "thick description," a term adapted to ethnographic inquiry by Clifford Geertz (1973) from Gilbert Ryle's two philosophic essays, "Thinking and Reflecting"



and “The Thinking of Thoughts,” which were reprinted in the second volume of Ryle’s *Collected Papers* (1971). It is this thick, multi-layered description which will allow my audience to achieve transfer. In my description, I tried to provide the widest possible range of information without digressing into the mundane and trivial.

My guideline for the description of the author-audience relationship between Rick Norman and five young adults as audience was Denzin’s (1989) explanation of what is contained in thick description:

A thick description does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard. (p. 83)

## CHAPTER 4: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AUTHOR RICK NORMAN AND HIS AUDIENCE

With this study, I sought to build upon past research into how an author's conception of audience affects the writing of a text (e.g., Berkenkotter, 1981; Ede & Lunsford, 1984; Flower and Hayes, 1981a, 1981b; Kirsch, 1990; Roth, 1987; Rubin, 1998), how the author-audience relationship affects the reading of a text (e.g., Bazerman, 1985; Geisler, 1991; Graves & Frederiksen, 1991; Haas, 1994; Wineburg, 1991), and how students respond to authorial intentions (e.g., Miall & Kuiken, 1995; Vipond & Hunt, 1984). I tried to blend these three foci in order to understand more fully the complexity of the author-audience relationship. In this chapter I present the findings of my case study based upon the three questions which I attempted to answer: (1) What was, and is, Rick Norman's conception of the audience of *Fielder's Choice*? (2) How do members of the audience—specifically five high school students—respond to *Fielder's Choice*? (3) How do the audience's responses relate to the author's intentions?

### **Rick Norman's Conception of the Audience of *Fielder's Choice***

In general, studies of authors' conception of audience have shown that a writer may view his or her audience as self (e.g., Roth, 1987; Rubin, 1998), real (concrete or "addressed") or imagined ("invoked") (Ede & Lunsford, 1984), single or multiple (e.g., Rubin, 1998), or evolving (Roth, 1987). The amount of time writers spend considering audience varies, but many studies (e.g., Berkenkotter, 1981; Flower & Hayes, 1981b; Roth, 1987) show that audience consideration is recursive, occurring throughout the writing processes, so that there is an ongoing awareness of the audience on the part of the author. Studies also seem to show that a writer's attention to, and perceived relationship with, his or her audience directly affects other aspects of

composing, such as task representation, idea generation, goals, and word choice (e.g., Berkenkotter, 1981; Flower & Hayes, 1981a, 1981b; Kirsch, 1990).

What was, and is, Rick Norman's conception of the audience of *Fielder's Choice*? The data used to answer this question were derived from my two interviews with Rick Norman and from his written responses to the students' journals, as well as from e-mail messages to me and to Ms. Faust, the editor of *Fielder's Choice*.

In reply to my asking Mr. Norman about his conception of the audience of *Fielder's Choice* during my first interview with him, he prefaced his answer by saying that he really did not know what the audience actually is. However, he replied that his perception was that of an audience that is “mostly male, mostly athletic, mostly fifteen-seventeen years old who have been forced to read a book, and they picked it for some reason” (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001). In addition to this defined audience, it seems that he also had a defined audience of adults and of self in mind as well as a general “generic” audience. (See Appendix C for a taxonomic outline.) In this section I describe Mr. Norman's perception of his audiences—defined and general—and his perception of the students in the study.

### **Defined Audience: Young Adults**

*Fielder's Choice* began life as audiotaped advice from Rick Norman to his two older children when he thought he might have terminal cancer. Mr. Norman never finished his audiotaped advice to his own children and did not have cancer, but this advice evolved over the course of five years into short stories and finally into *Fielder's Choice*, written for other young people as well as his own children. These “others” included friends of his children. After the editing process began, he decided to change the names of some of the characters to reflect their

names. For example, Dampf and McNulty, two minor characters in the book, were named after friends of his children.

**Young adults limited in literary experience.** Mr. Norman's stated target audience for *Fielder's Choice* was "kids who don't like to read" (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001). He himself graduated from high school with less than a 2.0 and "was proud to have graduated without having read a book" (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001). However, when he was introduced to the wry, tongue-in-cheek humor of Jean Shepherd, the author of *Wanda Hickey's Night of Golden Memories, and Other Disasters* (1971) and *The Ferrari in the Bedroom* (1972), at the age of seventeen and spent time reading when sitting in a hospital room with his dying father, Mr. Norman realized that reading could be a source of pleasure. Consequently, he aimed his writing at young people who do not read. His stated intent was that "there would be enough in there that was funny to keep them going until they got wrapped up in the story" (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001) and would actually end up finishing the book. Because he perceived that his targeted audience was limited in literary experience, Mr. Norman worried that these young adults would not be able to follow the dialogue and plot twists. He surmised that, instead, they would have to rely upon what literary techniques they may have picked up from "sitcoms and TV shows and movies" (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001).

**Young adults limited in worldly experience and knowledge.** In addition to being limited in literary experience, the young adult audience that Mr. Norman imagined were also limited in worldly experience and knowledge, particularly when it came to dealing with personal problems and feelings of isolation. He himself had struggled with problems and feelings of aloneness, but as he grew older he discovered that philosophers "2500 years ago . . . were

struggling with some of the same stuff” (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001). His protagonist, Jax, in *Fielder’s Choice* is a character who struggles with problems and really does not know what to do. Having had the opportunity to talk to various young adult readers of *Fielder’s Choice* prior to my study, Mr. Norman felt that his audience empathized with Jax, saying in effect, “Yeah, I feel the same way sometimes” (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001).

Mr. Norman’s perception of his young adult audience’s limited worldly experience and knowledge seems to have prompted his decision early on not to use vulgar or sexually explicit language in *Fielder’s Choice*. During the interactive interview (May 9, 2001) between Mr. Norman and four of the students in the study, Chatrick asked Mr. Norman: “When you were writing this, who were you writing to? I mean, did you make it a point to be clean? Did you make that a point because you thought students would read it?” Mr. Norman responded, “Yeah, I thought that.” He then proceeded to tell the students that he had been a “non-reader” in high school and that he had tried to write a book to capture the attention of “guys that haven’t been interested in reading.” Mr. Norman had explained more fully his decision not to use vulgar or sexually explicit language in *Fielder’s Choice* in an earlier interview I had with him:

I wanted . . . any kid to be able to pick it up and read it and me not be embarrassed and them not be embarrassed. . . . There are not many books where I think it’s necessary anyway. So I know that was one decision that was made on the basis of audience” (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001).

When the “pristine” speech of the baseball players was questioned by the editor, Mr. Norman explained:

I didn’t use profanity because I wanted to see if something could be funny without it. Also, I wouldn’t expect an enlisted man in 1946 to use profanity when speaking to an officer in this semi-formal setting, especially given the fact that he is trying to talk his way out of trouble (R. Norman, personal communication to Judith Faust, November 9, 1990).

Mr. Norman's concept of his young adult audience as being limited in worldly experience and knowledge is reflected in his description of his struggle with the World War Two/baseball backdrop for *Fielder's Choice*:

One of the things you struggle with especially when you're writing for young adults is, "What do they know?" I think if you're writing for adults, you assume that they know as much as you do about history and things. But if you're writing for kids, you can't make that same assumption, so to some extent you're limited in what you can write about and I think [you are] more conscious of maybe having to throw something in to make sure you explain what you're talking about. . . . In the forties and even in the fifties and sixties, it [baseball] was a big part of everybody's life. . . . But it's not a part of kids' lives anymore. And I was worried that that wasn't going to translate either because baseball's a big part of Jax's life, that's part of his story, that's kind of what he's able to pull himself through with. But I didn't know whether the kids would be able to follow that because baseball's not a big deal (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001).

Nevertheless, Mr. Norman assumed that young people do have a certain amount of knowledge about World War Two and baseball. However, in conversations with young people who have read *Fielder's Choice*, he has been surprised at some of their questions about the war. "The kids get the wars mixed up. To them there's not a real distinction between First World War, Second World War, Korea, and Vietnam. . . . Some of the questions they'll ask me are about Vietnam." He felt that some of the girls had problems with the baseball jargon but that they simply glossed over the terms they did not understand. "I would think that maybe if you're not a baseball fan, you don't pick up on some of the baseball stuff—earned run average and things like that" (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001).

**Young adults able to distinguish reality from fiction.** When he was writing *Fielder's Choice*, Mr. Norman also assumed that his young adult audience had the ability to distinguish reality from fiction. However, after talking to students, he perceived that some young readers either actually believed *Fielder's Choice* to be a true story or simply wanted to believe that there is a guy out there like Jax Fielder. According to Mr. Norman, one young reader told him that his

father knew Jackson Fielder. In reflecting on this blurring between reality and fiction, Mr. Norman commented, “There’s something very real about it. [Students are] a little bit disappointed when I tell them, ‘No, I made it up. It was all in my head.’ I guess I just didn’t think what kids of that age would believe and wouldn’t believe. . . . I think we had perspective. I just kind of assumed they would have that, too” (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001).

### **Defined Audience: Adults**

In addition to his defined audience of children, Mr. Norman also perceived an audience of adults. One audience of adults he perceived was friends and acquaintances. The second adult audience was adults plagued by the memory of their mistakes. Though the audience of adults plagued by the memory of their mistakes is a less sharply defined audience than that of Mr. Norman’s friends and acquaintances, both audiences may be said to represent what Ede and Lunsford (1984) would term a concrete, knowable audience “addressed.” However, as I argue in a later chapter, I do not believe that there is such a thing as a truly “addressed” audience.

**Adult friends and acquaintances.** Just as he changed some characters’ original names to the names of his children’s friends, Mr. Norman also changed the names of other characters to reflect the names of his adult friends and acquaintances. For example, the characters Cole and Musso received names of friends of Mr. Norman. It seems that his intention for doing so was to “guarantee I’ll sell twenty more books” (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001).

**Adults plagued by the memory of their mistakes.** Mr. Norman saw an audience secondary to that of his audience of children. This secondary audience was adults plagued by the memory of their mistakes” (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001). In fact, the dedication in *Fielder’s Choice* is to professional athletes who otherwise had good careers but are

remembered for their mistake—their most notable mistake. For example, Bill Buckner, first baseman for Boston, let an easy grounder go through his legs, causing his team to lose the 1986 World Series.

### **Defined Audience: Self**

Studies (e.g., Roth, 1987; Rubin, 1998) have shown that writing for self may be closely connected to writing for an “other” audience. It seems that the audience of self which Mr. Norman perceived—the self plagued by the memory of his mistake and the teen self—is closely connected to both his “other” audience of young adults and his “other” audience of adults.

**Self plagued by the memory of his mistake.** Mr. Norman himself is among these adults plagued by the memory of their mistakes, and he sees the writing of *Fielder’s Choice* as a sort of catharsis. In one of my interviews with him, he related the story of the mistake that has plagued him:

In high school I had lost a big game in 1971 in Monroe. I had gotten called for a penalty in the state semi-final game, and the winning touchdown got called back. And that had always plagued me. I was known for that around town. (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001)

**Teenage self.** In discussing the perspective he kept in mind while reading what he had written in *Fielder’s Choice*, Mr. Norman noted that the reader—the audience—he primarily kept in mind as he read was “myself at seventeen years old in the hospital reading the Jean Shepherd books” (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001). His mother, who was divorced from his dad, sent him to sit with his father who was in the hospital with cancer because she did not want his father to be alone. “I would read them and be laughing. I never realized that reading could be enjoyable” (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001).



## General “Generic” Audience

Research has shown that establishing a relationship with a general “generic” audience is often difficult for a writer, particularly for an inexperienced writer. This is why researchers (e.g., Ede & Lunsford, 1984; Flower & Hayes, 1981b; Hairston, 1986; Ong, 1975) have written extensively about the general “generic” audience as an imagined or created audience.

In my final interview with him, Mr. Norman noted that in addition to his defined audiences, he also kept in mind a “generic reader” (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001). His perceived “generic” reader was a reader who wants things causally connected, wants the author to enable him or her to connect seemingly unconnected concepts and ideas via a new twist, and wants characters who are either extremely interesting or extremely likeable.

## Students in the Study

Mr. Norman’s impression of the high school students in the study is reflected in an e-mail he sent after receiving the students’ responses to *Fielder’s Choice*. In it he wrote,

Keitha—I am reading the kids’ comments and am enjoying myself tremendously. Those kids are smart. . . . To hear their comments as they read is, I would suspect, a pleasure few writers have had. I’m about to bust a gut laughing, especially at the predictions (R. Norman, personal communication, April 17, 2001).

Later in the second interview I had with him, Mr. Norman made some further observations about this particular audience. He noted that they seemed “pretty literate” (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001). Reiterating this conception of the audience, he wrote in his responses to the students that they seemed “too literate to be non-readers” (R. Norman, personal communication, May 1, 2001) and complimented them on their perceptive responses.

Though his impression of the students in the study was that they were “pretty literate” and “smart,” Mr. Norman’s written responses to the students’ journal responses seemed to be reflective of a fluid perception of his relationship to this particular five-student audience, and his

perception seemed to shift among four relationships. These perceived relationships, Mr. Norman to student audience, in that order, seemed to be (1) teacher/parent to students/children; (2) *mea culpa* “apologist” to “offended;” (3) “apprentice” writer to “expert” readers; (4) teacher/defendant to students/“plaintiffs.” It should be pointed out that at the time Mr. Norman wrote his responses to the students, his conception of this audience was based strictly upon their written responses to *Fielder’s Choice*. Later in this chapter I report his relationship to the students during the interactive face-to-face meeting. The observations in this section, however, are based upon Mr. Norman’s written responses to the students’ journal responses.

**Teacher/parent to students/children.** The primary relationship seems to have been that of teacher/parent to students/children, perhaps because *Fielder’s Choice* began life as tape-recorded advice to Mr. Norman’s two older children. For example, he “taught” approaches to solving conflicts through practical jokes (“Conflicts can be resolved by three methods: peaceful means, violent means, and practical jokes. I favor the latter.”). He also taught that it is unforgivable to hit a child (“I was glad to read your comment in Chapter 17 that it is ‘unforgivable’ to hit a child. I hope that sentiment stays with you always.”), that a glorified view of war should be questioned (“I was hoping that the reader would also start to question the glorified view of war.”), and that there is not just one way to look at an issue (“Would another way to look at it be that his [Jax’s] indecision, his searching process, resulted in his figuring out a formula with which to live his life?”). At other times, this teacher/parent to student/child relationship was revealed when he complimented the students on “getting” his point (“Apparently I got at least one of my points across.” “You indicated to me that you followed the premise of my novel.”).

**Mea culpa “apologist” to “offended.”** A second perception which Mr. Norman seemed to have of his relationship to the student audience was that of the *mea culpa* “apologist” to the “offended.” For example, at times he “apologized” to the students when they were “confused” about or reacted “negatively” to a passage (“Perhaps I didn’t do a good enough job foreshadowing their [Dixie and Jugs’s] marriage.” “I think I may have lost some readers by bringing Jax too far down before I started him on the way back up.” “I was trapped by my own device.”).

**“Apprentice” writer to “expert” readers.** A third type of relationship between Mr. Norman and the students, resulting from his multiple perceptions of his audience, seemed to be that of apprentice to expert. Several times he seemed to perceive himself as the “apprentice” writer and the students as the “expert” readers. This perception was revealed by his asking the students such questions as: “Do you think the dialect was so strong that it would have caused a reader to give up the book?” “Do you think it [the kitten story] added [to] or detracted [from] the story? Should I have left it out?”

**Teacher/defendant to students/“plaintiffs.”** Finally, Mr. Norman seemed at times to perceive his relationship to the student audience as teacher/defendant to students/“plaintiffs.” In this particular relationship, he seemed to teach a “lesson” as well as to “defend” what he had written. For example, when Bob wrote that Jax “better show his point fast,” Mr. Norman responded, “I chose to show the point over 200 or so pages so that I would have a novel.” When Loki expressed frustration with the flashbacks, Mr. Norman wrote, “In that the whole story was more or less a flashback, I assume you were talking about parts of the story that were not in chronological order. . . . A writer has to struggle with how much and what he gives the reader at what time so that he does not telegraph his punch.”

## Conclusion Regarding Author's Conception of Audience

Just as Roth's (1987) successful college students seemed to have multi-dimensional and variable perceptions of their audience, so too Mr. Norman seemed to have multi-dimensional and variable perceptions of his audience. Mr. Norman's perception of his audience was both defined and general. Specifically, he perceived his audience to be young adults, both his own and others. His foremost target audience among young adults was those who do not like to read. Mr. Norman perceived them to be limited in literary and worldly experiences, and thus lacking in knowledge. In order to draw these students into a novel, he believed he had to rely upon humor. Other defined audiences were adults, especially those plagued by the memory of their mistakes, and himself, both the adult self and the teen self. His perception of his general "generic" audience was that this audience would want things causally connected, would want the author to enable him or her to connect seemingly unconnected concepts and ideas via a new twist, and would want characters who are either extremely interesting or extremely likeable.

Mr. Norman considered the students in my case study to be "too literate" and "smart" to be called non-readers. Interestingly, in spite of viewing the students as literate and smart, the predominant perception of his relationship to this particular audience seemed to be that of teacher/parent to students/children. Nevertheless, he did not limit his perception of his relationship to this audience to this one dimension. He also conceived of his relationship to them as *mea culpa* "apologist" to the "offended," "apprentice" writer to "expert" readers, and teacher/defendant to students/"plaintiffs."

Based upon these results, we may answer the question of what was, and is, Rick Norman's conception of the audience of *Fielder's Choice*—both defined and general, self and

other—by saying that it was and is a multifaceted, dynamic conception. It was and is an audience viewed through the window of self.

### **Editor's Conception of the Audience of *Fielder's Choice***

My study also included another person's—the editor's—conception of audience to complement that held by Rick Norman. I interviewed Judith Faust, the editor of the book, to see how her conception of audience related to that of the author. The data in this section is based upon an e-mail interview with Judith Faust and e-mail correspondence between her and Mr. Norman.

### **Editor's Description of Audience**

According to the e-mail interview which I conducted with Judith Faust, who had served August House Publishing as editor of *Fielder's Choice*, she conceived of the audience of *Fielder's Choice* on several levels but primarily as baseball fans: (1) readers of books about baseball (mostly nonfiction) who might cross over for an obviously connected novel and (2) fiction readers who happened also to be baseball fans. The book was published in the spring of 1991, and the timing was no accident. People buying books as gifts for Father's Day at the start of the baseball season figured into the marketing strategy. Devotees of Southern fiction and "plain old lovers of good novels" (J. Faust, personal communication, July 27, 2001) were also seen as part of the audience for *Fielder's Choice*. As editor, Judith Faust was also aware of an audience of young-adult librarians. In reference to the lack of profanity in *Fielder's Choice*, Ms. Faust noted that "young adult librarians will love it, which can be a very good thing" (J. Faust, personal communication to R. Norman, November 9, 1990).

On a personal level, Judith Faust commented,

When I think of "audience" for a work of fiction, I think of a sort of generic "reader," someone who seeks out fiction, loves words and stories, wants to be taken into the world of

the novel or the short story so that she or he can soak it up and see what's there to feel, react to, empathize with, puzzle over. (J. Faust, personal communication, July 27, 2001)

### **Comparison and Contrast with Norman's Conception**

When comparing and contrasting Rick Norman's conception of his audience of *Fielder's Choice* with the editor's, I found more differences than similarities. For example, Mr. Norman's primary target audience was young adults. By contrast, the editor seemed to conceive the audience as an older audience. This is evidenced by her targeting fathers and devotees of Southern fiction. Along these same lines, it is interesting to note that Ms. Faust had pointed out to Mr. Norman that "young adult librarians will love it" [lack of profanity in *Fielder's Choice*].

Another major difference seems to lie in Mr. Norman's and Ms. Faust's conceptions of a general "generic" audience. Mr. Norman saw this audience as those who want things causally connected, want the author to enable him or her to connect seemingly unconnected concepts and ideas via a new twist, and want characters who are either extremely interesting or extremely likeable. This concept of a general "generic" audience that primarily desires logic seems to reflect the logic of classical rhetoric as epitomized by such rhetoricians as Aristotle (1954), Cicero (1970), Quintilian (1910), and Campbell (1776/1963). This emphasis on logic seems fitting for a corporate lawyer whose primary occupation is arguing.

By contrast, Ms. Faust's personal (as opposed to editorial) conception of a general "generic" audience seems to emphasize the experiential dimension of reading. This can be seen in her use of such phrases as "loves words and stories," "wants to be taken into the world of the novel or short story," "soak it up and see what's there to feel, react to, empathize with, puzzle over." Her experiential concept of the "generic" reader seems similar to Louise Rosenblatt's (1978) comment about aesthetic reading, "*In aesthetic reading, the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text*" [italics in

the original] (p. 25). It is not surprising perhaps that Ms. Faust would emphasize that a “generic” audience wants to experience reading since she herself has “an electric fragment of memory of the moment when I connected the letters on the spines of those books with the words on the pages” (J. Faust, personal communication, July 27, 2001).

### **Conclusion Regarding Editor’s Conception of Audience**

Just what does this exploration of Mr. Norman’s and Ms. Faust’s conception of the audience of *Fielder’s Choice* contribute to our understanding of authors’ and editors’ conceptions of audience? First of all, this case study seems to indicate that at times there may be discrepancies between an author’s conception of audience and an editor’s conception of audience for the same text. In this particular case, these discrepancies seem to stem from the centrality of self in Mr. Norman’s conception of audience. An editor, on the other hand, does not have self bound up in the text. Consequently, we see that Ms. Faust’s concept of audience adds a more “objective” dimension to the audience of *Fielder’s Choice*; that is, her concept of audience seems to stem from the centrality of marketability or an audience with whom there might be a “best fit.”

The notion of a “best fit” audience was explored by Reither and Vipond (1989) in a case study on the collaborative nature of revision in which they detailed how changes were made in an article that Russell Hunt and Douglas Vipond co-authored. As part of the revision process, trusted colleagues played the role of editors by reading and commenting on successive drafts. Their comments were used to guide changes in the piece. The greatest impact which these colleagues had upon the co-authors was to persuade them “to reconsider the field of knowledge in which their article might fit” (p. 858).

Though Ms. Faust's editorial concept of the audience of *Fielder's Choice* centered upon a "best fit" marketing audience, her concept of a "generic" audience seemed to stem from self just as Mr. Norman's concept of a "generic" audience seemed to stem from self. It is interesting to note that for both Mr. Norman and Ms. Faust their concepts of a "generic" audience seemed to be a "best fit" for themselves. This finding that one's concept of a "generic" audience may in actuality be a "best fit" with oneself, a defined audience, seems to support a similar finding by Roth (1987). As I mentioned in Chapter Three, he found that college students Laura and Johanna created audiences that were consistent with their own needs—readers who resembled themselves.

These findings lead to three conclusions: (1) an author's conception of the audience of his or her own text may be derived from self; (2) an editor's conception of the audience of an author's text may be derived from a "best fit" marketing audience; (3) both an author's and an editor's concepts of a "generic" audience may be a "best fit" with self.

### **Audience Responses to *Fielder's Choice***

Nystrand (1990) noted that "writers and readers each proceed in terms of what they assume about the other" (p. 7). For the reader, this assumption is usually dependent primarily upon the textual features that the author provides. As I noted in Chapter One, some studies have shown that "expert" readers are able to attribute motives to authors as they proceed (Graves & Frederiksen, 1991; Haas, 1994; Wineburg, 1991). This "expert" reading sometimes seems to take the form of a "conversation" between the reader and the author. Remarks may be made about the author's claims (Geisler, 1991), or about the author's choice of wordings, phrasings, positioning of material, punctuation, or the effect on the intended audience (Wineburg, 1991). It is interesting to note, however, that in Vipond and Hunt's (1984) study of 150 undergraduates



reading a short story, only five percent of the students imputed motives to the author, a facet of “expert” reading.

How did members of the audience—specifically five high school students—in the words of Judith Faust, “react to, empathize with, puzzle over” Rick Norman and *Fielder’s Choice*? How did the author respond to the students’ responses? Because the reading and writing processes include social aspects (e.g., Berkenkotter, 1981, 1983; Bleich, 1975; Emig, 1971; Flower, 1979; Flower & Hayes, 1981a, 1981b; Perl, 1980; Porter, 1986; Sommers, 1980; Sperling & Woodlief, 1997; Spivey, 1997; Winterowd & Murray, 1985), I have chosen to include in this section the social dynamics among the students and between Mr. Norman and the four students who participated in the interactive interview. This description is based upon the data gathered from my follow-up interviews with the students, in which I asked the students (with the exception of Loki) about their conversations about *Fielder’s Choice*, and from the interactive interview between Mr. Norman and four of the students.

I have also organized the students’ book notes, journal responses and interview responses according to the four aspects of the rhetorical triangle—topic, author, audience, and text. (See Appendix D.) The topic aspect includes responses to topics in *Fielder’s Choice* (for example, making choices, war). The author aspect refers to responses to Rick Norman himself as well as to responses to his characters since one way an author of fiction appeals to his or her own credibility—*ethos*—is through the credibility of the characters he or she creates. Responses to audience include anything that reflects emotion (*pathos*) since one way an author of fiction appeals to audience is through emotion. For example, responses such as “I do not like,” “sadness,” and “awful” are included in this category. Finally, the aspect of text includes responses to structures such as foreshadowing, dialect, the reality devices, the use of the Major as

a pseudo-audience, the opening and the ending of the novel, and its pace. I have chosen to include Mr. Norman's written responses to the students' journals in this particular section rather than in a separate section so that I may more readily show my reader the author's relationship to this particular audience as illustrated in his responses.

I begin with the social dynamics among the students. Next, I discuss the responses of the students as recorded in their book notes, journals, and follow-up interviews, and the written responses of Mr. Norman. Finally, I conclude with a look at the relationships between author and audience revealed in the interactive interview.

### **Social Dynamics Among the Students**

The five students in the study—Thelma, Chatrick, Bob, Goose, and Loki—comprised a very diverse group of respondents. I have included this section on the social dynamics among these five because, although they responded individually, their responses were, no doubt, influenced by the responses of others. The students did not read *Fielder's Choice* in isolation. Rather, the reading of the novel generated social exchanges of ideas among the student participants as well as opportunities for identification—identification of friend with character and identification of self with character. The social exchanges also provided an opportunity for avid reader and “non-reader” to learn from one another. These exchanges of learning included discussions of baseball terms, confusing incidents, their dislike for Jude, what happened to Jax after he left the Major, the happy ending, and the abrupt ending.

Though Loki was the “intellectual” of the group, Thelma, a self-confident and articulate young lady, seemed to function as the hub of the social dynamics among the students. She seemed to serve as a reference resource as well as a participant in general conversations about *Fielder's Choice*. The topics in these conversations included explanations of situations and

sports terminology, dislike for Jude, satisfaction with a happy ending but dissatisfaction with the abruptness of the ending.

From Thelma, I learned about interactions she had with Goose and Chatrick. She discussed with Goose, an avid baseball player, the fact that it was “kind of neat” that his nickname correlated with Jax’s nickname of “Gooseball.” This seems to be an illustration of shared identification. Thelma recognized “Gooseball” in one of her friends, and Goose saw something of himself in “Gooseball.” Perhaps it was this shared identity that contributed to Goose, a “non-reader,” reading *Fielder’s Choice*. Thelma also volunteered that Goose phoned her to ask, “What happened in the last two chapters?” Thelma’s discussions with Chatrick, a non-athlete, centered upon some of the sports terms he did not understand and his confusion about what had happened to certain characters. In particular, they discussed Jax’s balk on the mound. Chatrick thought he had fainted. With both Goose and Chatrick we see Thelma functioning as a resource of information. Thelma also indicated that the students had discussed among themselves their dislike for Jude’s character and “how it (*Fielder’s Choice*) ended up good . . . because we all like happy endings.” Here we see Thelma as a participant in the ongoing discussion about *Fielder’s Choice*.

I learned about interactions from Goose when he said that he and Thelma talked about the fact that “she got into it (*Fielder’s Choice*) one day and read it all in one day.” It is interesting that Goose, a “non-reader,” would seem to be impressed by the fact that Thelma read the book “all in one day.” He also noted that they discussed that they liked the book. When I asked if they had discussed details of various incidents, he said they had not. On the surface, this seems to contradict Thelma’s revelation that Goose called to ask her what happened in the last two chapters. Perhaps the discrepancy lies in how Goose would define “details of various incidents.”

Confirmation of discussions with Thelma came from Chatrick, who also indicated that he discussed baseball terms with some of the baseball players at school, including Goose. Like Thelma, Bob said that “everybody . . . liked the book,” but he also indicated that they wanted to know what happened to Jax after he left the Major—about his being blacklisted and his being unable to play baseball anymore.

Because I neglected to ask Loki about any conversations she may have had with other participants, she did not indicate any social interactions. Presumably, however, she was part of the group discussion referred to by Thelma and Bob. In answer to Mr. Norman’s question (“Did they read everybody’s stuff, too?”) during the interactive interview, Thelma indicated that the students passed around his responses to each of them. In particular, Thelma noted that she read all of Mr. Norman’s comments to Bob. Once again, in the sharing of the comments which Mr. Norman wrote to the individual students, we see the social aspect of reading.

The reading of *Fielder’s Choice* provided opportunities for social exchanges of ideas among the student participants as well as opportunities for identifying friend with character and self with character. The social exchanges also provided opportunities for the students to learn from one another.

### **Responses: Book Notes, Journals, and Interview**

The students varied in their responses to the topic, author, audience, and text of *Fielder’s Choice*. Some of the students responded to sub-themes (topics) in the novel, but all responded to the primary theme (topic) of making choices. For most of the students, Jax was, in general, a very likeable, credible character. This connection with Jax seemed to create credibility for the author. However, the students did question some aspects of the author’s characterization of Jax. Perhaps because Jax was a likeable, credible character for them, at various points in the novel

most of the students had at least some emotional (audience-related) responses. The strongest and most universal of these emotions seemed to be sympathy or empathy for Jax and Little Jackson, and anger towards Jude. Several aspects of the text of *Fielder's Choice*—dialect, opening chapter, addresses to the Major, pace of the action, allusions, foreshadowing, flashbacks, word choice, reality devices—evoked responses from various students. Most of them appreciated the dialect and the attention-grabbing opening chapter, but some were initially confused by or had negative responses to various allusions, the flashbacks, and the addresses to the Major. One did not like the dialect at all.

Mr. Norman responded in writing to the students' questions, confusions, application of situations to their personal lives, predictions, emotions, and praises with clarifications; explanations and defenses of his dilemmas, intentions, and structural devices; suggestions; questions; and appreciation for their insights. However, the bulk of these responses seemed directed to Chatrick and Thelma.

### **Thelma: "I Couldn't Put the Book Down"**

Thelma, who seemed to be very self-confident and articulate, earned straight A's in senior English and was a member of the Honor Society, loved to read—especially mystery novels—and write. This love of reading and writing seems reflected in the fact that she could not stop reading about Jax and could not put down *Fielder's Choice*. Thelma used her book to jot down a substantial number of notes. The gist of these notes was often reflected also in her journal responses. Her journal responses—generally a full page or more—were thoughtful and rich, and her interview responses provided further insights into both her book notes and her journal responses.

**Topic.** Much of the plot of *Fielder's Choice* is based on the making of choices, and many of Thelma's topic responses concerned choice. However, she also picked up on the author's unique resolution to conflict as illustrated by Jugs playing a prank on Bubba to "put him in his place" instead of fighting him to settle their contention for the catcher's position on the team. "I like the way the problem with Bubba is resolved. The usual solution is a fight. It is good to see that the author resolves it differently." When I asked Thelma why she thought the author had presented this solution to the problem, she responded: "Just because it would maybe help with your perspective of guys or something. They don't always have to fight. Maybe they can just talk about it, and it would work out." However, she seemed to puzzle over this same "point" to the hunting story in which Jugs and Jax settle their conflict with their father and his buddies by putting chopped poison oak leaves on them. These men had humiliated Jax and Jugs by convincing them that the rabbit the boys had killed probably had Alabama Spotted Blue-Tick Fever, "*the blue plague*," and that the only way to know for sure was to examine the rabbit's liver, which the boys had thrown into the woods. After a miserable, fruitless search, the boys returned to the hunting camp only to find the men howling with laughter. Thelma wrote in her journal: "Why did Jax tell this story? His brother and dad are both gone now. Is he simply reminiscing?" Mr. Norman responded to Thelma's question about why Jax told the hunting story by telling her that his "theory is that conflicts can be resolved by three methods: peaceful means, violent means, and practical jokes. I favor the latter." Mr. Norman did not further explain his response, but it seems directly related to his personal anti-war sentiment. He ends the chapter in which the hunting story is told by writing,

It wasn't too long after they finished mopping up Guadalcanal that they confirmed Jugs had been killed. Somebody in his squadron had seen his plane explode before it hit the water. They told us his last radio transmission was, "Don't worry about me, fellows, I can walk back from here."

You know, I ain't told that bunny story for a while. I used to just hear the jokes in it—theirs on us and ours on them and God's on all of us (p. 101).

Several times Thelma noted that Jax really could think (in spite of his own insecurities about being able to make choices), and she approved of his basing his choices on love: “I would say he made the right choices. He was honest, loving, and kind. When you have all of this, how could anything go wrong?”

**Author.** In her journal Thelma wrote about Jax, “The author has made a great character. He is a character that we can't stop reading about. I couldn't put the book down.” She also noted that she liked the fact that “the author puts everything on a ‘normal’ families level. The dad is aggravated about Jugs going into the Navy, and the mom tells him (Jax) that it is perfect. This seems to be an ordinary family. These boys are so typical.”

An author of fiction creates credibility for himself or herself (*ethos*) by creating credible characters. Thelma seemed to identify strongly with the characters Mr. Norman created, particularly Jax, and she related them to people she knew in her own small Southern town. The emphasis on sports in both *Fielder's Choice* and *Limer* seemed to strike a chord with her. At one point in her journal, she made the comment, “I can see many of my friends in these characters.” In my interview with Thelma, she observed, “We have *so* many athletes.” Referring to the characters, Thelma used terms such as “realistic,” “normal,” “typical,” “ordinary,” and “lifelike.” Specifically, she characterized Jax in her book notes as “likeable,” “a very good guy,” “your typical guy,” and “very real.

However, the web-like relationships of Jugs, Dixie, and Jax seemed to confuse her (“I can't believe Jugs and Dixie got married. Had they ever seen each other?”), and her only “negative” response to Jax seemed to be in connection to his relationship with Dixie, which she initially found to be “very strange” and confusing. By Chapter Sixteen, though, she wrote that

she hoped “Jax and Dixie somehow end up together.” This complexity of relationships seems reflected in a very interesting comment Thelma made about Jax: “His accent and grammar make him seem very simple. The reader knows he is not.” Here we see what seems to be evidence of “expert” reading.

Rick Norman addressed Thelma’s confusion about the relationships:

You were confused about Dixie. I wanted the reader to be confused so that it would be a surprise when the characters finally worked out their feelings among themselves. Your comments in Chapter Four indicate that you were surprised that Jugs and Dixie got married. I intended that the reader be as shocked as Jax was. I did, however, want the marriage to be causally connected but not predictable. Perhaps I didn’t do a good enough job foreshadowing their marriage.

**Audience.** Thelma’s emotions seemed to be stirred in several ways through her role as audience: sympathy for Jax, the maggot-eaten kitten, Curly, and Little Jackson; anger towards Jude and Maw; sadness at Jugs’s death and Jax’s aloneness immediately after the war ends. Expressions of sympathy for Jax included the following comments: “I feel sorry for Jax.” “When he gets ready to pitch, my stomach gets in knots.” “When he fell on the ground, my heart sank.” “You can identify with what he is going through if you have ever played sports. Letting everyone down is the worst feeling.” She seemed frustrated that every time Jax had a big opportunity, he failed. In referring to the kitten in the interview, she commented, “It was just terrible.” In response to Yoshi’s revelation to Jax that Curly was an acclaimed comic book artist prior to the war and that his bitterness is a result of his losing his family to Allied bombs, Thelma wrote: “We are now in a way able to sympathize with him [Curly].” Anger towards Jude spilled over several times: “Jude is horrible!” “How pathetic; a ‘man’ against a child.” “I detest Jude.” Thelma also expressed anger toward Maw when she defended Jude’s treatment of Dixie and Little Jackson, “That’s sickening!” A sense of sadness flowed through Thelma’s responses to Jugs’s death and to Jax’s aloneness immediately after the war ends, while he is still at the



Admiral's. She wrote: "The baby only adds to the sadness of Jugs's death." "When Jax is left alone, there is a sense of relief and sadness." At one point in her journal, Thelma commented about the book as a whole, "This has to be one of the most depressing stories I have ever read."

Rick Norman responded to Thelma's concerns:

In Chapter Eight you ask why Jax seemed to fail each time there was a big game. Perhaps the people who struggle are actually the ones who should be revered. They are not on automatic pilot. They are the anti-soldiers who must know "why" before they act. By Chapter Twelve you were of the opinion that *Fielder's Choice* had to be "one of the most depressing stories [you had] ever read." I would be interested to know whether by Chapter Twelve you were so hooked into reading the book that you continued even though it was very depressing, or whether you believe a reader without an assignment may have put the book down at this point in time. I was glad to read your comment in Chapter Seventeen that it is "unforgivable" to hit a child. I hope that sentiment stays with you always.

**Text.** How did Thelma respond to such textual features as foreshadowing, dialect, the reality devices, the use of the Major as a pseudo-audience, the opening and the ending of the novel, and its pace? Thelma's responses were varied. The opening lines of Chapter One ("This ain't about aiding and abetting the enemy, Major. It's about the 1941 American League pennant.") confused her. At least twice, her attention was drawn to the Major: "I didn't even realize he was still talking to the major." "Why would the major listen to all this?" Even though at one point Thelma commented negatively about the incorrectness of Jax's grammar, she still seemed to like "the author's use of accents because it makes the characters more personable." Noting the pace of the story, Thelma wrote, "The story line moves along well. He seems to move the reader through the story rather quickly."

### **Chatrick: "I Finally Understand the Title Now"**

A gifted conversationalist, Chatrick was an A-B English student his senior year and was able to write quite competently. Like Thelma, he was also an Honor Society member. However, unlike Thelma, he admittedly did not like to read and felt intimidated by long books.

Interestingly, though, he had read at least some of the lengthy Harry Potter books. Chatrick had relatively few notes in his book. Instead, he underlined passages that seemed significant to him. His journal responses, however, ranged from a half page to a page and a half and gave a great deal of insight into what he was thinking. His words, “I finally understand the title now,” quotation seem to capture a significant moment of insight when he, a non-baseball player, had a “revelation” about why Mr. Norman used the baseball term “fielder’s choice” as his title. My interview with Chatrick was very productive, and he seemed very much at ease discussing the novel and his responses.

**Topic.** Chatrick’s topic responses centered on the two main themes of *Fielder’s Choice*: war and choices. He had a very strong anti-war response to the dropping of bombs over Tokyo, and I believe it is worth sharing in its entirety:

Well, I think that with the first bomb I dropped, I would be thinking about all of the “humans” I killed. I don’t think that I could ever go to war and kill people. I know that I couldn’t stand up and shoot the person next to me, so how could the army expect me to rain bombs down on people whom I would never see. I don’t see much difference in the two. If I was to shoot someone in a supermarket, I would be arrested, and in the worst case sentenced to death myself. However, if you are in the army and kill thousands in the name of your country, you are considered “brave” and are congratulated on your actions. I don’t think that I will understand why that happens.

Mr. Norman responded to Chatrick’s very strong statements: “Your comments about Chapters Ten and Eleven indicated perhaps a similar thought process to that of Jax. I was hoping that the reader would also start to question the glorified view of war.”

Though Chatrick was not particularly familiar with baseball terms, he ended his journal responses by saying: “I finally understand the title now. The whole basis of the book, overlooking baseball and the war, are the choices people make. I totally feel that and get it.” Mr. Norman was “very excited” by this comment and wrote that “apparently I got at least one of my points across.” Here we see what seems to be a genuine connection between Chatrick and

Mr. Norman. Chatrick “gets” Mr. Norman’s point, and Mr. Norman is excited by this. Here too is an illustration of the relationship between teacher/parent and student/child. Mr. Norman had a point to make, and Chatrick understood this point.

**Author.** Chatrick initially responded to Mr. Norman in his first journal entry by commenting on Norman’s knowledge of baseball and his ability to write a book and be a lawyer at the same time. (“Shows that he is very dedicated to writing.”) This first journal entry was in response to the information in the back of the book. It is perhaps one indication that Mr. Norman found credibility in Chatrick’s eyes even before beginning to read *Fielder’s Choice*. The fact that Norman could write a book while meeting the demands of a challenging legal career seemed to impress Chatrick.

Just as Chatrick seemed to accept the credibility of Mr. Norman, he also seemed to view Norman’s protagonist, Jax, as a credible character. However, in spite of his generally positive impression of Jax, he did not at all initially go along with Jax’s desire for Dixie, his sister-in-law: “What?!! Get a girlfriend!” (Jax’s encounter with Dixie in the raft) and “What?! He needs to respect his dead brother.” (Jax’s desire to marry Dixie). Later, however, this strong aversion to a relationship between Jax and Dixie changed: “At first I thought that it was bad that Jax was going to marry Dixie, but when he was going to her house, I was really rooting for them to get together.”

Interestingly, though Chatrick seemed to accept the credibility (*ethos*) of Mr. Norman and his character Jax, he seemed to have a strong negative response to Jugs. He was not convinced that Jugs was the lovable jokester Mr. Norman seemed to be portraying. Instead, he found his incessant jokes irritating and, putting himself in Jax’s shoes, often embarrassing. On the other hand, Paw was a very believable character for Chatrick, and the account of his affair with Lilly

was all too real. He noted in his journal: “It sounds almost exactly the same. The way Jax talks about his dad being ‘different’ than he remembered, that is what I remember of my father.” In my interview with him, he commented: “The whole thing about his [Jax’s] father leaving the family and stuff like that, I can identify with that perfectly because that’s exactly how my father acted—to the T. I identified.”

**Audience.** The deepest emotional audience-oriented response from Chatrick came at the revelation of Paw’s affair with Lilly. This struck a deep, personal chord with Chatrick who had himself experienced a similar situation with his own father. In response to the chapter that introduced this scenario, he wrote: “This chapter saddened me. Whenever this situation pops up in a movie, book, or even in real life, I find myself a little upset.” Mr. Norman responded to Chatrick’s very personal comments:

Your comments to Chapter Three indicated that you had experienced a similar divorce. Of course, I was very sorry to hear that. Do you feel that your own personal experiences affected the way you perceived my novel? An author must direct his story to the collective consciousness of his perceived audience and hope that he does not lose readers because of individual experiences.

In addition to his very personal response to this situation, Chatrick also revealed in various comments a deep sympathy for Jax: “I feel really sorry for Jackson.” “I wish he would catch a break here soon.” “I’m glad that something good has happened to him. After all he has been through, he deserves a little break.” “This final chapter is a very emotional chapter. Jax basically pours his heart out and my heart goes out to him.” Frequently, angry comments were directed at Jude: “I hate Jude!” “Jude is such a snake! He will get his one day. Arrogant S. O. B.” “I just want to say that I hate Jude. He is such a coward.” Chatrick’s angry comments escalated to projecting physical violence upon Jude in response to his treatment of Jax when he returned home from Japan (“That makes me mad. I would have hit him hard!”) and his

hitting Jax with a belt (“I’m surprised he didn’t knock Jude out! I would have. That would really make me furious.”).

Mr. Norman noted Chatrick’s sympathy for Jax and his desire for something good to happen to Jax:

In Chapter Thirteen you are hoping that Jax could catch a break “soon.” It is about this time in the novel that one of your fellow students [Thelma] indicated that “this has to be one of the most depressing stories I have ever read.” Some other people that have read the book have indicated that it was just too depressing. I think I may have lost some readers by bringing Jax too far down before I started him on the way back up.

**Text.** The notes that Chatrick made in his book were primarily questions that he had about the meaning of various terms (e. g., ERA, pert, balk). His journal and interview responses also reflected these questions about terms. For example, Chatrick wrote: “I don’t understand what happened to him on the mound. Did he faint or something? I don’t see how they lost the game. What is “balk”?”

Mr. Norman explained his dilemma of how much background to provide the reader:

Your question in Chapter Eight about a “balk” indicated to me that perhaps I didn’t explain that complicated baseball rule. Again I had to (i) explain the rule, (ii) assume a degree of knowledge or (iii) do both. However, in that Jax was telling the story to other servicemen who would, that day and age, have known what a balk was, I hesitated to get into a lengthy explanation. I was trapped by my own device.

Chatrick’s responses also dealt with other aspects of the text, such as the author’s use of dialect, foreshadowing, the effectiveness of the opening chapter, and the weakness of the final chapter. With reference to the dialect, Chatrick wrote: “I find myself reading a sentence a second and third time because I don’t understand what he is trying to say.” In my interview with Chatrick, we discussed his response to the dialect, and he further revealed his opinion that if he, a Southerner, had difficulty understanding the dialect, then he could not imagine “how people from the North—not knowing how we speak down here—how they could figure it out at all.”

He felt that Northerners might lose interest in the story and that less dialect might have been more effective.

Mr. Norman responded to Chatrick's concerns about the dialect:

You mention in your comments to Chapter One that you were bothered by the dialect. I think many people were. I was hoping that the dialect would become easier to read once the reader picked up the cadence. Did you find it easier as you went on? Do you think the dialect was so strong that it would have caused a reader to give up on the book?

Chatrick revealed his awareness of Mr. Norman's foreshadowing that "something bad [was going to happen] to Jugs in the war. I think he will be killed or at least hurt." Mr. Norman noted this prediction: "I enjoyed your prediction in Chapter Four that Jugs would be killed. Perhaps I was too predictable." Chatrick also noticed foreshadowing in respect to the way Jax "mentions war, and starts this new baseball thing; I just don't think it is going to last very long."

He seemed very impressed with the opening chapter of *Fielder's Choice*. By his own admission, if it takes him "till the third chapter" to get into a book, then he does not "tend to make it to that third chapter." He felt that the opening chapter "did a good job" of drawing him in. However, he was less sure of the effectiveness of the final chapter and made some suggestions for improvement. Chatrick suggested that "it should maybe have gone more into the whole Japanese baseball thing." He noted that "it could have been tied back into there [the ceremony honoring Jax many years later]." Chatrick also questioned the abrupt ending of the last chapter. (Though Chatrick does directly respond to the author as "he," I chose to put this quotation in the text section because he seems to be responding primarily to the text created by the author.)

I think he [the author] could have added a few more chapters about him [Jax] having his son and teaching him how to play baseball and leading up to that [the newspaper article]. It just kind of ended in a spot where it was unusual. He [Jax] just left the officer after explaining himself. And that's where you were left. Then it [the newspaper article] explains kind of what happened in the meantime.

It is interesting to note that as a “non-reader,” Chatrick seemed to have a keen sense of the textual features which Mr. Norman employed, even to the point of offering solutions for areas that he saw as problematic.

**Bob: “I Could Understand Some of the [Baseball] Situations”**

Bob, one of the two baseball players in the study, was a quiet fellow whose dry wit popped out at unexpected moments. Although he read rather slowly and labored over his writing, he worked hard in my senior English class and moved from C’s to B’s on his report card. As an avid baseball player, Bob played catcher for many years on school and summer league teams. It was Bob’s strong connection to baseball which led me to include him in the study. I was curious to see how he would respond to a baseball novel, and, as the quotation indicates, he identified with some of the baseball situations in which Jax found himself.

Bob made very few notes in his copy of *Fielder’s Choice*. His journal entries, which skipped over Chapter Ten, averaged a half page and were usually simply a recounting of the story. However, buried within these retellings of the story were nuggets of personal response. My greatest insight into Bob’s responses to *Fielder’s Choice* came from the follow-up interview, and it is at this point that we were both able to use my long-standing friendship with his family to our advantage. Though he was somewhat uncomfortable with the idea of doing an interview in which he was being recorded, the fact that he knew me alleviated some of his discomfort, and I was able to gain some valuable data.

**Topic.** Bob’s topic-related responses dealt almost exclusively with the theme of choice. The one exception was an observation made during the interview that Jax had the ability to look past the fact that Yoshi was Japanese and to see him as simply another baseball player.

When I asked Bob about the main idea of *Fielder's Choice*, he indicated that he perceived it as confessing to a mistake and trying to make it right. Perhaps in light of this perception, Bob commented in his journal that if Jax “did mess up, it was an accident. He didn’t mean anything by the choices he made. He just wanted to help everybody he could. Gooseball was an honest man.”

**Author.** After reading the brief biography of Mr. Norman at the end of *Fielder's Choice*, Bob noted in his journal:

The author Rick Norman seems to be a huge baseball fan. He played college ball somewhere and was known for not being able to hit a curve ball. Although he didn’t make it in the “big leagues,” he leads a very successful life being a lawyer.

Bob’s only notation about Mr. Norman directly seems to indicate his matter-of-fact acceptance of Mr. Norman as a “big league” lawyer “although he didn’t make it in the ‘big leagues’” as a baseball player.

Instead of focusing on Mr. Norman directly, Bob seemed to focus primarily on the characters Mr. Norman had created, particularly Jax, whom he often referred to simply as “the narrator,” and on Jax’s relationship with his older brother Jugs. In fact, though Bob himself has no brothers, it is this friendship between the brothers that he said (in the interview) that he liked best about *Fielder's Choice*. However, he also noted that “Jugs did all the thinking for him [Jax]. He relied too much on his older brother.” Bob perceived Jugs as being more level-headed than Jax but also as being inappropriately funny in certain situations. He seemed to imply that Jax’s relationship with Jugs did not end with Jugs’s death: “He starts thinking more like his brother.” That is, Jax seemed to gain some of Jugs’s level-headedness after his war ordeal. Still, Bob observed, Jax wanted to do something with his life after returning home from Japan,



“instead of just being a shadow of his older brother.” Bob saw this desire as Jax’s incentive for trying to go back into the majors.

Bob was not at all impressed with Jude. His brief description of him is worth noting: “There wasn’t much to him. He seemed kind of like a lawyer. You don’t know whether to trust him or not.” This comment is ironic given the fact that the author, Mr. Norman, is a lawyer. Bob seems to be critically examining the credibility of Jude and by implication the credibility (*ethos*) of the author.

**Audience.** A baseball player himself, Bob seemed to identify with some of the situations in which Jax found himself. For example, he noted in his journal: “I can understand [about the unfair umpiring] because most of the MPSA (Mississippi Private School Association) umpires pull for the teams in Mississippi and give us a little bit of a hard time.” Bob also seemed to identify with those who make mistakes. In my interview with him, he commented, “I could understand some of the [baseball] situations . . . It’s kind of difficult in some situations, and you make a mistake, and you just feel like an idiot.”

As a whole, Bob viewed Jax as “a good old country boy” who “does what he thinks is right.” He seemed particularly impressed with Jax’s ability to survive his ordeal in “The Pipe”: “This is the most courageous thing that I have ever heard of.”

**Text.** From the beginning of his reading, Bob was aware of Mr. Norman’s structural framework of having Jax tell flashback stories instead of giving the Major straightforward answers about his alleged treasonous conduct. In his Chapter One journal response, he noted: “He [Jax] has to convince the government that he didn’t help the enemy, and he is telling stories. He better show his point fast.” Mr. Norman responded to this comment: “I chose to show the point over 200 or so pages so that I would have a novel. I hope you did not find it too frustrating

waiting for some sort of resolution.” Mr. Norman’s comment is especially interesting given the fact that in the original manuscript, the Army interrogator makes an observation similar to Bob’s: “We have now listened to you for the better part of a day and haven’t, as far as I can tell, touched upon the treason charges against you.” After finishing the novel, Bob noted in the interview that Jax’s motive for telling the stories was “to show that he didn’t mean anything by what he did. He just wanted to show that he made an honest mistake if he did.”

Commenting on Mr. Norman’s use of flashbacks, Bob observed that without them the reader would not have known Jax very well. Perhaps because he and the other students had gotten to know Jax so well through the flashbacks, he noted that they (the five-student audience) wanted a more definitive conclusion to the novel than Mr. Norman had provided.

Bob enjoyed the Southern setting in *Fielder’s Choice* and adapted quickly to Jax’s south Arkansas dialect. Though he felt that if there had not been any Southern dialect in the novel “there wouldn’t have been as much emphasis on the Southern part,” he also felt that the lack of a Southern dialect would not have substantially altered the novel as a whole.

### **Goose: “It Was Very Focused”**

Goose, the other baseball player who participated in the study, had in his own words “basically lived, breathed, and worshipped baseball” since he was a child, acquiring the nickname of “Goose” at about age fourteen. In spite of being an Honor Society student—a straight-A student in senior English—Goose hated to read and considered himself to be a non-reader. An intelligent and personable young man, he had figured out ways of succeeding academically with only a minimum of reading. Because he did not like to read, Goose was very appreciative of Mr. Norman’s focused, straightforward style of writing, and this appreciation was highlighted in his responses.

Goose had a fair number of notes in his book, but not as many as Thelma. Like Bob, his journal responses were primarily retellings of the story. However, he too had some golden nuggets of data buried in those responses. The interview with Goose could best be described as frustrating—for both of us. Unfortunately, due to unavoidable scheduling conflicts, I was not able to interview Goose until several weeks after he had handed in his responses. By that time, he had forgotten some of the details of the novel and his responses. Consequently, a fair amount of the interview consisted of my prompting his memory. However, as I combed through the data contained in the interview, I realized that Goose had indeed provided me with more valuable data than I had initially thought possible.

**Topic.** Goose seemed immediately intrigued by the author’s use of the term “fielder’s choice.” He wrote in his journal: “Being familiar with baseball, I know what a fielder’s choice is, but I am interested in seeing how a fielder’s choice comes into play.” In my interview with him, Goose affirmed that as he read *Fielder’s Choice*, he “noticed there were many choices that he [Jax] could have gone either way,” illustrating the dilemma of a fielder’s choice. For example, Goose noticed that Jax stayed with his father in the hospital rather than playing in the championship game: “Maybe this is Fielder’s choice?” Here we see Goose thinking ahead, predicting possible meaning for “Fielder’s choice.” Commenting on the connection between Jax’s struggle to make choices for himself and the story of the Browns’ winning the pennant as a result of heart rather than skill, Goose noted: “He has to go on basic heart instinct—he has to decide for himself instead of listening to peer pressure.” Goose saw this pressure as being “a big point of it [the novel]. His [Jax’s] fielder’s choice came under the pressure.”

Goose had interesting insight into the topic of war. He readily recognized the difference between having an antagonistic relationship with a collective enemy and having a “friendly”

relationship with an individual who may be part of the collective enemy. He analogized Jax and Yoshi's relationship to that of individuals on an all-star team:

[When] you're on a team with one of your archrivals, you don't even think about, 'Oh, I couldn't stand him a week ago.' You play against his team; you don't play against him. They're fighting against the Japanese; they're not fighting against Yoshi.

**Author.** Most of Goose's author-related responses seemed to focus on Mr. Norman himself. In fact, he seemed to be the most sophisticated reader with respect to author. For example, in his journal he noted: "After reading about the author's previous experiences with baseball, I have a feeling he's going to use his own personal views in the book." When I asked Goose to clarify what he meant by "personal views," he responded that since the author had played baseball, he thought perhaps some of the situations in *Fielder's Choice* were based on situations "he was in or where he messes up," just as Jax had messed up in the state championship game. "I was thinking that could have happened to him, caving under pressure." In fact, some of the situations in *Fielder's Choice* were based on situations Mr. Norman was in—situations in which he "messed up." As noted in a previous chapter, Mr. Norman's biggest "mess up" under pressure came in a state championship football game in which a penalty call on him cost his team the championship, a situation similar to Jax's balk costing his team the pennant.

Goose noted that, since "the author is a lawyer now," there would likely be many twists, "loopholes," and exaggerated detail in the story. In my follow-up interview with him, he cited Mr. Norman's description of Neckless becoming ill in Mexico, saying that Norman "really went off into the sickness and everything" (exaggerated detail). When I asked Goose about his connecting Mr. Norman's being a lawyer and his expectations for *Fielder's Choice*, he responded: "Well, most lawyers are like that. It's a personality thing."

In terms of the authenticity of Mr. Norman's characters, Goose seemed to relate most closely with Jax and his relationship with his brother Jugs:

I thought that was just like the typical brother [relationship] because I have an older brother myself, and I'm the middle child just like Jax was, and I used to pitch to my brother, and my brother would pitch to me.

**Audience.** Goose had minimal emotionally evoked responses. His only comments which could be labeled as "emotionally evoked" came during my interview with him, which occurred after a time lapse. One was in response to the maggot-eaten kitten story ("Oh, that was gross!"), and the other was in response to Jude ("I didn't like him at all."). The only other "emotional" comment was to the "dropped babies" passage (Passage B) which is noted in the section on the focused passages.

**Text.** As I was rereading my analyses of Goose's book notes, journal responses, and interview responses, it seemed clear to me that Goose, a self-proclaimed "non-reader," responded strongly to the textual features of *Fielder's Choice*. In these responses, he used such literary terms as "style," "analogy," "metaphor," and "narrator." Goose seemed very appreciative of Rick Norman's style of writing and expressed this appreciation in my interview with him:

It was very focused. It was written so that the average person, anybody, a kid—a fifteen-year-old kid—can read, and [he] doesn't have to know these big, complex words [or deal with] sentences that have subject and verb inverted. It's just so much easier to read than [that of Charles Dickens in *David Copperfield*]. I'm not really English focused. I can't pick up on those real big words. You get to the point where you just don't even want to read anymore. You're just sick of all these big words. So I like the way he writes. I really do.

In his book notes, however, Goose did indicate confusion about some of the allusions Mr. Norman used. For example, he wrote: "Pavlov's weenie? Who is Pavlov?" He also put question marks at such allusions as "Grant's Bible" and "donnybrook." The references to the

Major also seemed to confuse Goose: “Who’s Major?” “Talking to someone named Major?” “I am still wondering—who is Jax talking to???” Mr. Norman addressed Goose’s confusion:

Your comment to Chapter Nine was that you could not determine to whom Jax was talking. That was a difficult part of writing the novel that I struggled with. On the one hand a writer wants to tell the reader what is happening, but at the same time Jax was supposed to be telling the story to someone who had obviously known much of the situation. If you were talking to someone, you would not start out your conversation saying, “I am here talking to you today because you are an army investigator and I have been charged with treason.” That would be presumed. So, as you see, I was trapped by my own literary device.

Towards the end of the novel, Goose figured out the Major’s role, and his confusion gave way to appreciation for the author’s use of the Major as a pseudo-audience, which he expressed in the interview: “He would say ‘Major,’ but in a way I felt that he was talking to me. It was directed at the reader. Even though he was talking to the Major, you could associate with him.”

Though Goose may have been confused about some terms, his baseball knowledge seemed to enable him to grasp immediately the significance of the title, predicting that it “represents a metaphor for a choice that the author had to make.” Another prediction that he made was triggered by what he saw as a possible connection between the misspelling of Jax’s last name in a newspaper article and the title of the novel: “I was just thinking . . . there was going to be a newspaper article or something named ‘Fielder’s Choice’ or ‘Fielder Made His Choice’ or something like that.” Goose also recognized Mr. Norman’s use of an analogy in recounting Neckless’s story of the orangutan wrestling yellow-coated opponents.

In response to the dialect, he noted in his journal: “I find the dialect and the way he [Norman] writes easy to relate to at times, but hard to follow [at] others. I would rather his style than that of Charles Dickens in *David Copperfield*.” Mr. Norman responded by noting that “an almost universal comment was that the dialect was hard to follow.” He wanted to know if Goose found “that it became easier as the story went on” and if he thought readers “would have quit

reading the book out of frustration.” Later in the interview Goose elaborated on his opinion of Mr. Norman’s use of dialect:

At first it was kind of hard to follow, but once you got used to it, it was so easy to read. After a few chapters of it, you’re just reading it like it’s normal. You don’t even have to delay. At first I was going back and reading, just kind of double-checking, [but] we use some of those slang words down in Louisiana.

### **Loki: “He Seems Intelligent”**

Loki was a generally quiet but extremely intelligent student who, like Thelma, Chatrik, and Goose, was also a member of the Honor Society. She had the ability to handle quite easily material which most students find challenging, reading widely and deeply in areas that are generally not within the scope of a high school senior. Loki was able to analyze what she had read and then synthesize it in a coherent format that reflected her thoughtful approach, particularly adept at doing so in writing. Loki’s thoughtful approach is also illustrated in her analysis of Mr. Norman as “intelligent, judging by his writing style and the fact that he has a law degree.” Though Loki was the acknowledged “intellectual” of the senior class, she also participated in track and field—specifically in field events—and was knowledgeable about other sports.

Initially, Loki provided handwritten journal responses and also typed responses. Later, the handwritten journal responses were merely a summary of the chapter and questions she had. The typed responses were her “journal” responses. Occasionally, there seemed to be contradictions between her handwritten responses and her typed responses. For example, she wrote: “The second chapter doesn’t shine much light on the first. I imagine it will not until the end chapters.” But her typed response read: “The second chapter provides more insight into Jax’s life as the story continues forward almost chronologically. The chapter covers a few incidents, but I only find some of them to be of any interest.”

Loki's copy of *Fielder's Choice*, by comparison to the books of the other students, was peppered with notes on practically every page. From these notes she drew her journal responses. For example, her note about Jugs, "Gosh, Jugs is never serious. Not at all like an officer," became in her typed version: "Even after flight school and becoming an officer Jugs still has his sometimes inappropriate sense of humor."

**Topic.** Most of Loki's topic-related responses dealt with the main theme of *Fielder's Choice*, that of making choices. Early in her journal responses, she recognized that "instead of just being a baseball book, the novel becomes something deeper. The novel becomes a book about a choice—a life-altering choice—though what exactly this choice is remains unknown." In our interview, Loki revealed that she had decided that this life-altering choice occurred when Jax "finally decided that it was *his* life, and *he* was going to control it, not someone else and all the events that came of that." She seemed to feel that the theme of choice was summed up in the story of the Browns' winning the pennant not because of the skills of the players but because of their heartfelt dedication:

Such is the simple message of the novel. Choices, good or bad, must be made for the right reasons. The simple message of the chapter, and indeed of the story, is one of hope. Choices are made by everyone every day, but why do we make them? If we are making them for the wrong reasons, then they are wrong regardless of outcome. Only a choice made for the right reasons can truly sit right in the grand scheme of things.

**Author.** Loki's perceptions of Mr. Norman himself are interesting to note:

It does seem to me that the book, or at least the author, is somewhat humorous. The note about the author contains comments which are quite obviously designed to poke fun at the author, not necessarily to ridicule him but to impart some of his personality through the description rather than having an astringent synopsis of his life. This signals that the tone of the book will probably have comic undertones from time to time.



In my interview with her, Loki commented: “He seems like a very odd man. Oh, you know, he has kind of an off-beat sense of humor. But he seems intelligent, judging by his writing style and the fact that he has a law degree.”

Like the other students, Loki’s responses in this category focused on Jax. However, unlike the comments of the other students, many of her initial comments about Jax were negative and skeptical. She did not seem to accept the author’s portrayal of Jax, questioning the credibility of his protagonist, Jax. In some of her book notes, she used terms such as “paranoid,” “jealous,” “defensive,” “selfish,” “touchy,” and “messed up” to describe him. She also seemed skeptical of certain details about Jax. For example, she made the following notes in her book: “He sleeps on his glove?” When Jax decides that the Japanese are human because they play baseball, Loki commented: “I suppose. Interpreting how his mind works.” By contrast, as she tried to figure out the rationale for Jax’s loathing of Jude, Loki initially seemed to feel that Jude had more credibility than Jax. She noted that Jude was “not disobedient like the other two” though he seemed a little too quick to please. She also seemed irritated with Jax for blaming everything on Jude and for taking out all of his anger on his little brother. At one point Loki wrote in her journal: “I cannot help but wonder why Jax hates Jude so much. There must be more than what is being revealed thus far.”

In spite of her skepticism of Jax, Loki did make some positive notes about him. For example, when Jax determinedly tells the Major that he will not allow himself to be put in prison for treason, she wrote: “Good for you!” Responding to Jax’s struggles after Jugs’s death, she conceded: “I do not blame Jax for his feelings. He has been through a lot thus far. It may also upset Jax to know that Jugs went down as he lived, alleviating others’ feeling of anger with his

amazing sense of humor.” Loki also noted Jax’s feeling of being trapped in the position of “the Alpha male of sorts” when he becomes the “man of the house.”

However, it was not until Loki read Jax’s story of Jude’s “Dud Ranch,” the failed lizard-thawing science project, that she noted: “Oh, maybe Jude has some problems.” But, as she pointed out in the interview, she still did not view Jude as a “bad person.” In fact, at one point, she surmised that “Jax has such a horrible view of Jude, not because Jude is a bad person, but because Jax blames him for the death of their father. It seems that Jude blames himself as well.” Only when Jude marries Dixie and “it was revealed that he was abusive, and he was very vindictive about having married Dixie before Jax got a chance” did she write in her journal: “Jude is a jerk. I cannot believe he got Dixie.”

Loki’s responses to the other characters were minimal. On the positive side, she noted that Jugs seemed to have a good attitude about sports and that Bubba, “one tough guy,” turned out not to be a bad guy after all. Earlier in her notes, Loki had expressed doubt about Jax’s view of Bubba. She did not feel that “a simple grudge [on the part of Bubba] would make someone frame another person for what seems to amount to high treason.” On the negative side, Loki noted that “it seems odd to me that even after undergoing his officer’s training Jugs still has his inappropriate sense of humor.” She also seemed to find Dixie’s reason for marrying Jude incredible: “She married him for a car!”

In spite of what seemed to be a great deal of incredulity, Loki did find credibility in the characters’ pranks and in the simple pastimes of small-town life. When we discussed the pranks in our interview, she commented: “I’ve been raised around guys, and that’s pretty realistic.” In response to the story of Jax and Jugs throwing a baseball through the pipes, she wrote in her

book: “Gosh, I guess all small-town kids are the same.” When I asked Loki to elaborate on this comment, she gave an illustration from her own childhood:

Well, it’s just that they found whatever was there, and they played in an old stack of pipes. My dad’s a mechanic, and when I was little, [he] used to overhaul engines. My brother, little friends from around the neighborhood, and I played with the valves that came out of the engines. We’d make up ridiculous games, but it’s all we had.

**Audience.** For Loki, *Fielder’s Choice* seemed to evoke feelings of aversion, sympathy, sadness, and outrage. Her strongest aversions seemed to be to the kitten story and to Jax’s treatment at the hands of the Japanese. For example, Loki wrote the following notes: “Ugh!” (maggots crawling in the eye sockets of the kitten, conditions in “The Pipe,” and Jax’s eyeball popping out); “I hate that feeling.” (things crawling on Jax); “How terrible!” (Jax battling flies in “The Pipe”); “Ouch!” (Jax being hit by the guard). She noted in her journal that “the haunting image of the cat sticks with me even now.” It is this image that also haunts Jax while he is in “The Pipe.” Mr. Norman responded to Loki’s aversion to the kitten story: “You were disgusted by the cat story. When I speak in schools, that is the most common comment that I get. Do you think it added [to] or detracted [from] the story? Should I have left it out?”

At various times, her sympathy seemed to encompass Bubba, Jax, Jude, Jugs, and Little Jackson. At one point in her journal, Loki indicated strong empathy for Jax’s aversion to funerals:

To tell the truth, I sympathize with Jackson when it comes to funerals. I go out of my way not to get near them. Not that it is a fear of death. I just do not grieve like most people. Jackson seems the same way.

Sadness was evoked by the death of Jugs and by Jax’s mistimed declaration of love for Dixie, but Loki’s outrage was focused upon the “despicable” pranks carried out by the ball players. For example, she responded to the prank on Neckless by writing: “Those rotten cheats!”

**Text.** An experienced reader, Loki seemed keenly aware of the textual features of *Fielder's Choice*. Impressed with the opening chapter of the novel, she wrote:

The first chapter of *Fielder's Choice* is one of the best-written openings in any book I have ever read. It is immediately captivating because it opens directly into action but does not give away the plot or ending to the book. I find this particularly attractive in the novel.

Mr. Norman responded to this praise with appreciation: “Your comment . . . that I did not give away the rest of the plot was very welcome. I tried very hard to give the reader enough information that he could follow the story but not enough that he could predict it.”

In other responses she noticed the author's use of the following literary techniques: the baseball framework, the purposeful changes of subject (Referring to Jax's sense of guilt about his father's death, she wrote: “Accentuated with change of subject.”), the Civil War allusions, the repetition of certain phrases (“That's psychology.”), the “remember him?” reality device, the building of associations, the chronological organization interrupted by flashbacks (“I'm really getting tired of flashbacks.”), and the connecting of the end of the novel to the sequence in the beginning (Jax being investigated for treason).

In our discussion of the text during the interview, I asked her what she thought of the overall structure and tone of the novel. Here is her response:

Structure—it was interesting, you know, the way he put it together. A little bit of the flashbacks inside of the flashbacks would get annoying and tedious, but overall it was very well assembled. And the tone—it was a very serious story, but it was realistic.

Her criticism of the text seemed to focus on Mr. Norman's use of flashbacks. Loki observed that using flashbacks to set up the novel was effective, but she became frustrated when “instead of going forward he started going backwards more.” She felt that this lack of forward movement in the action of the story would be distracting for the general reader as well. Mr. Norman responded to Loki's frustration with the flashbacks:

In your comments to Chapter Four you indicated you were “really getting tired of flashbacks.” In that the whole story was more or less a flashback I assume you were talking about parts of the story that were not in chronological order. I struggled with this a lot during the editing process. Again, a writer has to struggle with how much and what he gives the reader at what time so that he does not telegraph his punch.

In the interview, Loki acknowledged that “once you get toward the end of the book some of those flashbacks that seemed pointless actually tie in very well, so without them it would have had a different effect.”

More than once Loki noticed the Civil War references scattered throughout *Fielder's Choice* and noted them in her copy of the book. Commenting on these in the interview, she explained that “being from the South and knowing how everyone here [Limer] takes the Civil War so seriously, I think it [use of Civil War references] just kind of fit in with where he was supposedly from. That's the kind of thing that guys around here think about.”

A very interesting detail that Loki noticed (which I did not) was the fact that Mr. Norman had Jax use present tense verbs when he tells the Major that he is quite sure that he is not at the prisoner of war camp (in fact, he is at the Admiral's), although he is recounting a past event. Loki noted this in her journal: “Funny the language used to say that is very present, not at all like he knew what it was until he told that part of the story.” When I asked Loki to expand on that observation in the interview, she explained:

I really didn't know what to think about that part. It seems like he's still in shock over everything that's happened to him, and so he's just telling this story as it's coming to him. He doesn't really realize what's happened in the grand scheme of things.

### **Conclusions Regarding Students' Written and Oral Responses**

**Topic.** Multiple cues such as the title and situations in which Jax had to make a choice were provided about the theme of making choices, and without exception all five of the students responded to this theme. Two of the most interesting responses to the title came from Goose and

from Chatrick. For Goose, an avid baseball player, the title was an immediate cue that the topic of choice would be important in the novel. The inherent logic (*logos*) of the title seemed apparent to him. For Chatrick also the title was important. However, as one who was unfamiliar with baseball terminology, it was not until the end of the novel that he understood Mr. Norman's title. As I noted in a previous chapter, Miall and Kuiken's (1995) study of student readers seemed to indicate that a heightened awareness of author and attention to the author's purpose may be associated with an extensive reading of literature. What is interesting with Goose and Chatrick is that it is life experiences rather than literary experiences that made the difference in their awareness of the author's purpose.

**Author.** Because a major way in which the credibility, or *ethos*, of an author of fiction is established with readers is through the characters the author creates, I included students' responses to Mr. Norman's characters as well as their responses to Mr. Norman directly in the section on author. For all of the students except Goose, their primary form of response to Mr. Norman was through their responses to his characters, especially to Jax. All of them, however, including Loki in the end, viewed Jax positively and identified with some aspect of Jax's life, thus viewing him as a credible character. These aspects differed across readers. Thelma saw Jax in some of her friends. Chatrick saw himself in Jax's experience with his parents' separation. Bob identified with some of Jax's baseball situations. Goose saw himself in Jax's relationship with his older brother Jugs. Loki identified with Jax and Jugs's small-town pastimes.

Though Goose did identify with Jax, most of his author-related responses were directed at Mr. Norman himself. Of all the participants, he seemed to connect Mr. Norman most closely with the text. Goose perceived that it was likely that situations in *Fielder's Choice* were reflective of Mr. Norman's personal experiences, and he connected the plot twists and

exaggerated detail with what he perceived as the typical lawyer personality of the author. It seems that for Goose, Mr. Norman was a rather “visible” author (Crismore, 1990; Nolen, (1995), but his “visibility” did not seem to present any obstacles for Goose.

**Audience.** One avenue for an author to establish a relationship with an audience is through appealing to emotion, or *pathos*. Mr. Norman certainly evoked emotions from the students through Jax’s story. The primary emotion seemed to be sympathy for Jax. Out of this feeling of sympathy for Jax flowed other emotions, particularly sadness and anger. For Thelma and Loki, sadness was evoked by the death of Jugs, Jax’s beloved older brother. Chatrick’s sadness was for himself as well as for Jax when he learned of Paw’s affair. Thelma and Chatrick both expressed strong anger towards Jude. Though the students did not all overtly express the same emotions, they all seemed to be bound by a common sympathy for Jax.

This common bond of sympathy for Jax is no accident. Mr. Norman’s framework for Jax’s story is a legal inquiry into whether or not Jax is guilty of treason, and Mr. Norman, the author/defense lawyer, is presenting Jax to the reader/jury as a character worthy of sympathetic consideration. It is interesting to note that his persuasive appeal to his audience’s emotions (*pathos*) harks back to the use of classical Aristotelian rhetoric in the law courts (forensic).

The students’ responses of sympathy for Jax seem consistent with one of the principles which Norman Holland (1975) derived from his study of five readers, a study which I discussed in Chapter Two. This principle was that defenses must be matched, hypothesizing that a reader finds something in the work that matches what he or she does to cope with needs or dangers. It seems evident from the students’ responses to Jax that they found enough of a match between themselves and Jax to identify with him and sympathize with him.

**Text.** There seemed to be six features of the text to which the students responded, though not all of the students responded to all six features. These six features of the text were: (1) the opening of the novel, (2) the use of the Major as a pseudo-audience, (3) the dialect, (4) the pace of the story, (5) the flashbacks, and (6) the terms and allusions.

Chatrick and Loki were very impressed by Mr. Norman's opening chapter. Chatrick felt that it drew him in, and Loki praised it as one of the best openings she had ever read. Thelma, on the other hand, was confused by the opening lines of the novel. The use of the Major as a pseudo-audience confused both Thelma and Goose. However, by the end of the novel, Goose's initial confusion diminished and was replaced by appreciation. He felt that, though Jax was speaking to the Major, he was also speaking to him. Thelma, Bob, and Goose all adapted easily to the Southern dialect and seemed to appreciate it. On the other hand, Chatrick was bothered by the dialect and would have preferred more conventional spelling and sentence structure. The pace of the novel seemed a bit too slow for Bob and Loki. For Thelma, however, the story seemed to move very quickly. Closely related to the pace of the novel were the flashbacks. Though Bob felt that the pace was too slow because Jax was telling so many stories, he later came to the conclusion that without the flashbacks the reader would not have been able to know Jax as well. Loki was very frustrated by the backward movement of the story because of the flashbacks, but she acknowledged that some of the flashbacks that seemed pointless actually tied in very well in the end. Baseball terms were confusing for Chatrick, who was unfamiliar with the terms of the sport, and Goose was confused by allusions such as "Pavlov's weenie," "Grant's Bible," and "donnybrook."

We may conclude that in spite of the diverse responses of the students to the features of the text and the variety of emotions evoked, the students unanimously enjoyed *Fielder's Choice*,



sympathized with Jax, and grasped the primary theme of choice. The students identified with Jax and were able to move past what may have seemed problematic. This unity seems to illustrate an aspect of what Burke (1950) termed “consubstantiality,” how through identification, humans are joined yet separate. It seems, then, that creating opportunities for both a defined and a “generic” audience to identify with an author—directly or indirectly—may be an author’s most effective strategy for connecting with his or her audience.

### **Direct Responses in Interactive Meeting: Author to Audience and Audience to Author**

Opportunities for exchange, such as the journal responses, seemed to enable Mr. Norman’s audience to connect to him directly as well as through his characters. How did he connect to his audience in a face-to-face situation? And how did the students respond to Mr. Norman? The interactive meeting was an extension of the interaction among the students as they read and responded to *Fielder’s Choice* and Mr. Norman’s written responses to the students. In this section I describe the setting in which the interactive meeting took place, identify the participants, describe typical behaviors of the author and audience, and describe the exchanges between the author and various students and exchanges among the students. (See Appendix F.)

**Setting.** The setting of the interactive meeting between Mr. Norman and four of the student participants was a windowless meeting room on the campus of a university that was centrally located to the participants. A table with chairs around it was arranged in the middle of the room. The seating arrangement was as follows: Mr. Norman was at the end of the table closest to the door; Chatrick was seated to Mr. Norman’s right; Thelma sat next to Chatrick; I was seated next to but a short distance removed from Thelma; Bob sat to Mr. Norman’s left; Loki was seated next to Bob; Bob’s mother, our videotaper, was seated against the wall opposite Mr. Norman.

**Participants.** The participants in this meeting were Rick Norman, the author and lead conversant in this meeting; high school students Thelma, Chatrick, Bob, and Loki; and myself. Bob's mother was present as the videotaper, but she did not participate in any form in the conversation. Goose, the fifth high school student who participated in the case study, was unable to be present because he had to work.

It was evident that Mr. Norman wanted to set a relaxed, casual, and open atmosphere for the meeting from the very beginning. In keeping with his belief in the importance of humor, he initiated the first of many rounds of laughter when he told the students that "we need to agree among ourselves that we'll be straight and not hold anything back. . . . When you get old and bald-headed, it doesn't matter anymore what people say about you or think about you." Most of the exchanges involved Mr. Norman, Chatrick, and Thelma, and it was not unusual for Chatrick and Thelma, as well as Mr. Norman, to evoke laughter from the group. Part of this laughter was produced by Mr. Norman's off and on teasing of Chatrick after he found out that Chatrick did not see anything funny in *Fielder's Choice*. It is interesting to note that Bob, a quiet fellow, made a few comments that evoked laughter, some of which was generated by his gentle teasing of Chatrick.

Because most of the conversation revolved around Mr. Norman, Chatrick, and Thelma, Mr. Norman's eye contact was primarily with the students to his right, Chatrick and Thelma. Chatrick and Thelma primarily had eye contact with Mr. Norman and with each other. Bob had much less frequent eye contact than Chatrick and Thelma since most of Mr. Norman's exchanges were not with him. Loki's eye contact was less frequent even than Bob's. There was often a lack of eye contact from Loki even when she was speaking with Mr. Norman.

It is interesting to note that Chatrick, who seemed very uninhibited and relaxed, nevertheless often sat with his arms folded across his body. Thelma, who seemed a bit less relaxed than Chatrick, also often sat with her arms folded across her body. When she talked, however, she frequently used her hands to punctuate her conversation. Bob often looked down at the table and sometimes seemed disconnected. Frequently toying with her autographed copy of *Fielder's Choice* or tapping gently on the table, Loki too sometimes appeared disconnected and only occasionally directed her attention toward the author.

**Conversation.** The various exchanges in the conversation were generally ignited by Mr. Norman, who interspersed personal questions and observations (for example, “Well, are y’all all going to college—somewhere?”) with discussion of *Fielder's Choice* and his writing of the novel. Both Chatrick and Thelma responded readily to Mr. Norman’s questions as well as initiating exchanges. Bob and Loki, on the other hand, seemed to respond to Mr. Norman primarily when spoken to directly. When they did join in the general conversation, their remarks often did not seem directed specifically toward Mr. Norman. Though I had defined my role as that of an observer, I entered into a few of the exchanges, usually pulled in either by Mr. Norman or by various students.

In a preceding section, I discussed what seemed to be Mr. Norman’s perception of the students in the study. These perceptions were based strictly upon what he could assume about the students (cf. Nystrand, 1990) as he proceeded with his written responses. These perceived relationships seemed to be (1) teacher/parent to students/children; (2) *mea culpa* “apologist” to the “offended”; (3) “apprentice” writer to “expert” readers; (4) teacher/defendant to students/“plaintiffs.” The primary relationship in his written responses seemed to be that of teacher/parent to students/children.

However, in the interactive interview, the primary relationship seemed to be that of apprentice writer to “expert” readers. Many of the exchanges revolved around Mr. Norman’s asking the students such questions as “What makes [a book] pleasurable to read?” “When do you put it down? When do you just say, ‘This is stupid! This isn’t going anywhere. This is too boring to read.’” “Should I assume that a reader is at a 5 [on a scale of 1-10 in knowledge of baseball]? Or should I assume the reader’s at an 8?” Though not explicitly stated, Mr. Norman’s intention seemed to be to learn from his audience.

The teacher/parent to students/children relationship seemed less dominant in the interactive meeting than in the written responses, but it still seemed very strong. This may be related to the fact that Mr. Norman has a daughter the same age as the students in the study. This relationship was reflected in “teaching/parenting moments” such as when he instructed the students, “When you start writing for an audience, you have to assume that they know something. And what you try to do is . . . tell them something new.” Another example of this relationship occurred when he exhorted the students, “Although you may not want to do it because it takes time and effort, . . . you can make it [a paper] probably 30% better every time you rewrite it.”

Much less evident but still present were traces of the *mea culpa* “apologist” to the “offended” and teacher/defendant to students/“plaintiffs” relationships. For example, we see both of these relationships present in Mr. Norman’s response to Chatrick, who said that he did not understand what happened to Jax on the mound in his humiliating loss to the New York Yankees,

Once you start telling a story like he’s [Jax] telling, one guy to another [to the Major], you know, the other guy that he’s telling it to is going to know what a balk is, I would think, back then, you know, and in that context, it’s kind of hard to work in an

explanation (teacher/defendant). I was kind of trapped by what I was doing (*mea culpa* “apologist”).

**Conclusions regarding interactive exchanges.** As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, this interactive meeting was an extension of the students’ responses to one another and to *Fielder’s Choice* and Mr. Norman’s responses to the students. This continuation is particularly evident in Mr. Norman’s attention to Chatrick and Thelma. Just as the majority of his written comments were directed to these two students when he “knew” them only by a number, his verbal comments and questions were also directed first and foremost to them in the face-to-face encounter. Perhaps this should not be surprising since it was Thelma and Chatrick who provided the most open responses both in their journals and in the meeting. They seemed to connect more personally to Jax and to Mr. Norman than Bob or Loki did. (I omit Goose because he was not present at the interactive meeting).

This continuation is also seen in Mr. Norman’s perception of his multiple relationships with the students. He seemed to see himself and the students in the same roles as he did when he responded to them in writing. However, the focal relationship shifted from parent/teacher to students/children to that of “apprentice” writer to “expert” readers. It is perhaps partly due to this shift in focus that the face-to-face relationship between Mr. Norman and the students was much richer than the “pen and paper” relationship in his written responses.

To conclude, one major observation about the interactive meeting seems pertinent to this study. Though the author’s focal relationship to this audience seemed to shift from his written responses, the nature of the audience’s responses to the author did not seem to shift dramatically from their written responses. Thelma’s and Chatrick’s responses were very open, Loki’s were observant, and Bob’s were spare. However, just as sympathy for and identification with Jax seemed to be the common thread in the students’ written responses, what appeared to be

sympathetic laughter seemed to be the common thread in the students' "verbal" responses to Mr. Norman and to one another.

### **Relationship Between Author's Intentions and Students' Responses**

How do the audience's responses relate to the author's intentions? Though authorial intentions may be the subject of debate among literary critics, reader response theorists, and poststructural theorists, composition theorists seem to agree that authorial intention is fundamental (e.g., Kinneavy, 1971; Nelson & Calfee, 1998; Vipond & Hunt, 1984; Winterowd & Murray, 1985; Witte, 1987). Research has shown that a writer's attention to and perceived relationship with his or her audience directly affects goals as well as task representation, idea generation, word choice, and so forth (e.g., Berkenkotter, 1981; Flower & Hayes, 1981a, 1981b; Kirsch, 1990). The author-audience relationship also affects readers' responses to an author's intentions (Geisler, 1991; Graves & Frederiksen, 1991; Haas, 1994; Vipond & Hunt, 1984; Wineburg, 1991).

The question of how the audience's responses relate to the author's intentions has already been partly addressed in a preceding section in which I included the author's written responses to the students' journal responses. The conclusion there was that the author's responses to the students' journals were based upon his perceptions of his multifaceted relationship with the students: (1) teacher/parent to students/children, (2) *mea culpa* "apologist" to the "offended," (3) "apprentice" writer to "expert" readers, (4) teacher/defendant to students/ "plaintiffs."

In this section I include the author's stated intentions for the focused passages and the students' responses to these focused passages. The data for the author's stated intentions were taken from the interviews which I had with him, and the data for the students' responses were

taken from their journals and book notes as well as the follow-up interview and the interactive interview. However, Mr. Norman was not given access to the data from the book notes or follow-up interviews, and the interactive interview took place after he had responded in writing to the students' journals; thus, his written responses were based upon the journals.

I also include in this section a discussion of the students' responses as they relate to Mr. Norman's perception of his audience prior to his relationship to the students in the study, whom he had described as young adults limited in literary experience, young adults limited in worldly experience and knowledge, and so forth. Not all of Mr. Norman's perceptions of his audience, such as those pertaining to adults and the self plagued by the memory of *the mistake* and in need of catharsis, apply directly to the students' responses. Therefore, I have limited the scope of this section to the following: young adults limited in literary experience, young adults limited in worldly experience and knowledge, young adults able to distinguish reality from fiction, and the general "generic" reader. (See Appendix E for a taxonomic outline of the interactive interview.) However, I have incorporated into some of these sections (where it seemed particularly obvious) references to Mr. Norman's own experiences (self) because it is impossible to separate completely Mr. Norman's intentions for his audience and Mr. Norman himself. In fact, the role of self in writing for others is explored in the next chapter.

### **Focused Passages**

**Passage A: Baseball, an orangutan, and Jax's revelation.** Mr. Norman's stated intention for this passage—in which Jax flies over Tokyo, notices the baseball fields, and remembers Neckless's story of the orangutan—was to convey "in a story form that may be somewhat funny" the point that "there are often things going on behind the scenes, and different

labels may be put on different people, but you just don't know the whole story" (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001).

None of the students responded to Mr. Norman's intended humor in this passage. Indeed, Bob focused on a literal response to the analogy by sympathizing with the orangutan. The only emotional audience-related response Bob expressed in written or oral form was to this passage. He wrote, "The section that is chosen is horrible. They pick on a defenseless animal. This man must have some kind of fun when he does this or he is making a lot of money."

While Bob responded literally, Thelma and Chatrick seemed to question Mr. Norman's illustration, as well as, in Thelma's response, to question Jax's credibility. She seemed very skeptical of Jax's observation that the Japanese are human because they played baseball. In her journal she questioned: "He realized they were human because they played baseball? Is this the only way he can relate to people? Why did he not think of this before?" She also could not understand his not being more upset with the Japanese. After all, his beloved brother Jugs had been killed in conflict with the Japanese. "Why is Jax not more upset with them? Is he really that forgiving? I find this to be a little strange. Yes, they are people too, but they are also his brother's killers and the enemy."

In responding to Thelma's questions, Mr. Norman wrote:

You found very strange Jax's ability to forgive the Japanese. Throughout the novel I tried to make Jax a skeptical character searching for answers. More than anything he just wants to get along. If I could rewrite the novel, I would perhaps make this point clearer so that his lack of hate for the Japanese would not seem so out of place.

Chatrick seemed to discredit the analogy that Mr. Norman used to illustrate Jax's questioning of the "yellow coat" that had been put on the Japanese:

I think that comparing Americans' dislike of the Japanese and the story of an orangutan being beat by a man in a yellow suit is a horrible metaphor. What he is insinuating is that Americans have somehow "set up" the Japanese. It is saying that the Japanese are



innocent, and Americans don't realize it. . . . It is a bad comparison. The Japanese knew why they were fighting, and they bombed us first. I do agree that they are human, but part of me thinks that anyone, or any group, that would bomb someone who isn't even in the war has to be a little "yellow."

Mr. Norman explained his use of the analogy in this way:

I am sorry that you did not like the story of the orangutan. Through that story I was attempting to show that Jax was searching . . . for some explanation of war and had concluded that there may have been ulterior motives involved in the propaganda.

The only students who seemed to respond directly to Mr. Norman's point were Goose and Loki. Goose responded to this passage first on a textual level by taking note that Mr. Norman made use of an analogy. He then explained the point of the analogy by writing that "this [story] makes Jax question all the bad things people have said about Japan. Jax wonders if some high official is putting the yellow coat on him [Jax]." Loki noted that "Jax has a revelation about the war and how people construe things." The revelation that Jax has is that though there is a war on, started by the Japanese, the Japanese are still human and not all are bad. The few bad ones have created a yellow coat, which is placed upon the whole group. From the perspective of the monkey (the United States), all Japanese are wearing the coat of the one who beats him.

It seems evident from the students' responses that unlike Mr. Norman, they saw nothing humorous in this passage. In fact, they seemed to view this passage quite seriously. The point Mr. Norman was making, that "there are often things going on behind the scenes, and different labels may be put on different people, but you just don't know the whole story" seemed unclear to most of the students.

**Passage B: Dropped babies.** Concerning Jax's nightmare about the babies falling from the apple tree, Mr. Norman indicated that the point that he was trying to illustrate was that

“indecision is as big a problem [as]—or maybe a bigger problem than—a wrong decision.” He added:

In making a decision, a lot of times too much angst is spent on whether the decision is right or wrong, where the harm comes in the indecision. And I think he was also bothered . . . by the children. He had his own nephew, he had the children he was bombing, [and] he had the little kid in the street that he sees later on (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001).

With the exception of Thelma, who viewed this passage as biblical symbolism of the Fall of Man, the students indicated interpretations that were basically the same as Mr. Norman’s intention. Thelma responded to what she saw as biblical symbolism in this passage. She saw it as symbolizing the Fall of Man as recorded in the book of Genesis. “If the babies would not take the apples, they would not fall. They may represent man as a whole. He [Jax] cannot save them because a mere man can’t. Only God can save us from our sins.” Later in the interview when I asked her to expand on this response, she added that she also thought that the baby was “like Little Jackson.” Jax thought of him as his son and was concerned for him. However he was “so far away he couldn’t do anything about it.” In her book Thelma noted that “his ‘dream’ may have been like a message from God keeping him alive.” Though she connected the image of the falling babies with Jax’s nephew, Little Jackson, as did Mr. Norman, she never gave an interpretation of indecisiveness similar to Mr. Norman’s.

The problem of indecisiveness was at the heart of the responses of Goose, Chatrick, Bob, and Loki. Interestingly, however, it was not until I conducted the follow-up interview with Goose that he provided this interpretation of the passage. In his journal he wrote that he did not understand Jax’s dream, but he responded on an emotional level: “This is a very sad part in the book.” It was not until my interview with Goose, after he had reread this passage, that he gave the following explanation of the “dropped babies” passage:

I think what it was mainly showing is that he has to make good choices, but you can't always make the right decisions. It's the choices and his ability to pick and choose which choice to make—which baby to catch. He spends his whole time figuring out which one to catch. [If] you spend your whole time trying to figure out what's your main priority, [you] never get anything done.

Just as Goose did not initially respond to the meaning of the passage in accordance with Mr. Norman's stated intention, Chatrick also wrote at first that he did not understand the passage even though he read it three times. However, he seemed to write his way to an understanding of the main idea of Jax's dream, writing a very coherent explanation of it:

Maybe it is supposed to mean that if you try to "save the world" you end up doing nothing, but if you focus on one problem, and when that one is solved, then you move on to the next. If he would have just tried to take one baby at a time, he could have saved some of them. This dream might also be trying to tell him to quit "choking" under the pressure. This dream may help him get over his problem.

Chatrick returned, though, to his doubts about his understanding of the passage: "Maybe all of my interpretations are silly and don't make any sense, but neither does this dream. All I know is that if I had a dream like this, it would really bother me."

Mr. Norman responded to Chatrick's "confusion" over this passage:

In Chapter Twelve you could not make sense of Jax's recurrent nightmare. In writing the nightmare scene I did not want so much for the reader to figure out the analogy as much as I wanted the reader to be bothered by it and empathize with Jax being bothered by his indecision.

Responding on two levels to the "dropped babies" passage, Bob initially revealed a sensitivity to the pathos of the dream: "This passage is even worse than the one [Passage A] before." Subsequently, Bob explained the topic of this dream by saying that "this sort of sums up his life. His indecision always ends up hurting him in one way or another." Mr. Norman suggested another way of looking at Jax's indecision: "Would another way to look at it be that his indecision, his searching process, resulted in his figuring out a formula with which to live his life?"

Like Goose, Chatrick, and Bob, Loki also interpreted the passage as symbolic of Jax's struggle with indecisiveness. However, she had an interesting opener to her response: "If I were a Freudian, I would think this passage is about Jax's latent sexual desires for his fellow POWs. Suffice it to say, I am not a Freudian." She went on to explain that "the babies represent the flow and ebb of life." Jax's life, like the babies, "slips away and he cannot control it beyond his choices. He must stop and decide one course of action." Mr. Norman responded to Loki's unique "Freudian observation" and her interpretation of this passage: "I am glad that you are not a Freudian. I hope there are no such things as Freudians. Your interpretation of the recurring nightmare was the same as mine."

There are three observations that I believe we can make about the students' interpretations of this passage. First, Thelma's interpretation seemed to be based primarily upon her familiarity with biblical allusions rather than strictly upon the context of the theme of choice. Secondly, Chatrick seemed to write his way to a coherent interpretation. Thirdly, Goose's final interpretation was the result of rereading the passage. These observations suggest that familiarity with allusions may bring an added intertextuality to interpretations, and that writing and rereading may clarify interpretations.

**Passage C: Love is all.** Mr. Norman indicated that the "love is all" passage, in which Jax defends love as the basis for his decisions, was intended to "summarize the whole deal." He explained his philosophy of love as the basis for making choices by saying that "you've just got to love each other and get along. If that's your bottom line, I don't think you can go wrong." He added:

If you have a problem, if you'll just fill up your heart with love, you'll look at it the right way. And even if you mess up, and it turns out to be the wrong decision, at least you can say that you made it for the right reason (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001).

He confessed that he struggled with whether or not to include this passage because he was worried that he would be “spoon feeding” the moral of the story. In retrospect, he seemed glad he had included it. When I asked Mr. Norman how Jax would define love, there was a long, thoughtful pause. Eventually, he defined it as “ultimate friendship towards everything.” He added, “And I think that’s what he’s figuring out. There is this blissful state that once you reach it, the other problems sort of disappear because the decisions become easy, and it doesn’t really matter if they’re right or wrong” (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001).

All of the students’ responses seemed to imply at least some degree of agreement with Mr. Norman’s philosophy that love should be the basis of decisions. Thelma and Chatrick indicated strong agreement with this concept. Thelma had a very succinct response to this passage: “Love is the reason we act as we do. His decisions have not been bad. They were all for love and therefore can’t be wrong.” Chatrick’s response revealed agreement with Jax that if you make a decision “for love, then that automatically makes it the right one,” and he felt that Jax had made the best decisions possible. He thought that Jax would define love as “caring for somebody” and that as long as someone cared enough to make a decision, that decision was loving. Based on this definition of love, Chatrick agreed with Jax: “I think that’s the right way to make a choice.”

Goose’s and Loki’s responses reflected Mr. Norman’s intention that this passage was meant to “summarize the whole deal.” Goose saw this passage on love as the one that “ties in the whole theme of the book . . . love is all,” as well as tying in all the misfortunes of the novel. He emphasized “that it’s not always the result of the decision that matters, but instead it’s the reason you make these decisions.” In response to my question in the interview, Goose decided that Jax would define love as “a basic relationship of trust and truth between two individuals.”

In a response similar to Goose's, Loki noted that "this simple statement resolves the conflict in the book and is the response, as it were, to Passage B." Jax is finally comfortable with his decisions because "they are his decisions and his life; no one can tell him that he made the wrong choice as long as he is right with himself." Earlier in her journal, Loki had remarked that Jax needed to develop a moral compass to help him make decisions. In the interview, when I asked her if she thought he had developed the compass, she pointed to this passage as evidence that Jax had settled on love as his guide. When I asked her how she thought Jax would define love, she responded that she thought it would be a type of brotherly love in which Jax identified with others on two levels: "This person's like me; they don't try to hurt me."

Taking the point of making choices rather than being indecisive and applying it to himself (included in the "we") and others, Bob responded:

The choice we make today will affect our lives tomorrow. It will be wise to make right choices today so it will be easier tomorrow. An honest man can only make an honest mistake. We all make mistakes, but [we should] try to make the right decisions.

However, he seemed unsure of the wisdom of Jax's choice to base his decisions on love, perhaps because he was unsure of Jax's definition of love. He noted that there are "two different kinds of love—a family love, and then a married type of love." Bob seemed to imply that if Jax based his decisions on "a family type of love," he would not let anything happen to those he loved. He also noted, though, that perhaps Jax needed to base his decisions on more than just love, especially the sexual "married type" love, which could get him into "the wrong spots."

Mr. Norman initially worried that he was "spoon feeding" the moral of the story in this passage. However, none of the students expressed any sense of being "spoon fed." Instead, they seemed to respond to the "simplicity" of the "lesson" with a profoundness of their own. In

particular, Bob seemed to take the next step forward from merely responding. Instead, he thought about the application of this “lesson” to his own life.

I believe that two points may be drawn from the students’ response to this passage. First, writing that is clear and “simple” does not always represent “spoon feeding.” Second, students like Bob, who consider themselves non-readers and who sometimes struggle in school, are sometimes capable of responses to literature that are more sophisticated than they or we may realize.

**Passage D: Newspaper epilogue.** Mr. Norman confessed that the newspaper epilogue was “a little bit of a cop-out.” The publisher had told him that he needed at least one more chapter to let the reader know what happened to Jax. Mr. Norman, however, did not feel that he had another chapter in him, and he was (and is) “really bad at writing on command.” Mr. Norman is not sure who came up with the idea of using the newspaper article as a “shortcut,” but Mr. Norman decided to push the article twenty years into Jax’s future because “I think [it] gave me more of a story . . . rather than just tying up loose ends” (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001).

Thelma and Loki both commented on the “great ending,” “wonderful conclusion” of the novel. Thelma’s response to the “wrap-up” of Jax’s life and the conclusion to the novel was very brief: “It seems that Jax’s life turned out great. What a great ending, even if it was with the Yankees.” Loki noted that this newspaper article is a final resolution to the chronology rather than the theme. (She viewed Jax’s “love is all” declaration in Passage C as the resolution to the theme.) Responding to the text and the topic of the newspaper epilogue, she wrote in her journal:

This passage is the final resolution to the book. It is not the resolution of the central theme but of the chronology. He is happy, or so he indicates. Jax makes a joke about the

turn of events, and it shows that he is happy. He and his family are all happy because he made the right choice all those nights ago [the choice to rescue Dixie and Little Jackson from Jude]. I think it is a wonderful conclusion to the book.

In responding to the newspaper article, Chatrick decided that the army's apology and medal were "too little too late," but he applauded little Jackson's playing ball, seeing it as a way for Jax to live through his son. It seems that he too approved of this ending.

In Goose's opinion, the newspaper article seemed to function as an "afterword" that tells what happened to little Jackson (as well as to Big Jackson), but he also commented on a change he saw in the character of Jax, "Big Jackson gets to throw his gooseball, but he messes up. This doesn't bother him because baseball is no longer the only love in his life. Dixie and his son Jackson are now the major part in his life." Bob also seemed to see this article as a summation of Jax's career and life. However, he took his response one step further just as he had with the "love is all" passage. Bob seemed to make a life application to himself, pondering the question of how others may view what he may consider to be a right decision: "It makes you wonder if you make the right decisions if somebody will question you and then tell you, you are wrong." Mr. Norman responded to Bob's comment: "Your final comment was very perceptive. You indicated to me that you followed the premise of my novel."

As a whole, the students tended to respond to the content of the newspaper article rather than to the format. None of them viewed the article as a reality device designed to convince them of the "truth" of the story. Indeed, Mr. Norman himself did not indicate that this was his intention. Instead, the newspaper article was a "shortcut" designed to fulfill the publisher's demand that he let readers know what had happened to Jax. The students' responses to the passage alone suggest that they accepted the article as a conclusion. However, as I discussed in a preceding section, Chatrick questioned the abrupt ending of the last chapter, suggesting that Mr.



Norman should have added a few more chapters leading up to the newspaper article. He was not entirely satisfied with the newspaper article as a conclusion. In his follow-up interview, Bob indicated that as a group they (the five students) wanted a more definitive conclusion. Indeed, in the interactive interview, the students expressed this desire to Mr. Norman. He then explained to them, as he had to me, that the article was a “shortcut” because he did not feel that he had another chapter in him.

Two aspects of the students’ responses are interesting. First, the students’ written responses to this particular focused passage did not reveal the full depth of their response to this passage. Only by looking at Chatrick’s response to the chapter that included the article did I realize that he seemed to see the article for what it was—a “shortcut” that did not satisfy his need to know more about Jax. Likewise, it was only in the follow-up interview with Bob and in the interactive interview between the students and Mr. Norman that I understood that the students wanted more from the conclusion. This suggests to me that the students’ responses did not reveal all that they were actually feeling or thinking—even to the point of creating a seeming discrepancy between their written responses and verbal responses.

Second, I find it interesting that in a very sophisticated way the students seemed cognizant of Mr. Norman’s intent to use the article as a “wrap-up” of Jax’s life, but they were also sophisticated enough as readers to realize that, for them at least, the article did not have enough in it to fulfill its purpose.

**Conclusions regarding responses relative to stated intentions.** This study leads to three conclusions about readers’ responses to passages relative to an author’s stated intentions. First, readers’ understanding of an author’s intended meaning may at times be “impeded” by competing meanings. This seems illustrated in Thelma’s interpretation of Jax’s baby tree dream

as representing the Fall of Man. Thelma evidently was quite familiar with the biblical story in Genesis of the Fall of Man as represented by Adam and Eve eating fruit from the forbidden tree. She applied this familiar representation to Mr. Norman's description of babies falling from an apple tree in a way that seemed quite different from his stated intention.

Second, readers may respond to what an author may consider to be a "simplistic" intended meaning with profound insights. As I discussed earlier in this section, this seems to have been the case with the students' responses to the "spoon feeding" of the "love is all" moral.

Third, readers may understand "too well" an author's hidden intention—an intention that readers were not meant to understand. This seems illustrated by the students' understanding that the newspaper article was intended to fill in the gaps of the readers' knowledge of what happened to Jax after he left the interview with the Major. They also indicated that they understood that for them this "shortcut" fell short of its intended purpose.

### **Students' Responses to Author's Intentions for Audience**

As I indicated earlier in this section on the relationship between the author's intentions and the students' responses, I include here a discussion of the students' responses as they relate to Mr. Norman's perception of his audience, prior to his relationship to the students in the study. Prior to this relationship, he seemed to perceive his audience as children limited in literary and worldly experience and knowledge but able to distinguish reality from fiction. He also perceived a general "generic" audience as wanting things causally connected, wanting the author to enable them to make previously unknown connections between known facts, and wanting an extremely likeable or interesting character. Since research has shown that a writer's attention to and perceived relationship with his or her audience directly affects goals as well as task representation, idea generation, word choice, and so forth (e.g., Berkenkotter, 1981; Flower &

Hayes, 1981a, 1981b; Kirsch, 1990), I wanted to see how the students in the study fit into Mr. Norman's intentions for the audience he imagined.

**Young adults limited in literary experience.** In his general comments to all the students who participated in the study, Mr. Norman shared that his intent or goal in writing *Fielder's Choice* and *Cross Body Block* was "to somehow entice a non-reader into reading a book." As soon as Goose read that, he turned to me and said, "That's me!" In addition to Goose, Chatrick and Bob also considered themselves non-readers. Though these particular non-readers were not reading *Fielder's Choice* voluntarily, still there were some indications that Mr. Norman had indeed enticed these non-readers. Chatrick was hooked into reading the novel after the first chapter. In the interactive interview with Mr. Norman, he explained that he enjoyed *Fielder's Choice* and that, after he had finished it, he missed carrying it around. Consequently, he read two more books on his own. Bob indicated in my interview with him that he thought *Fielder's Choice* was a good book and that he enjoyed the flow of Jax's stories. When he was previewing the novel, Goose noted in his journal that he thought that the book would appeal to him "since I've basically lived, breathed, and worshipped baseball since I was a child." In the follow-up interview, Goose admitted that he "could reread that book." In the interactive interview, Thelma expressed amazement that Goose had read *Fielder's Choice*: "You can't make him read. You can give him a book, and he won't read. It's amazing that he read this."

Mr. Norman seemed to place a great deal of importance on the presence of humor in his novels as a device for hooking young adults limited in literary experience into reading. Perhaps this is because it was humor that ignited his own reading. In my interviews with him, he stated very clearly that the tone he was trying to create was one of humor: "I hoped there would be enough in there that was funny to keep them going until they got wrapped up in the story." In

fact, he was conscious of having to work very hard to create humor: “You’ve got to make sure that the joke is funny—is timed out right. You’ve got to have an ear—you’ve got to be playing to your audience’s ear; otherwise, it’s not going to work” (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001). As a model for his own writing of humor, Mr. Norman apparently used the humor in the Jean Shepherd stories:

I’ve read the Jean Shepherd stories [to my kids] and know what strikes them as funny, and what I laughed at, where the laugh is. I think you just learn what’s going to be funny, where it’s going to be, and then hope you’re able to do the same thing with your stories. (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001)

Based upon the responses—letters and verbal exchanges with students—which he had prior to my case study, he seemed to believe that it was the humor in *Fielder’s Choice* that struck the chord of response. According to him, teachers have told him that because of the humor in *Fielder’s Choice*, “the kids thought you were going to be a lot funnier [in person] than you were” (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001).

Though what follows is very closely related to my previous discussion of audience in which I explored students’ emotional responses to *Fielder’s Choice*, I have chosen to include here the students’ responses to Mr. Norman’s intended humor because it is an illustration of readers’ responses to authorial intentions as related to the author’s perception of audience.

Interestingly, my five young adult readers, except perhaps Loki, did not seem to respond on an emotional level in their journals, book notes, and follow-up interviews to any of the intended humor in *Fielder’s Choice*. On the contrary, they saw it as a rather serious and even depressing novel. Thelma commented that the novel had to be “one of the most depressing stories I have ever read.” However, in the interactive interview with Mr. Norman, Thelma indicated that humor did not play a significant role in her enjoyment of a book. In the interactive interview, Chatrick declared, “I didn’t think anything was funny in the book.” He went on to

assure Mr. Norman, though, that what he saw as a lack of humor did not impair his enjoyment of *Fielder's Choice*. When Chatrick said that he did not find anything funny in the novel, Bob spoke up and indicated that he considered Neckless's habit of making prank phone calls involving taxis to be humorous. Goose, who was not present at the interactive interview, did not indicate whether or not he thought anything in the novel was particularly funny, but in my interview with him he did give an explanation for Jugs's jokes on the baseball field: "What I think Jugs was trying to show him [Jax] was that it [baseball] would have to be fun, or it's no fun playing." An avid baseball player himself, Goose agreed with Jugs's philosophy: "I think if it's not fun, then it's just pointless to be out there. You can't really give 110% if you're not having fun." Interestingly, Loki did expect "comic undertones from time to time" in *Fielder's Choice*, and in her book notes, she acknowledged Mr. Norman's intended humor in what may have been emotional responses. For example, she wrote "laughing notes" ("He He He" or "Ha Ha" or "He He") in the margins of the descriptions of Neckless's phone pranks, the team's joke on the porter, Curly's attempt at batting, Jude's inflated view of himself ("God Almighty's overcoat wouldn't make him a vest," p. 166), the grinning frog, and Jax's story to Jude about killing a tail-gunner who asked too many questions. However, she also made comments such as: "This guy needs a better sense of humor" (response to the anecdote about Paw telling Jax he had a head like a potato). "He [Mr. Norman] has kind of an offbeat sense of humor." "Jugs—the weird sense of humor." Though she noted that the pranks "didn't take away from the dramatic part of the book; [they] just added to it," she disapproved of some of them. So it is very possible that some of these "laughing notes" may have been expressions of sarcasm.

One particular concern which Mr. Norman expressed to me in our first interview was that students who were limited in literary experience would have difficulty following the dialogue

and plot twists. Because the story is told in the form of a flashback, the dialogue and plot twists are a part of Jax's defense strategy of telling stories. In the original manuscript, Jax recounted his stories to Davis, the interrogator, and a grand jury. Interestingly, Davis and some of the students (who never saw the original manuscript) had similar responses to Jax's recounting of what basically was his life story when he is supposed to be defending himself against the charge of treason. Davis commented: "We have now listened to you for the better part of a day and haven't, as far as I can tell, touched upon the treason charges against you." Thelma, Bob, and Loki all questioned this strategy just as Davis did. Thelma made a note in her book: "Why would this major listen to all this?" Bob wrote in his journal: "He has to convince the government that he didn't help the enemy and he is telling stories. He better show his point fast." Loki had a note in her book: "And I'm sure the Major cares about his little story."

When I asked Mr. Norman about this tactic, he explained that Jax was operating under the assumption that "if he talked long enough and loud enough, somebody would figure out that he wasn't a bad guy. Sometimes that's the best defense." He noted that in his legal career he has found that it is rather easy to judge someone from the evidence in court. But if a defendant is allowed enough time to go back—"and they always do—you figure out exactly why they're there. It makes it a lot harder to judge somebody if you've walked a mile in his shoes rather than just seen their shoes sitting there" (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001).

Though Bob may have had the most "limited" literary experience of the five participants, it is he who seemed to understand most clearly the author's motive (intention) for creating Jax's storytelling defense strategy. In my interview with him, he explained, "I think he [Jax] kind of did it [told the stories] to show that he didn't mean anything by it—what he did. He just wanted to show that he made an honest mistake if he did." When I asked Chatrick why the author chose

to have Jax recount his childhood, he responded, “I think it kind of built his personality—you know, what his personality started out as.”

**Young adults limited in worldly experience and knowledge.** During the interactive meeting, Mr. Norman questioned the students about their knowledge of World War Two and baseball. He did so because he had struggled with how much background he should provide his readers, whom he perceived as being limited in worldly knowledge and experience, and he wanted to know if he had given them enough. In my interviews with him, he indicated that he had intended to provide the “right” amount of background knowledge for his young-adult audience. As a group, the students considered themselves slightly more knowledgeable about World War Two than baseball. On a self-rating scale of 1-10 (1=least, 10=most), the students varied from 2-9 (6.75 average) in their knowledge of baseball; on the same scale, their answers ranged from 6-9 ½ (7.125 average) in their knowledge of World War Two. Chatrick commented, “Everybody knows a little something about World War Two. I mean, you learn about it everywhere.”

World War Two was particularly fresh in this audience’s mind since I had taken their class on a field trip to the D-Day Museum in New Orleans. In preparation for the field trip, we had watched actual news footage and had refreshed our memories about key individuals, groups, and terms associated with World War Two. After the trip to the museum, the students had written a fictional first-person narrative of a World War Two experience.

Though World War Two was his specific backdrop for *Fielder’s Choice*, Mr. Norman intended to convey something of his own ideas about war in general:

I think that war is a terrible thing, the worst thing that we’ve come up with yet. Would you still be for war if you knew that your son was going to get killed? Because somebody’s son is getting killed. I think that’s the question people need to be asking. I think some of that came out [in *Fielder’s Choice*], and I wanted it to come out. I wanted

the people that read it to think about some of these things (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001).

With the exception of Chatrick, the students did not express strong anti-war sentiments in their journals. When I asked them in the follow-up interviews what they thought the author's attitude toward war was, they did not seem to see Mr. Norman's strong personal anti-war sentiment reflected in *Fielder's Choice*. Thelma seemed to see an attitude of "objective" duty in Jax's willingness to participate in the war without a feeling of personal hatred toward the Japanese. "Our soldiers didn't really hate the Japanese. That's what they had to do. They [the Japanese] had never done anything to him [Jax] personally. It was just his duty to go and fight." Bob suggested that "he [Mr. Norman] probably didn't like it, but he knew it was going to happen." Goose and Loki did not seem to see much of the topic of war in *Fielder's Choice*. Goose explained, "He didn't really go into great detail about the war. He didn't really take a side on the war." Loki "didn't really see a lot in it about war," but she suggested that Jax's sometimes cynical attitude—seeing life as a prank on him by God—may be a reflection of the author's attitude on war.

One area of worldly experience and knowledge which the students seemed to see in *Fielder's Choice* and which Mr. Norman did not, was the area of race relations. Mr. Norman did not see anything in *Fielder's Choice* as necessarily commenting on race relations. "When I think of race relations, it's black and white" (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001). The students, however, did not seem to limit their concept of race relations to "black and white." They all seemed to feel that Jax's relationship with Yoshi—or in the case of Loki, Jax's insight that the Japanese were human because they played baseball—spoke to the topic of race relations. Thelma commented on the common bond of baseball "between two very different groups of people." Chatrick surmised that Jax's friendship with Yoshi taught him "a little bit more



tolerance and understanding,” and that he should not judge before really knowing someone. Bob seemed to see the relationship between Jax and Yoshi as a commentary on how it is possible to move beyond race. He commented that Jax was able to get past Yoshi “being Japanese” and simply saw him as a baseball player. Like Bob and Thelma, Goose noted the bond of baseball that enabled Jax to see that “it doesn’t matter at all” that they were supposed to be enemies. Loki saw Jax’s “revelation” about the humanity of the Japanese as being “profound in its truth about race relations.” In the interview, she commented that this incident revealed the common tendency to “paint each other a certain way and say, ‘This is what you are, and I don’t care whether or not it’s true.’”

**Young adults able to distinguish reality from fiction.** When he was writing *Fielder’s Choice*, Mr. Norman’s perception of his young-adult audience was that they had the ability to distinguish reality from fiction. “I think we had perspective. I just kind of assumed they would have that too” (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001). This perception of his audience seemed to be the basis for his intention of making the story as real as possible. He acknowledged in an interview that “all of those [reality devices] were conscious efforts to make it [the story] seem more real” (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001).

How did my student participants respond to some of the reality devices? One of the reality devices which Mr. Norman employed is Jax addressing the Major directly and asking, “Remember him?” When such a “remember him?” reference is made to Frenchy d’Aquin, Thelma wrote in the margins of her book: “Is this a real player?” Chatrick had no responses to the reality devices in his book notes, journal responses, or follow-up interview. However, in the interactive interview Chatrick questioned Mr. Norman about whether or not any of the stories were from his own childhood. Mr. Norman acknowledged that “probably a good bit of it was

sort of.” He then went on to tell the students that the hunting trip, the kitten story, many of the baseball stories, and the orangutan wrestling challengers at the state fair were all based on real incidents. Neither Bob nor Goose had any responses to the reality devices. Loki noted that the name Mickey Owens (in the dedication) seemed familiar to her and concluded that “he was a baseball player in the thirties.” In responding to the “remember him?” devices, Loki seemed to hold a dialogue with the author as she wrote notes (“Not really.” and “No, I don’t.”) in the margins of her book.

**General “generic” reader.** In discussing with me his perception of his “generic” audience, Mr. Norman described people who wanted to have things causally connected. As a writer, he intended to provide these causal connections, and he spoke of this facet of writing in several of his responses to the students. The responses of the students when the causal connections were *not* clear seem to support Mr. Norman’s perception of this necessity. For example, Thelma could not believe Jugs and Dixie got married because the events leading up to the marriage did not seem to her to be causally connected (“Had they ever seen each other?”). She also could not figure out why Jax was not particularly upset with the Japanese after Jugs’s death. Loki had difficulty connecting the slingshot incident to Jax’s dislike of Jude: “Jax uses this incident to explain his dislike of his younger brother Jude, but I find this idea quite strange. Jugs is the one who made the slingshot, shot Paw, and laughed after the three were almost off the hook.”

In the interactive interview with Mr. Norman, Bob, Chatrick, and Thelma all expressed confusion about whether or not Jax was actually convicted of the charge of treason. Since Jax simply walked away from the Major, they assumed the charges had been dropped. However, they were confused about whether or not he was actually cleared of the accusation because he

was still blacklisted from baseball. In this interview, Thelma also expressed to Mr. Norman confusion about who had actually brought the charges against Jax. She surmised it was Colonel Cole, but she did not seem to see a strong causal connection: “I didn’t know where he had even seen him again.”

In my first interview with Mr. Norman, the author suggested that in “the process of writing—when you write for yourself and a [“generic”] reader—you make a connection between two things, two dots, that you hadn’t thought were connected” (March 29, 2001). He made virtually the same observation in his general comments to the students: “The writer’s objective in writing is to try to have a reader make previously unknown connections between known facts.” Mr. Norman reiterated the obligation of the writer to “make the connection” in my last interview with him. In the case of *Fielder’s Choice*, the connection he stated he was trying to make was between World War Two and baseball.

Did my readers “get” this connection? At first, Thelma seemed frustrated by the frequent references to baseball: “This is getting ridiculous.” By the end of the novel, however, she acknowledged that “maybe the game [baseball] really is that important. It saved his life.” Still, as I mentioned in a preceding section, Thelma did not seem to accept the connection between baseball and Jax’s “revelation” that the Japanese were human. Chatrick, who knew very little about baseball, did not seem to think the connection between baseball and war was critical to the primary theme of making choices. In the interactive interview, he indicated that he “didn’t know anything about the military either.” However, after finishing the novel, he wrote in his journal: “The whole basis of the book, *overlooking* [italics added] baseball and the war, are the choices people make.” In my interview with him, he expressed the opinion that knowledge of baseball would not help or hinder a reader from understanding the point of the book. Bob gave no

indication of accepting or rejecting the connection between baseball and war. Goose, on the other hand, seemed to see a strong connection between baseball and war. As I pointed out previously, he readily recognized the difference between having an antagonistic relationship with a collective enemy and having a “friendly” relationship with an individual who may be part of the collective enemy. In his explanation of this phenomenon, he used an analogy of individuals on an all-star team. Like Thelma, Loki initially was not sure of the connection between baseball and Jax’s “revelation” that the Japanese were human. She noted in her book: “I suppose. Interpreting how his mind works.” However, in her journal response to this passage, she noted that “this idea is profound in its truth about . . . war as a whole.” In a later book note, Loki responded to the following sentence: “Yellow or not, the Admiral knew his baseball.” She wrote: “How ironic! See, they are people too.”

Mr. Norman also commented that he thought the “generic” reader wanted an extremely likeable or interesting character. As a whole, the five students who participated in the case study seemed to find Jax very likeable. This was evidenced both in their comments and, as I have already mentioned, in their desire to know more of what happened to him. Thelma, Bob, and Goose all liked his relationship with his brother Jugs. Additionally, Thelma made comments such as: “[Jax] is so likeable.” “Jugs is an excellent character.” “The author has made a great character [Jax]. He is a character we can’t stop reading about. I couldn’t put the book down.” “He [Jax] was just a very good guy.” Chatrick wanted something good to happen to Jax. Bob saw Jax as “a good old country boy.” Though Loki initially criticized Jax, it seems that ultimately she wanted him to succeed. When Jax is sent to the minors, she noted in her book: “Awe. At least he’s not a total failure.” Commenting on his hot pitching streak when he returns to the majors, she wrote: “Hey, he’s doing all right.”

**Conclusions regarding responses relative to author’s perception of audience.** Three of the five students who participated in the case study, Goose, Bob, and Chatrick, considered themselves to be non-readers. Responses from these three suggest that they were indeed enticed into reading *Fielder’s Choice*, as Mr. Norman intended, though it was an assigned book. However, there were no strong indications that it was humor that hooked these students into reading the novel. Instead, identification seems to have been a stronger hook.

Mr. Norman feared that young adults limited in literary experience would have difficulty following the dialogue and plot twists. Thelma and Loki, who were not limited in literary experience, as well as Bob, who may be considered to be so, did not necessarily have difficulty following the dialogue and plot twists, but they questioned why the dialogue and plot twists were embedded in the flashbacks. In the follow-up interview, however, Bob gave an explanation that closely paralleled Mr. Norman’s explanation of his intention of showing that Jax “wasn’t a bad guy.”

In addition to perceiving his audience as young adults limited in literary experience, Mr. Norman also perceived them as limited in worldly experience and knowledge, specifically in knowledge of World War Two and baseball. Because of this perception, he intended to provide his audience with the “right” amount of background information. With the exception of Chatrick, whose knowledge of baseball was limited, the students in the study were not limited in these areas, and Chatrick’s limited knowledge of baseball did not hinder him in understanding the theme of *Fielder’s Choice*. However, with the exception of Chatrick, the students did not seem to perceive Mr. Norman’s intention of having his readers question a glorified view of war. Interestingly, though Mr. Norman did not intend for *Fielder’s Choice* to speak specifically to the issue of race relations, all of the students saw some relevance to race relations.

Because Mr. Norman's perception of his audience was that they were able to distinguish reality from fiction, he intended to make the story as real as possible by using reality devices. Students in the study seemed generally able to distinguish reality from fiction, but at least some were still uncertain about whether some minor characters were real or not. In the interactive interview, Chatrick questioned Mr. Norman about what was real and what was fiction, and Mr. Norman told him that many of the situations were based on real incidents.

Mr. Norman's perception of his general "generic" audience—readers who want things causally connected, want the author to enable them to connect seemingly unconnected concepts and ideas via a new twist, and want characters who are either extremely interesting or extremely likeable—seemed to have a direct bearing on his stated intentions to connect things causally, to connect seemingly unconnected ideas such as World War Two and baseball, and to create a likeable, interesting character like Jax. Interestingly, it seems that the students in the study exhibited more of the characteristics of this "generic" audience than they did of Mr. Norman's defined audience. It seems clear by the students' responses that they did want to have things causally connected, and they seemed to connect with the story and with Mr. Norman primarily through Jax, whom they generally viewed as a very likeable character. It is difficult to say whether or not the students *wanted* the author to enable them to connect seemingly unconnected concepts and ideas—in this case, baseball and war—via a new twist. Chatrick did not see the necessity of the connection, but Goose made a very definite connection between the two ideas. The others either had no response or had some difficulty, at least initially, in connecting baseball and war as presented through the eyes of Jax.

What conclusions may be drawn about the relation between an author's perception of audience and his or her intentions and an audience's responses to these intentions? First, it

seems clear that an author's perceptions of his or her audience influence intentions. Second, it may be more likely that an audience may respond to an author's overarching intention(s) (e.g., enticing non-readers to read) rather than to more specific intentions (e.g., creating a hook with humor, creating reality devices) that an author may believe will help him or her accomplish the overarching intention. Third, accomplishing an intention with a defined audience may be more closely related to an author's perception of a general "generic" audience than we realized.

### **Summary of Results**

Three questions guided my research into the author-audience relationship: (1) What was, and is, Rick Norman's conception of the audience of *Fielder's Choice*? (2) How do members of the audience—specifically five high school students—respond to *Fielder's Choice*? (3) How do the audience's responses relate to the author's intentions?

Based upon the findings detailed above, we may answer the question of what was, and is, Rick Norman's conception of the audience of *Fielder's Choice*—both defined and general, self and other—by saying that it was and is a multifaceted, dynamic conception based upon the view of other people through the window of the self.

How did members of the audience respond to *Fielder's Choice*? In spite of the diverse responses of the students to the features of the text and the variety of emotions evoked, the students unanimously enjoyed *Fielder's Choice*, sympathized with Jax, and grasped the primary theme of choice. The students identified with Jax and were able to move past what may have seemed problematic. This unity seems to illustrate an aspect of what Burke (1950) termed "consubstantiality," how through identification, humans are joined yet separate.

In the interactive interview, the audience's responses to the author and *Fielder's Choice* did not seem to shift dramatically from their written responses. Thelma's and Chatrick's

responses were very open, Loki's were observant, and Bob's were spare. Just as sympathy for and identification with Jax seemed to be the common thread in the students' written responses, what appeared to be sympathetic laughter seemed to be the common thread in the students' "verbal" responses to Mr. Norman and to one another.

Finally, how did the audience's responses relate to the author's intentions? All of the students responded positively to Mr. Norman's overarching, global intention of enticing them into reading. Avid reader and "non-reader" alike enjoyed the novel. However, though Mr. Norman intended for humor to be the hook, none of the students seemed to see humor as the hook. Mr. Norman's intentions for the focused passages met with mixed results. Only responses to the "love is all" passage seemed to indicate a degree of meshing of intention and responses. All of the students indicated agreement to some extent with the philosophy expressed, but only Goose and Loki explicitly responded to his intention that this passage would be the summary "of the whole deal." In terms of responding to Mr. Norman's intentions for his defined (young adult) and "generic" audiences, the students seemed to respond primarily to his intentions for a "generic" audience rather than the defined audience.

The focus of this study was on the author-audience relationship because I was interested in how this relationship might affect the teaching of writing. In the following chapter, I discuss the implications of these results for deepening our understanding of this relationship.



## **CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PUZZLE OF THE AUTHOR-AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIP**

In Chapter One I discussed young-adult authors who experiment with changing forms and formats, changing perspectives, and changing boundaries. I too was interested in changing the forms and formats, perspectives, and boundaries of my teaching of writing. Thus I became interested in learning more about the author-audience relationship. In this chapter I discuss the implications of the results of this study—results which I hope will add to our understanding of the puzzle of the author-audience relationship.

### **Rick Norman’s Conception of Audience: Images Seen Through and Reflected in a Window**

As I have noted in Chapter Two, Roth (1987) observed:

Writing for oneself and writing for others may be more interdependent than we have realized, then. Indeed, a chameleon-like readiness to project oneself onto one’s audience or to somehow blend in with potential readers may be just the capacity needed to successfully reread one’s own emerging text in what George Herbert Mead calls “the role of the other.” (p. 51)

Based upon the results of my study, I believe that writing for oneself and writing for others may indeed be more interdependent than we have realized—more so perhaps than even an author realizes. For example, in responding to Chatrick’s very deeply emotional response to Paw’s affair, Mr. Norman wrote:

Do you feel that your own personal experiences affected the way you perceived my novel? An author must direct his story to the collective consciousness of his perceived audience and hope that he does not lose readers because of individual experiences.

What is interesting here is that Mr. Norman did not tell Chatrick that he too had gone through the divorce of his parents. His individual experiences surely affected the way in which he blended in with or projected himself onto “the collective consciousness of his perceived audience.”

Mr. Norman's stated intent was initially to write advice for his own children, who, though they have read *Fielder's Choice*, have never given him any response to it, and then for other children. Along the way, the audience for *Fielder's Choice* seems to have widened to include himself and other adults plagued by the memory of their mistakes. However, the presence of self seems to permeate all of his audiences—defined and general. This self, as described by Mr. Norman, has been the fifteen to seventeen-year-old athletic male who felt alone and in need of advice. This teenaged self was also averse to and limited in literary experiences, and it was only through the humor of Jean Shepherd that this self was hooked into enjoying reading. This self has also been plagued by the memory of mistakes. All of these self-perceptions, as I have noted in the preceding chapter, seem to have been projected onto Mr. Norman's defined audiences of young adults and adults. The self that seems to have been projected onto the general "generic" audience is that self that wants things causally connected. At one point in college, Mr. Norman abandoned homework in favor of reading Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's complete works. He liked Doyle's logic and adopted his style in his non-fiction writing. The self that read the emerging manuscript of *Fielder's Choice* created by the adult self, however, was the seventeen-year-old reading and enjoying the Jean Shepherd books.

We may think that the self which an author sees and projects onto an audience is a crystal clear image. After all, who knows us better than ourselves? Ede and Lunsford (1984) noted that those in the "audience addressed" camp assume that through analysis and observation one can know an audience's attitudes, beliefs, and expectations. Presumably, one would know one's own attitudes, beliefs, and expectations. Murray's (1982) article "Teaching the Other Self: The Writer's First Reader" likens the writing process to a conversation between two parts of the self—the writing self and the reading self. A conversation between two parts of self implies

intimate knowledge of self. However, Berkenkotter's (1983) study of Murray suggested that his perception of self was not as crystal clear as he had supposed. She compared what Murray had to say about his composing process with what she could discern about it through analysis of his oral verbalization of his thoughts as he wrote. Berkenkotter found evidence that Murray's assertions about his composing process did not match the reality of his composing process.

The self that is projected onto and blended in with Mr. Norman's audience seems to be made up of both substance and shadow. His concept of his audience—young adults, adults, self, the “generic” reader—seems to be based upon that which is seen through and reflected in a window. What is seen through and reflected in the window is based upon the substance of self and others, but the images and reflections are shadowed or incompletely revealed since the window itself imposes limitations. For example, when I look through a window, the images I see are limited by such things as the size of the window, the lighting, and the sharpness or dimness of my own eyesight. Sometimes my own image is reflected in the window and projected upon the images emanating from the other side of the glass. Even if my own reflection is not revealed in the window, what I see is still a function of self. What I see is based upon the substance of the objects, animals, or people on the other side of the glass, as well as my own substance, but these substances are not fully revealed. In this section, I will illustrate this concept of the substance/shadow audience.

When audiotaping advice to his children, Mr. Norman seemed to view them—at least potentially—as “alone,” struggling with problems and in need of advice, just as was the teenage Rick Norman. Likewise, he seemed to view other children in the same manner. The desire to advise young adults about how to deal with their problems is reflected most clearly in the teacher's guide to *Fielder's Choice*, which Mr. Norman (1997) also wrote. This teacher's guide

focuses on the use of philosophy as a way of dealing with moral dilemmas. In this guide, Mr. Norman tried to give students a taste of philosophical history, to introduce them to philosophical concepts, so that perhaps they would understand that “if I can’t figure out what to do, at least I know everyone’s got problems” (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001).

When I asked Mr. Norman how students had responded to this philosophical approach to teaching *Fielder’s Choice*, he explained that when he presented the material in the guide to students, his purpose was to try to get students to see that “there’s not just one way to look at something” (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001)—to get them to change their minds one way or the other when seeking a solution to a problem he had presented. According to Mr. Norman, many of the students would respond in the way he intended—shifting their opinions. However, he also noted that some of the students—particularly those who used the Bible as their standard—would, in essence, say, “No, you can’t do that because the x number of commandments says you can’t do that, and that’s the end of it. I’m not thinking about it anymore. This is the way it is” (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001).

In one of his responses to Thelma, Mr. Norman’s desire to have students question the “one way only” mindset was revealed: “Perhaps the people who struggle are actually the ones who should be revered. They are not on automatic pilot. They are the anti-soldiers who must know ‘why’ before they act.” In a response to Bob he wrote:

In Chapter Thirteen you commented that Jax’s indecision always ended up hurting him in one way or the other. Would another way to look at it be that his indecision, his searching process, resulted in his figuring out a formula with which to live his life?

Let us now contrast this conception of an audience that Mr. Norman perceives as needing to be taught that “there’s not just one way to look at something” with his response to the following question, which I asked in the March 29, 2001, interview: “Obviously, *Fielder’s*

*Choice* is heavily about making choices. Tell me a little bit about what you see as being some of the critical choices that young adults face today.”

I think that the choice they need to make is whether to play by the rules or not play by the rules in whatever [they] do, and I think that choices would be simpler if you could limit it to that. Now, what ends up happening is every little turn in the road they make they turn into a decision. . . . I think it was easier at some point in my life—and I don’t really recall when it was—at some point I said, “I’m going to play by the rules, whatever the rules are.” And I think it would be a lot easier if they would just say, “OK, these are the rules. I don’t like the rules, but I’m going to live by the rules, and that’s how I’m going to play.” I think you can have just as much fun if you play by the rules as you do if you don’t. (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001)

Extending this conversation, I asked Mr. Norman about a comment which one of the reviewers had made about *Fielder’s Choice* being about Southern ethics and whether or not Southern ethics played into the idea of playing by the rules. Here is his response:

I think so. I don’t know about the most recent generation, but I know that my mother’s generation had more of that philosophy. Things were either right or wrong, and you don’t need to bother yourself about it. That’s just the way they are, and I take that to be sort of Southern ethics. . . . But I just think things would be a lot simpler for everybody if we just adhered to some philosophy and stuck to it. And then you wouldn’t have to be making decisions every day about different things. Life just becomes much simpler. . . . I just find my life to be a lot simpler if I’m not having to make these decisions—not anguishing over these decisions and just say, “This is the way it’s going to be, and that’s the end of it.” (R. Norman, personal communication, March 29, 2001)

When explaining his intent for the “dropped babies” passage, Mr. Norman told me that the point that he was trying to illustrate was that “indecision is as big a problem [as]—or maybe a bigger problem than—a wrong decision” (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001). This declaration of intent seems to parallel Bob’s assessment that Jax’s indecision always ended up hurting him in one way or another. However, Mr. Norman’s perception that his young adult audience needed to be taught that there was not just one way to look at an issue seemed to prompt him to ask Bob, “Would another way to look at it . . .”

Mr. Norman's perception of a self that says, "This is the way it's going to be, and that's the end of it" seems to contradict the self that views his young adult audience as needing to be taught that "there's not just one way of looking at something." I point out this seeming contradiction—this substantive/shadowy perception of self/audience—not as a criticism of Mr. Norman personally but simply as an illustration of what I believe to be true of all of us. Let me give one more illustration of this substantive/shadowy perception of self/audience, this time using my three "non-readers" as examples.

Chatrick, Bob, and Goose all perceived themselves as "non-readers." However, based upon their journal responses, Mr. Norman perceived *all* of the students in the study as being too literate to be non-readers. The data from Chatrick, Bob, and Goose seem to support Mr. Norman's perception that they are too literate—"expert" readers, in fact—to be the non-readers they perceived themselves to be. Being able to attribute motives to authors (Graves & Frederiksen, 1991; Haas, 1994; Wineburg, 1991), "point-driven" reading (Vipond & Hunt, 1984), making remarks about the author's claims (Geisler, 1991), or about the author's choice of wordings, phrasings, positioning of material, punctuation, or the effect on the intended audience (Wineburg, 1991) are all characteristics of "expert" reading. Bob, for example, discerned the author's motive—"point-driven" reading—in having Jax present his personal stories as a defense "to show that he didn't mean anything by what he did." This closely parallels Mr. Norman's own assessment of why Jax was telling his stories: "I think to some extent what he was doing was talking around it—figuring if he talked long enough and loud enough, somebody would figure out that he wasn't a bad guy" (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001). Chatrick made remarks about the author's use of dialect, the effectiveness of the opening chapter, and the weakness of the final chapter. He even had a solution for strengthening the final

chapter. The majority of Goose's journal entries dealt with the text, commenting in particular on the dialect and Mr. Norman's style of writing.

Mr. Norman's perception of self and audience and the students' perception of self as audience seem to illustrate that we tend to view ourselves and others as if seen through and/or reflected in a window. The images that we see in this window are based upon a concrete substance, but these images are not fully revealed. If our concept of ourselves as audience—presumably an audience which we know best, an audience which is most concrete and specific—is less than completely substantive, then perhaps there is no such thing as a truly addressed, concrete, specific audience. Perhaps there is no such thing as a truly invoked, imagined, or “generic” audience either. Ede and Lunsford (1984) suggested that the audience invoked/audience addressed perspectives are not “necessarily dichotomous or contradictory” (p. 165) since all of the audience roles (self, friend, colleague, critic, mass audience, future audience) except a past audience and an anomalous audience (e.g., a fictional character such as the Major in *Fielder's Choice*) “may be invoked or addressed” (p. 165). However, it seems to me that the dichotomy still exists when we say that these audience roles “may be invoked *or* [italics added] addressed.” This still does not seem to address the problem that neither an addressed audience (defined by Ede and Lunsford as a concrete, knowable reality) nor an invoked audience (defined by Ede and Lunsford as a construction of the writer) is fully knowable or fully unknown. Perhaps a better way of describing a proposed synthesis of these two perspectives—audience addressed/audience invoked—is to say that all audience roles are *both* invoked *and* addressed. I would suggest that perhaps a more realistic way of understanding the concept of audience is to view *any* audience—self or other—as an incompletely revealed image or reflection of a substance that cannot be fully known. As Spivey (1995) put it, “a writer is in a

relationship with reader as construed, even if the writer knows the reader, just as the reader is in a relationship with writer as construed” (p. 317). It must be with caution, therefore, that any writer projects self upon the audience.

Nevertheless, I believe it is useful for a writer to project self onto his or her audience as a starting point for audience awareness. After all, we human beings seem to have more in common than not. Let me illustrate this by paralleling some of Mr. Norman’s perceptions of his audience with how others have perceived their audiences. Dating back to about 350 B. C., Aristotle (1954) recognized two general kinds of auditors—decision-makers (those who decide what to do in the future or what happened in the past) and spectators (those who only evaluate rhetorical art). In light of the primary topic of *Fielder’s Choice*, Mr. Norman seems to have viewed his audience as “spectators” who needed to be taught a lesson in decision-making. The Roman orator Cicero (1970) felt that one gained the attention of an audience by discussing something new, something unbelievable, or the scope of a matter. Associationism, the predominant psychology of Campbell’s (1776/1963) day, viewed the goal of the orator/author as creating an association between new ideas and experiences that the listener/reader had already accrued. Mr. Norman felt that a general “generic” audience wanted the author to enable him or her to connect seemingly unconnected concepts and ideas via a new twist. Writing during the time of the Roman dictators, Quintilian (1910) emphasized the moral purpose of rhetoric. His “good” man had respect for public opinion, sincerity, justice, integrity, honor, and virtue and was judged by how active he was in the public life of his country. Mr. Norman’s “good” man, Jax, has respect for the opinions of those he loves (perhaps too much so), sincerity, integrity, honor, and virtue and is judged by how well he makes decisions based on love. This seems directly



related to Mr. Norman's perception of his generic audience as desiring an extremely likeable or extremely interesting character.

These brief illustrations seem to indicate that as human beings we have some similar conceptions of audience and that these conceptions of audience may originate in our conceptions of self. Though these conceptions of self are limited and imperfect, they nevertheless seem to be a valid starting point for our conceptions of an "other" audience.

### **Voice(s): Students' Responses to the Voice of the Author, Author's Responses to the Voices of the Students**

As I have noted before, one way in which an author of fiction establishes credibility with an audience is through the creation of credible characters. As a whole, the students in my study responded to Jax as a credible character. A relationship with this character seemed to lead at least some of them to experience various emotions, but all of them seemed to "hear" the message of the novel. This relationship between the students and Jax and the author was not a passive one in which the students "swallowed" everything. Instead, just as in any relationship, there was both agreement and disagreement, and suggestions were made.

In order to establish this give-and-take type of relationship between author and audience, what Grice (1975) described as a contractual relationship, I believe it is essential that the author have a projected voice. After all, it is the author who initiates the relationship in the first place simply by writing. Having a projected voice is closely linked to the projection of self onto the audience, which I discussed in the preceding section. In order for an audience to identify with, relate to, or react to an author, that author must have a projected voice. This voice may be established through fictional characters, as it was in *Fielder's Choice*, or through non-fiction. Granted, whether or not this voice is discerned depends upon the reader.

However, just as in our personal conversations and relationships with others, this voice must be considerate of the other, what Grice (1975) termed the “cooperative principle” (p. 45). Communication “includes the worlds of both writers and readers” (Winterowd & Murray, 1985, p. T-8). In projecting self upon the audience, in projecting voice, an author must also be conscious of and considerate of the world of the reader. For example, even though Mr. Norman read the emerging manuscript of *Fielder’s Choice* primarily from the perspective of the seventeen-year-old Norman sitting in his father’s hospital room reading the humor of Jean Shepherd, he also noted that “the way you write is to try to read the story the way that ‘generic’ reader is going to read your book” (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001). For Mr. Norman, this consideration for the world of his reader involved a questioning strategy. For example, the accent of Jax presented a problem. So he asked himself some questions: “What was too much? What was not enough? What was real? What was going to turn the reader off? Were we going to slow him down to the extent that he quit?” (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001). The writing of the humorous parts of *Fielder’s Choice* and *Cross Body Block* also presented a challenge (according to Mr. Norman, more so in *Cross Body Block* than in *Fielder’s Choice*). Again he questioned himself:

Where is it that he’s going to laugh? Where is that little spark that makes that connection that makes him laugh? Is it ever going to happen? Is it going to be funny? Are they going to laugh at this or not? How is this going to play to someone hearing it for the first time? (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001)

The questioning strategy also seemed to be part of the editing process that Mr. Norman was involved in with Judith Faust, August House editor. There seemed to be three main questions they asked themselves:

Number one: Is a non-baseball person going to know what this is? Number two: Is somebody not from the South going to know what we’re talking about? Number three: Is a teenager going to know what this is about? Are they going to know about World War

Two? Are they going to know about baseball? (R. Norman, personal communication, April 24, 2001)

Just as in any human relationship, a voice that dominates and marginalizes others is likely to cut off a relationship rather than foster one. As I mentioned in Chapter One, studies such as those conducted by Crismore (1990) and Nolen (1995) seemed to indicate that a highly “visible” author may sometimes be an obstacle. However, there are several ways in which an author may be seen to project his or her voice while at the same time considering the audience. According to David Olson (1994), literary devices such as figures of speech, sarcasm, irony, understatement, and hyperbole give voice to an author. We may question the use of sarcasm, arguing that this device dominates and marginalizes others. However, sarcasm may at times be appropriate in conveying a point to and evoking a response from the audience. Both Campbell and Blair, influential seventeenth-century Scottish rhetoricians, agreed that certain figures of speech would stimulate their audiences (Johnson, 1991). Campbell (1776/1963) seemed to feel that the voice of the orator/author would best be heard by appealing to the imagination and passions of the audience as well as to their rationality. Blair (1783/1867) felt that a style that was pleasing and interesting to the audience would most clearly allow the voice of the author to be heard.

In his responses to the students, Mr. Norman seemed to place an emphasis on his attempts to appeal to the rationality of his audience and thus project a rational voice. In his general comments to the students, he wrote that “because the writer’s objective . . . is to try to have the reader make previously unknown connections between known facts, the writer must either put the facts in his novel or assume the reader already knows the facts to be connected.” He added,

Through the writing process, and in addition to asking myself what the reader is thinking at a point of the story, I must constantly ask myself what is it the reader is expecting to

happen. The next event needs to be causally connected to the preceding events yet at the same time somewhat unpredictable.

He went on to confess to the students that in *Cross Body Block*, the sequel to *Fielder's Choice*, he was less predictable, but “what it gained in unpredictability it lost in logical consistency. In other words, if you get too unpredictable you risk losing the reader.” When some of the students expressed confusion or doubt about the logic or causality of events, Mr. Norman often responded by acknowledging that perhaps he did not do “a good enough job” of providing the logical connections.

It seems clear then that as an author projects self onto the audience, projects his or her voice, he or she must consider the voice of the other, the audience that is beyond yet somehow a part of self. An author may choose to project self by appealing to the voice of the audience in various ways. He or she may appeal to the imaginations, passions, logic, or interests of the audience through various literary devices or through likeable or interesting characters. The point is that in order for an author's voice to be heard, the voice of the audience must also be heard.

### **Purposeful, Intentional, “Point-Driven” Writing: No Second Chance**

The issue of authorial intentions may be a subject for debate among literary critics, reader-response theorists, and poststructural theorists, but for composition theorists it seems much less so. For example, Nelson and Calfee (1998) noted that classical rhetoric, both ancient and modern, is “concerned with author and audience: an author producing a text *intended* [italics added] to have particular effects on an audience” (p. 4). In *A Theory of Discourse* James Kinneavy (1971) focused on the *aims* of discourse: persuasive, referential (including informative and exploratory discourse), expressive, and literary. Vipond and Hunt (1984) contended that authors have *points* to make, even as they produce writing that is classified as “literature.” Winterowd and Murray (1985) wrote that “the writer *intends* [italics added] some meaning and

projects that *intention* [italics added] through a language structure in a ‘scene’ or context. The reader interprets the message from the signals sent and, in a very real sense, cooperates with the writer to construct meaning” (p. T-8). Witte (1987) defined pre-text as “a writer’s tentative linguistic representation of *intended meaning*” [italics added] (p. 397). It would seem that for the composition theorist, authorial intention is fundamental.

In the preceding chapter, I focused on Mr. Norman’s intentions as they connected to the focused passages, his perceptions of his audience (young adults limited in literary experience, young adults limited in worldly experience and knowledge, young adults able to distinguish reality from fiction, a general “generic” reader), and the responses of the students to these intentions. As I have already mentioned in Chapter Four, Mr. Norman’s overriding intention was “to somehow entice a non-reader into reading a book.” The major device that Mr. Norman intended to hook his readers with was humor, but this particular device did not seem to be very important for my students’ enjoyment of *Fielder’s Choice*. More important than humor perhaps was their identification with Jax, a character who in many ways seems to resemble the author. What is interesting, however, is that not only did Mr. Norman seem to fulfill the intention of enticing a non-reader into reading a book, as illustrated by the students that I have identified as “non-readers,” but he also seemed able to entice the avid readers, Thelma and Loki. Thelma was so hooked once she started reading *Fielder’s Choice* that she could not put it down until she finished reading it. Loki, who admitted to Mr. Norman in the interactive interview that “I would never pick this book up,” nevertheless acknowledged that when she read it, “it was a good book.”

The fact that the avid readers as well as the “non-readers” enjoyed *Fielder’s Choice* seems to suggest that perhaps there was not as much difference between the “tastes” of the two

audiences as may have been supposed. For example, the intriguing first chapter of the novel seemed to play a significant role in the hooking of both “non-readers” and avid readers.

Chatrick, an admitted “non-reader,” felt that Mr. Norman’s opening chapter “did a good job” of drawing him in. Loki, whom I have described as the “intellectual” of the group, wrote that “the first chapter of *Fielder’s Choice* is one of the best-written openings in any book I have ever read.” It is interesting to note Chatrick’s admission that if it takes him “till the third chapter” to get into a book, then he does not “tend to make it to that third chapter.” This echoes M. E. Kerr’s (1998) advice to student writers: “Your first three chapters hook your reader into your story” (p. 92). In his intent to hook the “non-readers,” Mr. Norman seems to have hooked collaterally the avid readers as well.

Evidence of a wider, collateral audience is further illustrated by the fact that many adults, including myself, were also hooked into enjoying *Fielder’s Choice*. Among the materials which Mr. Norman allowed me to photocopy were letters from adults who had read and enjoyed the novel. One letter was from a seventy-two-year-old World War Two veteran who, like Jax, joined the Army Air Corps the day after Pearl Harbor was bombed, became a gunner, bailed out, and became a prisoner of war. A woman who reviewed books for two public radio stations wrote enthusiastically about *Fielder’s Choice*. A Washington state newspaper columnist wrote a review on Amazon.com in which he praised Mr. Norman’s use of comedy and tragedy, a trait which he felt set the novel apart from others. A variety of adult reviewers praised *Fielder’s Choice* when it was first published. It seems then that having a specific intention for a specific audience as a starting point may in some cases actually help widen rather than narrow an author’s audience.

Mr. Norman seems to have fulfilled his intention of hooking his audience, but what about his intention relative to topic? Did he in fact have specific intentional meanings? Judging from Mr. Norman's responses to the students' responses it seems clear that he did indeed have intentional meanings. It seems also that his intentional meanings were not, in his opinion, always grasped by all of the students. In his general comments to the students, he wrote:

I started to write additional comments but omitted them because it appeared that I was talking down to you or was somehow telling you that you missed a point that I intended to make. However, in the world of novels, if the author fails to make a point with his reader then he has no right to a second chance to make that point.

Though Mr. Norman omitted his "talking down" and "missed point" comments, his confirmation of the students' "getting" a point sometimes seemed to convey that other points were missed. For example, he wrote: "Apparently I got at least one of my points across." "Your final comments indicated to me that I was able to get at least some of my point across to you." Mr. Norman's initial response that "you missed a point" seems quite natural, especially for a lawyer who is used to having the opportunity to argue and rebut points. Those in academia often have the same opportunity to answer those who they feel have "missed a point."

However, Mr. Norman is quite right when he says that the author of a novel "has no right to a second chance to make a point." This does not mean, of course, that an author does not have the opportunity to make revisions. Indeed, as Mr. Norman pointed out to the students in the interactive interview, the manuscript of *Fielder's Choice* underwent multiple revisions prior to and after he submitted it to August House for publication. The point, rather, is that once an audience read *Fielder's Choice*, Mr. Norman's intentional meanings were no longer under his control. (A similar point is made by Rosenblatt [1978] in *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*.) Additionally, in the case of my study, approximately ten years had elapsed since the publication of *Fielder's Choice*. Consequently, in Mr. Norman's own assessment, his recollection of his

intentional meanings for certain passages was a bit fuzzy. Because of this, it was difficult to discern whether some of Mr. Norman's stated intentional meanings were his original ones or whether he was influenced by the students' responses. It is possible that he meshed some of his intentions with the students' responses because he felt that the author of a novel "has no right to a second chance to make a point." Here are some examples of what may be meshing of intentions:

You were confused. . . . I wanted the reader to be confused . . .  
[Y]ou were surprised. . . . I intended that the reader be as shocked as Jax was.  
[Y]ou could not make sense of Jax's recurrent nightmare. In writing the nightmare scene I did not want so much for the reader to figure out the analogy as much as I wanted the reader to be bothered by it and empathize with Jaxon being bothered by his indecision.

Nevertheless, whether a reader "gets" a point or not, it is clear that the writing of at least some authors is "point-driven." This "point-driven" writing is what makes it purposeful, and this purposefulness seems connected to awareness of audience. Researchers such as Berkenkotter (1981), Flower and Hayes (1981b), and Roth (1987) have found that writers' consideration of audience leads them to idea generation and back to exploring the topic itself. Concern for the reader impacts both the ideas and focus of the text. Perhaps the key to purposeful, intentional, "point-driven" writing is to write under the assumption that there is no second chance with an audience.

### **Social Dynamics Among and Between the Participants**

Social constructivists emphasize that reading and writing are constructive processes. Spivey (1997) maintains that whether the focus is upon the individual or the group, the constructive process is essentially social. For my purpose, this discussion will focus on two groups. The first "discourse community" or, as Fish (1980) would term it, "interpretive community," is the group made up of the audience—the readers (Thelma, Chatrick, Bob, Goose,



and Loki). The second group, a “discourse community,” includes the participants in the interactive meeting (Mr. Norman, Thelma, Chatrick, Bob, Loki, and myself).

Because I was not present to observe the social dynamics among the student readers when they discussed the book informally, I must base my discussion on what they reported to me during the follow-up interviews or what they revealed in the interactive interview. These comments seem to indicate that Thelma played a significant role in the dialogue among the students. Chatrick and Goose both indicated that they discussed *Fielder's Choice* with Thelma. Though Bob did not indicate by name the individuals with whom he discussed the novel, the presumption is that Thelma was part of the “they” when he indicated in the follow-up interview that they wanted to know more about what happened to Jax. In addition, Thelma specifically mentioned in the interactive interview that she had read Mr. Norman’s comments to Bob. I think we can safely assume that they had a conversation about those comments. Perhaps because she was the first to finish reading *Fielder's Choice* (because she could not put it down), Thelma seems to have served as a reference resource for both Chatrick (explaining baseball terms) and Goose (filling in reading gaps) as well as a discussant in the conversations about *Fielder's Choice*.

As I reported in Chapter Four, the most dynamic social interactions during the interactive meeting took place between and among Mr. Norman, Chatrick, and Thelma. It is interesting to note that Thelma and Chatrick seemed to respond to *Fielder's Choice* in their journals on an emotional level (audience) more than the other three. Consequently, their voices were revealed more openly than Bob’s, Goose’s, or Loki’s. Likewise, their voices dominated the responses to Mr. Norman in the interactive meeting.

Though the interactive meeting was conceived as “lagniappe”—something extra, as we say in Louisiana—in reality, some of the most interesting data about the author-audience relationship between Mr. Norman and the students seem to have come from this meeting. Had the dialogue between Mr. Norman and the students been limited to his responses to their journals, my view of this relationship would have been somewhat narrow and sterile. I say “sterile” because Mr. Norman’s responses to the students’ journals seemed to lack the richness and warmth of his personality that I had come to appreciate during the two interviews I had with him prior to his writing his responses to the students. This may have been due in part to the uncertainty he felt as to how he should respond to the students, an uncertainty he expressed in our second interview. Not having a clear understanding of his relationship with this audience may have made it difficult for him to respond to the students.

On the other hand, the interactive meeting was rich, warm, and relatively open and relaxed, considering that the students may have felt a bit nervous at times, knowing that they were being audiotaped and videotaped. Mr. Norman seemed much more comfortable in a face-to-face relationship with this audience than he had when they were an audience whom he “knew” only by their responses to *Fielder’s Choice*. There was nothing stilted, perfunctory, or impersonal about his approach to the students. In fact, even though he had to speak at an athletic banquet later that evening, he never gave the impression that he was in a hurry to leave. The connection which Mr. Norman seemed to establish with his audience may be seen in the thread of laughter that ran through the conversations. This is interesting because in one of the interviews which I had with him, he told me that students with whom he had previously talked had been disappointed because he was not funnier in person. They had expected him to be something of a comedian because of the humor they found in *Fielder’s Choice*. My students, on

the other hand, were most likely not expecting to be entertained by humor since their responses had not focused on humor. Nevertheless, the amount of laughter during the meeting seems to indicate that the students—even Bob and Loki who seemed disconnected at times—connected with Mr. Norman on something of a personal level.

Perhaps the clearest indication that a personal relationship had been established between Mr. Norman and the students was revealed “off the record” when the students and I went to dinner after the meeting. The consensus among the students was that Mr. Norman was “not at all like a lawyer or an author.” This seemed to be their way of complimenting him, viewing him as just a regular guy.

### **Conclusions**

The relationship between Mr. Norman and his audience—both the case study audience and the wider audience—seems to have been one in which, like the center circle of an archery target, self was at the center of the concentric circles of the “other” audience as well as the text. However, unlike the archery target, self was not the primary “bull’s eye” target. Rather, self was primarily the eye through which the “other” audience was seen and the pattern by which the “other” audience was created. However, neither the center circle of self nor the circle of the “other” audience seemed impermeable. Rather, they were porous, each drawing upon that which was within its own circle (endogenous) as well as each contributing to that which was outside of its own circle (exogenous). The resulting text seemed to reflect this endogenous/exogenous relationship between a “concentrized” author and his audience.

Though the author’s conceptions of this “concentrized” self were limited and imperfect, they nevertheless seemed to be a valid starting point for his conceptions of the “other” audience. As he projected himself and his voice onto the “other” audience through the creation of his

likeable character Jax, through the dialect, through causality and reality devices, he also considered the voice of the “other,” the audience that was beyond yet somehow a part of self. Having specific intentions for a specific audience as a starting point seemed to help widen rather than narrow the author’s audience. Though the author seemed to feel that not all of his specific intentions were “understood” by the case-study audience, he nevertheless “understood” that he did not have the right to a second chance at conveying his intentions.

### **Contributions of the Study**

I believe that this study has made several contributions to our understanding of the puzzle of the author-audience relationship. First, I believe it has drawn attention to what seems to be the complex role of self in an author’s conception of audience. I have studiously refrained from using the Piagetian term “egocentrism” to describe Mr. Norman’s use of self in conceiving his audience because this term has been defined by Barritt and Kroll (1978) as “a cognitive state in which a person fails to perceive others’ perspectives” (p. 54). As I have already discussed, Mr. Norman did indeed perceive others’ perspectives, but these perceptions were filtered through self. I believe this complex role of self in an author’s conception of audience deserves further investigation. Second, this study has raised the possibility that writing for a defined audience may in fact widen an author’s audience to a more general “generic” audience rather than narrow it, a possibility which warrants a closer look. Third, this study has contributed to our understanding of how an audience responds to an author’s stated intentions. The results of this study seem to indicate that global intentions (in this case, enticing children to read) may be more easily achieved than more specific intentions (i.e., hooking students with humor, conveying certain “points”). However, this too needs further study. To conclude, I believe that this study has shown where several pieces may fit into the puzzle of the author-audience relationship.

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## APPENDIX A: GUIDES FOR AUTHOR AND EDITOR INTERVIEWS

### Author Interview #1—Beginning of Study—March 29, 2001

1. Connections to baseball—antipathy to New York Yankees
2. Family—growing up, now—Steve Kelly—*Seattle Times*—a novel about “the magic and mayhem of families”
3. His body of work—including study guides for *Fielder’s Choice* and *Cross Body Block*
  - author/audience relationship—experiences teaching *Fielder’s Choice* and *Cross Body Block*
  - some of the difficulties students have expressed in understanding the novels.
  - *Fielder’s Choice*--philosophy as a solution to moral dilemmas
  - *Cross Body Block*—comment on religion and corporal punishment as deterrents to bad behavior
4. Reviews and others’ interviews about *Fielder’s Choice* and him
  - *Publisher’s Weekly*—“reminiscent of Mark Harris’s wonderful fictional major leaguer, Henry Wiggen”—*Bang the Drum Slowly*
  - *Kirkus Reviews*—debut novel with the charm of a Ring Lardner tale
  - Steve Kelly—*Seattle Times*—“has some of the whimsy of W. P. Kinsella’s *Shoeless Joe & Iowa Baseball Confederacy*”
  - Michael Adams—Magill Book Reviews—influenced by Mark Harris, *The Catcher in the Rye*, & *Slaughterhouse Five*
  - Liz Parkhurst—movie that deals with the “big game that got away”
  - Bob Anderson—*Advocate*—“I [Rick Norman] wrote about the two things I liked to read about best” [baseball & war]—Influence of these—other works—on the writing of *Fielder’s Choice*
  - *Plain Dealer*—“written in a Southern accent, the charming, whimsical dialogue Faust—“We’ve struggled with the dialect”
  - Pete Conture—St. Petersburg—grating narrative—How he/they dealt with dialect
  - Interview with Laurie Parker Duren—Norman believes that everyone has at least one book in himself or herself—comment?—particularly as this relates to young people
5. His development as an author
  - Help from family? friends?
  - Relationship of Southern storytelling tradition & his style of writing?
  - Laurie Parker Duren--It ended up being a lot more work—fun to do in spare time
  - BUT—publisher—“take out this chapter and switch this around, take this character out, we need a new character here;” 40-50% change in editing process (Explore this) (\*\*Does he still have manuscript marked with publisher’s comments? May I xerox it?)
6. Writing for (a young adult audience)—how he perceives his audience
  - *The West Virginia Hillbilly*—“I wrote it for adults plagued by the memory of their mistakes.” Original target audience? Did he **not** have YA audience in mind?



- Douglas Noverr—novel has deeply pacifist theme—“A decision was made early on by the publisher to concentrate on the baseball aspects of the novel. Had I been in the position to do so, I would have tried to emphasize the war aspects of the novel more.” Why publisher’s choice to emphasize baseball?
  - *Fielder’s Choice*—first written as grand jury transcript & foreword a letter by Gooseball’s nephew explaining how he came to find the transcript—Why change?
  - “Without a doubt, the most gratifying result [of writing *Fielder’s Choice*] has been the letters I’ve received from around the country from just good, plain folk thanking me for writing the book. For some reason that I can’t fathom, the book strikes a much deeper chord with some readers.” What is this chord?
7. Speaking to a young adult audience—how he perceives his audience
  8. Connections between writing for and speaking to young adult audiences
  9. Critical choices facing young adults today—Steve Kelly—Seattle Times—Fielder’s Choice—a novel about Southern ethics

Author Interview #2—Middle of Study—April 24, 2001

1. Multiple/evolving audience—his children, kids who don’t like to read. Interview with *West Virginia Hillbilly* about *Fielder’s Choice*—“I wrote it for adults plagued by the memory of their mistakes.” Comment?
2. Author’s perspective of audience when writing *Cross Body Block*—different from *Fielder’s Choice*?
3. Point in writing process at which author becomes aware of the audience
4. Specific issues relating to audience author may have struggled with while writing *Fielder’s Choice* & *Cross Body Block*
  - Revisions
  - Title (editor’s attempt to get him to change title because editor didn’t realize “fielder’s choice” was a baseball term)
  - Profanity
  - Setting
5. Specific strategies or solutions for dealing with issues relating to audience
6. Authorial intentions
  - Passage A (author’s attitude toward war, race relations, authenticity of character vs. projected image)
  - Passage B (appeal to emotions of audience)
  - Passage C (lesson to audience, author’s definition of love)
  - Passage D (switch to newspaper style, foreshadowing)

7. Audience relationship with Southern references:
  - Jefferson Davis
  - Dixie
  - lost as Grant's Bible
  - pitches wild as canonballs at Gettysburg
8. Fictional audience—Davis—in original manuscript has similar response some students had—  
“we have now listened to you for the better part of a day and haven't, as far as I can tell,  
touched upon the treason charges against you.
9. Name changes for characters (from original manuscript):
  - Andrew Jackson Norman to Fielder
  - Col. Beathard to Cole
  - Ernie Risponse to Musso
  - Tim Johnson to Will McNulty
  - Zero to Yoshi
  - Admiral Yomama to the Admiral
10. Change in title of manuscript from Gooseball to Fielder's Choice
11. No balk (?) in the original manuscript—runner steals home
12. Original manuscript—Jax was going to play ball in Cuba (changed to Mexico)

Interview Questions for Judith Faust, editor of *Fielder's Choice*

1. What was your perception of the audience for *Fielder's Choice*?
2. How would you characterize Rick Norman's style of writing in *Fielder's Choice*? What role do you see audience consideration playing in this choice of style?
3. What were some of the issues relating to audience that you as editor found yourself struggling with—with *Fielder's Choice*? What were the solutions to these audience-related issues?
4. What role did audience play in the editing of the dialect?
5. Originally, *Fielder's Choice* was written as a grand jury transcript and the foreword was a letter by Gooseball's nephew explaining how he came to find the manuscript. Why was that changed?
6. Why was the title “Fielder's Choice” chosen over “Smackover,” “Rough in the Diamond,” “Decided Forever Betwixt Two Things,” “Decided Only to Be Undecided,” “Against Change or Choice”? What role did consideration for audience play in this choice of a title?

7. In the original manuscript, the protagonist's name is Andrew Jackson Norman. If the title had not reflected the last name of the character, would you have kept "Norman" as the last name of the main character? Why or why not?
8. I'm interested in the lessons you taught young writers using Mr. Norman's edited manuscript. Why did you show readers how an author's work is edited?
9. What did you want to accomplish?
10. Based on the students' responses, do you think you accomplished your goal?

## APPENDIX B: INTERACTIVE INTERVIEW OBSERVATION CHART

1. Physical setting			
2. Participants			
	Act & Interact	Conv	Subtle Factors
Norman			
Student 1			
Student 2			

APPENDIX C: OUTLINE OF RICK NORMAN'S  
PERCEPTION OF HIS AUDIENCE

- I. Defined audience
  - A. Children/young adults
    - 1. Norman's two older children
    - 2. Other children/young adults
      - a. Reluctant "non-readers"
        - 1) Limited in literary experience
        - 2) Limited in worldly experience and knowledge
        - 3) Experienced in distinguishing reality from fiction
        - 4) Described as mostly male, athletic, 15-17 years old
      - b. Friends of Norman's children
  - B. Adults other than self
    - 1. Adults plagued by memory of mistakes
    - 2. Norman's acquaintances
  - C. Self
    - 1. Adult plagued by memory of mistake
    - 2. Teenager
- II. General "generic" audience
  - A. Causal connections
  - B. Connection between concepts and ideas
  - C. Interesting or likeable characters
- III. Students in the study
  - A. Students/ children
  - B. The "offended"
  - C. "Expert" readers
  - D. Students/"plaintiffs"

APPENDIX D: CODING AND OUTLINING OF STUDENTS' BOOK NOTES, JOURNAL RESPONSES, AND INTERVIEW RESPONSES

Coding: Thelma

**A—Topic—book notes**

1. [Response to the Bubba incident] I like that they didn't have to fight. That is usually the solution.
2. He [Jax] really can make decisions. I don't know why he thinks he can't.
3. He seems to think pretty well for himself.
4. [Response to Passage B] His "dream" may have been like a message from God keeping him alive.
5. [Frequent references to baseball] This is getting ridiculous.
6. Maybe the game [baseball] really is that important. It saved his life.

**A—Topic—journal responses**

1. I am a baseball fan, and this should add to the book's appeal.
2. I also like the way the problem with Bubba is resolved. The usual solution is a fight. It is good to see that the author resolves it differently.
3. If you love someone, you would be with them in this situation.
4. Jax definitely made the right decision by jumping in the water.
5. You can really understand what war and hatred will do to people.
6. And Jax really can think. He lived through the pipe, he allowed "Curly" to kick him so he would not get beaten. These things take thought and intelligence.
7. I would say he made the right choices. He was honest, loving, and kind. When you have all of this, how could anything go wrong.
8. [Response to Passage B] This passage symbolizes the fall of man. There is a tree full of apples. If the babies would not take the apples, they would not fall. They may represent man as a whole. He can not save them because a mere man can't. Only God can save us from our sin. Also, this may deal with predestination. There are many different views on this. If these babies do not know Christ, then they can't be saved. Personally, this is not my view, but it is one of many. I am not sure why this would bring him back, but it does.
9. [Response to Passage C] Love is the reason we act as we do. His decisions have not been bad. They were all for love and therefore can't be wrong.

**A—Topic—interview**

1. [Response to author's intent in presenting Jugs's solution to the problem with Bubba] Just because it would maybe help with your perspective of guys or something. They don't always have to fight. Maybe they can just talk about it and it would work out.
2. [Response to the author's presentation of the Japanese and war] I agreed because not all of the Japanese people were bad. What they were doing was wrong, but they had never done anything to him personally. But it was just his [Jax's] duty, I guess, to go and fight.
3. [Response to Passage B] I said it was like whenever—the tree and the apples was like Adam and Eve—and the original sin. And then the baby, I thought was like Little Jackson because I think he [Jax] kind of considered him like his son now that his other brother was gone, and he was going to try to save him, and he knew he [Little Jackson] was sick and that he needed help. But he was so far away he couldn't do anything about it.

**B—Author—book notes**

1. [Response to rumors about Bubba] This “rumor” reminds me of Limer. You never know to believe or not.
2. [Response to Jugs teaching Jax a lesson] Jugs is an excellent character. Not too many people would do that.
3. [Response to team shunning Jax and Jugs] This is very realistic.
4. [Jude] This boy is strange; he still cries?
5. [Jude] He is very irritating.
6. [Jude] He was always left out.
7. [Jude] He is such a loser.
8. [Response to Maw hating Paw] This sounds like a very realistic situation.
9. [Incident with Lilly at Paw’s funeral] Who would really do this?
10. I love how they [the characters] are so close to home in the story.
11. [Response to: “booze wasn’t going to get me no further along down that road” (p. 78) Pretty admirable and unusual.
12. [Jugs’s death] How will he manage without Jugs?
13. [Jax not jumping out of hospital bed to salute Admiral] He still has a sense of humor.
14. [Jax wanting to marry Dixie] This is kind of strange.
15. [Jax saying Jude stayed out of the war because he had a yellow streak down his back] Very true.
16. [Dixie’s marriage to Jude] Was she that desperate?
17. [Jude] And he didn’t even fight! He didn’t care about them—only himself.

**B—Author—journal responses**

1. I like the fact that the characters are from New Orleans and the South in general. I think this will make them easier to identify with.
2. The characters are easy to identify with also.
3. This chapter reveals a lot about each character. I admire the relationship Jugs and Jax have. The way they communicate with one another and others is very unique. They seem extremely close. Their personalities balance out...I like how the author puts everything on a “normal” families level. The dad is aggravated about Jugs going into the Navy and the mom tells him (Jax) that it is perfect. This seems to be an ordinary family. These boys are so typical. I can see many of my friends in these characters.
4. The way the mother tries to persuade them that she is right and to hate their dad is typical.
5. I can’t believe Jugs and Dixie got married. Had they even seen each other?
6. The fact that Jax left baseball to be with his dad says a lot about him.
7. The characters seem very lifelike.
8. This character [Jax] is so likeable. He is very real. We know exactly what he thinks about everything. He is simple in that he comes from a small town and is very laid back.
9. Jax is very complex. His accent and grammar make him seem very simple. The reader knows he is not.
10. Jude is definitely a strange kid. His character is very strange, and in my opinion, not very likeable.
11. The author has made a great character [Jax]. He is a character that we can’t stop reading about. I couldn’t put the book down. I want to know exactly what happens to him. I would also like to know what happened to Jude and his mother.

12. [Response to Passage A] He realized they were human because they played baseball? Is this the only way he can relate to people? Why did he not think of this before? People would make them out to be worse than they really are. I would have too. Why is Jax not more upset with them? [the Japanese] Is he really that forgiving? They took away the most important person in his life. They have been shooting at him, and now he decides they may not be all that bad. I find this to be a little strange. Yes, they are people too, but they are also his brother's killers and the enemy.

### **B—Author—interview**

1. They [the characters] were from a small town. Limer is a very small town. And you see how whenever they would—you know—word would get around so fast and everything just kind of seemed like Limer.
2. [Recognition of friends in characters] The baseball players—because we have *so* many athletes. Just the way they—he [Jax] was so obsessed with baseball and they're always just “sports, sports” all the time. And just some of their—Dixie—their friend, their neighbor—which is—good friends—you just go over to their house all the time and you don't think anything about it. That's just kind of the way everyone around here is.
3. He was just a very good guy. He liked baseball. He was your typical guy, and he loved his family. His parents were divorced and everything—well, they didn't divorce—but he didn't take a side or anything. He was always fair about it. He took care of his brother's wife. He just always seemed to think of everyone else.
4. [Complexity of character] Well, he—if you just listened to him talk, it was all baseball and everything, but he was concerned about his family, the war, his brother, and—just like everyday things that everybody would be concerned about and not just baseball and “that's my whole life.” He worried about other things too.

### **C—Audience—book notes**

1. [Response to kitten story] Terrible
2. Jude is horrible! Why would he act like this? His brother was just home! (p. 162)
3. [Response to Jude beating Little Jackson and hitting Jax with a belt] You don't do that!
4. [Response to Jude beating Little Jackson] How pathetic; a “man” against a child.
5. [Maw saying Jude was just sensitive and no one understood him] That's sickening!

### **C—Audience—journal responses**

1. I do not like the character of the dad too much now.
2. I do not like Jude.
3. I do not like the way the mother and Jude are acting.
4. I feel sorry for Jax and how he is being treated.
5. When he gets ready to pitch, my stomach gets in knots.
6. When he fell on the ground, my heart sank.
7. You can identify with what he is going through if you have ever played sports
8. Letting everyone down is the worst feeling.
9. The baby only adds to the sadness of Jugs' death.
10. This has to be one of the most depressing stories I have ever read.
11. The pipe is awful.
12. We are now in a way able to sympathize with him [Curly].



13. When Jax is left alone, there is a sense of relief and sadness.
14. If the author wanted the reader to hate Jude, he has accomplished it.
15. I detest Jude.
16. When the doctor says he can fix his face, I was so excited.
17. Jude is such a “little” man that he would hit a child like that.

**C—Audience—interview**

1. [Referring to the kitten] It was just terrible.

**D—Text—book notes**

1. [Response to the first two sentences of Ch. 1] These two lines are a little confusing.
2. [Response to the line “but he never done nothing to me”] I don’t like this. It is incorrect.
3. [Response to kitten story] I think this passage was not necessary.
4. [Response to the following lines: “Sometimes you got to lie to yourself to keep yourself going. I learned that in Japan” (p. 70)] I don’t like the small shift.
5. I didn’t even realize he was still talking to the major.
6. [Response to reference to the batter Frenchy d’Aquin (p. 85)] Is this a real player?
7. [beginning of Ch. 11] Why would this major listen to all of this?
8. Question mark to indicate not understanding a term: donnybrook

**D—Text—journal responses**

1. I like the author’s use of accents. It makes the characters more personable.
2. The story line moves along well. He seems to move the reader through the story rather quickly.
3. I can see how the kitten story is related now, but I could have still done without it.
4. [Response to Passage D] It seems that Jax’s life turned out great. What a great ending, even if it was with the Yankees.

**D—Text—interview**

1. [Referring to the dialect] Just because they were so—they weren’t all proper, and they were just like regular people you meet every day—your family, your friends, and everything. That’s how we talk, and so it makes it a lot more personable.
2. [Response to kitten story] Probably just to show—and it related to him in the pipe—so maybe it would show how terrible—that kind of related to how terrible his experience was.

## Taxonomic Outline: Thelma

- I. Topic
  - A. Conflict
  - B. Choices
  - C. War
- II. Author
  - A. Jax
  - B. Jugs
  - C. Jude
- III. Audience
  - A. Sympathy
  - B. Anger
  - C. Sadness
- IV. Text
  - A. Dialect
  - B. Pace
  - C. Major (pseudo-audience)

**A—Topic—book notes**

None

**A—Topic—journal responses**

1. I don't understand what or who the dedication is about. I'm sure that the men he refers to have something to do with baseball, but I have no idea what kind of mistake they made. Maybe the book will shed some light onto that topic.
2. Well, I think that with the first bomb I had dropped, I would be thinking about all of the "humans" I killed. I don't think that I could ever go to war and kill people. I know that I couldn't stand up and shoot the person next to me, so how could the army expect me to rain bombs down on people whom I would never see. I don't see much difference in the two. If I was to shoot someone in a supermarket, I would be arrested, and in the worst case sentenced to death myself. However, if you are in the army and kill thousands in the name of your country, you are considered "brave" and are congratulated on your actions. I don't think that I will understand why that happens.
3. [Response to Passage B] . Well, I don't understand what the baby tree with the falling babies means. I read the passage three times, and I just don't know. I'm sure there is some deep symbolism in it, but I don't see it. Maybe it is supposed to mean that if you try to "save the world" you end up doing nothing, but if you focus on one problem, and when that one is solved, then you move on to the next. If he would have just tried to take one baby at a time, he could have saved some of them. This dream might also be trying to tell him to quit "choking" under the pressure. Throughout the book, there have been many instances where he has blown a big thing just because of his nerves and the like. This dream may help him get over his problem. Maybe all of my interpretations are silly and don't make any sense, but neither does this dream. All I know is that if I had a dream like this, it would really bother me.
4. [Response to Passage C] I think that Jax is exactly right. In your life, you are faced with many choices. You never know fully which is the right decision, but everyone hopes that they make the right one. Not every decision works out as planned, but if you did it for love, then that automatically makes it the right one. I feel like Jax has made the best decisions possible.
5. I finally understand the title now. The whole basis of the book, overlooking baseball and the war, are the choices people make. I totally feel that and get it.

**A—Topic—interview**

1. I don't think knowing any more or any less about baseball really hindered you from really getting the point of the book.
2. Like the title says—it's *Fielder's Choice*. And it was just about all the choices he's had to make throughout the book, throughout his life, you know, starting when he was younger because—like—in the first chapter I think it was, or maybe the second, he was—a lot of going back when he was younger and throughout the whole book he went back. And about choices he made then and choices he's making now—you know. About—like when he had to go save the guy from the hole or whatever. And that was a choice he made to go do that. And then he ended up in the hole.

3. [Response to author's attitude toward war] Maybe that it was kind of like there was no need for it maybe. Like it was useless. There was no reason to start a war like that.
4. There was no need for everybody to hate the Japanese or the Japanese to hate the Americans. Just because they are at war together doesn't mean that two opposites can't be friends. I think they both learned a lot from each other, you know. Not only did he teach him[Yoshi] baseball but he [Jax] taught him some other values, and he[Jax] got a lot of values from him[Yoshi] too.
5. [Values] Probably a little bit more tolerance and understanding. Maybe that he shouldn't judge things right off the bat—before you really know somebody.
6. [Jax's definition of love] Caring for somebody. Just as long as you care to make the decision, I think. That makes it a loving decision or a choice.
7. [title connection to theme of choice] Well, all throughout the whole book that's what he was doing. He was making choices, you know, on what to do and, you know, he was always worried if he was making the right or wrong choice, you know. Since the very beginning—about throwing the ball, he didn't know how to throw it, and he ended up blowing the whole thing. He didn't know if he should go save the guy from the hole or not, and he did and ended up getting put in the hole. He didn't know if he should send a letter to her or not, but he ended up sending it anyway—to Dixie. You know, just all throughout he was just making choices. Then he made the little speech at the end about choices and all the ones he's had to make.
8. [basing decisions on love] I think that's the right way to make a choice.

#### **B—Author—book notes**

1. [Response to Jax's encounter with Dixie in the raft] What?!! Get a girlfriend!
2. [Response to Jax writing marriage proposal to Dixie] What?! He needs to respect his dead brother.

#### **B—Author—journal responses**

1. As for the author, he seems to know quite a bit about baseball. He must be very intelligent too, to have been able to write a book and be a lawyer at the same time. Shows that he is very dedicated to writing.
2. One thing that I have realized is that I think Jugs would really get on my nerves. His incessant joking would really start to bother me.
3. He purposely lost two of the most important games for the team just to teach Jax something. Jax appreciated him doing that just to teach him something, but I think that I would really be upset if someone did it to me.
4. Jugs embarrasses Jax quite a bit also. This would also bother me.
5. [Response to Paw having an affair] The same thing happened with my family about three years ago. It sounds almost exactly the same. The way Jax talks about his dad being “different” than he remembered. That is what I remember of my father.
6. He needs to get a girlfriend!
7. Jax's childhood memories really add a personal touch to the story.
8. A few chapters back, when he finds out Jugs has been killed, he didn't seem as upset as I thought he would. With all of the memories, he must be hurt inside.
9. [Response to Passage A] I think that comparing Americans' dislike of the Japanese and the story of an orangutan being beat by a man in a yellow suit is a horrible metaphor. What he is

insinuating is that Americans have somehow “set up” the Japanese. It is saying that the Japanese are innocent, and Americans don’t realize it. Maybe he isn’t saying that the Americans are putting the yellow coat on them; maybe he is saying that it is the Germans. The Americans are the orangutans, the Germans are the trainers who beat up the orangutans, and the Japanese are the men who go in to wrestle the orangutans. However you look at it, to me it is a bad comparison. The Japanese knew why they were fighting, and they bombed us first. I do agree that they are human, but part of me thinks that anyone, or any group, that would bomb someone who isn’t even in the war has to be a little “yellow.”

10. At first I thought that it was bad that Jax was going to marry Dixie, but when he was going to her house, I was really rooting for them to get together.
11. [Response to Passage D] Well, as for the army’s apology and medal, I think it is too little too late. Jax turned his life around for his country and his army and when he tried to get his life back to normal, they screwed it up again. I think that it is great how little Jackson is playing ball now. It must give Jax a way to live through his son now.

### **B—Author—interview**

1. The whole thing about his [Jax’s] father leaving the family and stuff like that, I can identify with that perfectly because that’s exactly how my father acted—to the T. It was almost that exactly except my mom wasn’t like his mother. It wasn’t the same like that in that his mom wanted him to hate his father and, you know, never speak to him again. And my mom didn’t act like that. That’s it. I identified.
2. [Response to Jax missing his championship game to sit with his father in the hospital] I think it made him seem very mature, you know. He was a young guy, and he was making really adult decisions, you know. Putting his dad first over himself, you know, and things like that.
3. And another thing, was when Jugs lost the game on purpose to teach Jax a lesson. I mean, I thought that was really—I don’t know if I would have liked that so much. You know what I mean? Like, somebody losing the game. But he seemed to understand that he was just trying to teach him something, and, you know, he got that.

### **C—Audience—book notes**

1. [Response to Jax missing his championship game to sit with his father in the hospital] Must have been hard for him.
2. [Response to Jude marrying Dixie] What?! I hate Jude!
3. [Response to Jude cheating the GIs] Jude is such a snake! He will get his one day. Arrogant S.O. B.
4. [Response to Jude beating Little Jackson] He is so yellow that he can only beat his kid.

### **C—Audience—journal responses**

1. [Response to Paw’s affair] This chapter really saddened me. Whenever this situation pops up in a movie, book, or even in real life, I find myself a little upset.
2. I feel really sorry for Jackson. I think his mom, and everyone else, is trying to make him grow up too fast.
3. I wish he would catch a break here soon.
4. The Japanese were horrible, it seems, to the Americans. You wouldn’t treat a dog like the way they treated Jax. I would have never been able to make it.

5. One thing that makes me mad about Jax is the fact that he wants to marry his dead brother's wife.
6. Someone else who makes me mad is this "Curly" guy. Who does he think he is? Jax needs to punch him in his face!
7. I just want to say that I hate Jude. He is such a coward.
8. [Response to Jude's treatment of Jax when he returned from Japan] That makes me mad. I would have hit him, hard!
9. [Response to Jude hitting Jax with the belt] I'm surprised he didn't knock Jude out! I would have. That would really make me furious.
10. I'm glad that something good has happened to him. After all he has been through, he deserves a little break.
11. I'm really glad Jude is gone.
12. This final chapter is a very emotional chapter. Jax basically pours his heart out, and my heart goes out to him.

### **C—Audience—interview**

1. Well, I wanted something good to happen to him [Jax].
2. I didn't like him [Curly] at all, you know.
3. You know, I kind of think the book was a little brutal in some things—like where he talks about the cat. In the way he described the cat.
4. And when he was in the hole, how he described everything that was happening to him in there, you know. And maybe it was the truth, but I think it was pretty brutal.

### **D—Text—book notes**

1. Question marks to indicate lack of understanding of term:
  - a. "still prone to hit high on the backstop"
  - b. ERA
  - c. "pert"
2. [Response to Jax's balk] What happened?
3. [Response to the term "presumed dead"] Maybe he [Jugs] isn't dead.

### **D—Text—journal responses**

1. The only problem I have right now is the dialect he (the author) writes in. I find myself reading a sentence a second and third time because I don't understand what he is trying to say.
2. The way they show Jugs and Dixie being so happy about their marriage is a foreshadow to something bad happening to Jugs in the war. I think he will be killed, or at least hurt.
3. I have a strange feeling that right when Jax starts his major league training, something else bad is going to happen. The way he mentions the war, and then starts this new baseball thing; I just don't think it is going to last very long.
4. Well, my prediction was right, but I figured he would make it, and then he would be drafted. Nevertheless, I knew that it wouldn't work out somehow.
5. It said that he was presumed dead. Maybe he really isn't.

#### **D—Text—interview**

1. He was writing from the South—in a Southern voice or dialect and I can't imagine somebody from the North really getting anything of what he meant. Because some of the stuff like—throughout the book he—they—misspelled “throw” every time they mentioned the word—and different other words too—things he used.
2. It wasn't easy for me [even though he's from the South]. Sometimes I still had to read the sentence a couple of times to kind of get what he was saying. But I still figured it out. But I don't see how people from the North—not knowing how we speak down here—how they could figure it out at all.
3. I think they [people from the North] might lose interest with it maybe a little.
4. Less [of the dialect] would have been better. I mean using some was OK, you know, because it showed—it kind of put the setting in there, where they were from and everything. So that helped a little, but he could have used a little less, I think.
5. I think after the first chapter it really got me started on the book. Like sometimes—like if it takes me till the third chapter to get into a book, I don't tend to make it to that third chapter.
6. I think it [the first chapter] did a good job of that.
7. I think it should maybe have gone more into the whole Japanese baseball thing. And maybe something like—you know how at the end it was just—he was throwing the pitch in or whatever and his son was being a Yankee. Maybe something could have happened there with the Japanese and the baseball. You know, it could have been tied back into there.
8. And I think, like, with the ending, it was like a newspaper article—kind of like, you know. I think he could have gone—maybe added a few more chapters about him having his son and teaching him how to play baseball and leading up to that, you know. It just kind of ended in a spot where it was kind of just unusual, you know.
9. Because the whole thing was him telling the Army officer this story about him going through baseball and then going to the war and all this kind of stuff. And then he just left the officer after explaining himself. And that's where you were left, you know. Then it [the newspaper article] explains kind of what happened in the meantime.
10. [Response to why author chose to have Jax recount his childhood] I think it kind of built his personality—you know, what his personality started out as. And it also helped us to see, I think, how his brother Jude, the younger brother, reacted towards him and his other brother—you know, and how he—they weren't together all three of them because mainly Jax and his older brother—and then the younger one was kind of left out.
11. [Response to why Jude was often left out of the narrative] Because I don't think he (Jax)—there wasn't—he didn't spend time with him, you know, so there wasn't really much to say about him because I don't think he really knew him that well. You know, if you spend all of your time with—if he spent all of his time with his older brother playing baseball and doing this fun stuff, you know, going to movies with girls or whatever. And I don't think he knew a lot about Jude. Jude spent a lot of time with his mom.
12. And the only time he did mention him (Jude) was when he was ratting on them or something like that.

## Taxonomic Outline: Chatrick

- I. Topic
  - A. War
  - B. Choices
- II. Author
  - A. Mr. Norman
  - B. Jax
  - C. Jugs
  - D. Paw
- III. Audience
  - A. Sadness
  - B. Sympathy
  - C. Anger
- IV. Text
  - A. Terms
  - B. Dialect
  - C. Foreshadowing
  - D. Opening
  - E. Conclusion



**A—Topic—book notes**

None

**A—Topic—journal responses**

1. This book will teach us about life decisions.
2. He [Jax] will have to be very careful of what he does and the decisions he makes.
3. He [Jax] was trying to rationalize why he should kiss her [Dixie].
4. This is where he got his head straight.
5. This chapter tells of Gooseball's choices he made and why he did them. If he did mess up, it was an accident. He didn't mean anything by the choices he made. He just wanted to help everybody he could. Gooseball was an honest man.
6. [Response to Passage B] This passage is even worse than the one before. These babies were just falling off of the trees and Gooseball couldn't decide which one to catch. He was trying to help. This sort of sums up his life. His indecisions always end up hurting him in one way or another. I think he decides he doesn't want to die, and that is when he starts feeling pain again in his face. He wants to do something right for a change. He doesn't want to be a loser. He just wants to get out of the POW camp and pitch again.
7. [Response to Passage C] This passage talks about choices. The choice we make today will affect our lives tomorrow. It will be wise to make right choices today so it will be easier tomorrow. An honest man can only make an honest mistake. We all make mistakes, but try to make the right decisions.
8. [Response to Passage D] This last passage sums up what Gooseball went through his whole career. It also tells us what happened to him. It makes you wonder if you make the right decisions if somebody will question you and then tell you, you are wrong.

**A—Topic—interview**

1. He got past him [Yoshi] being Chinese [he meant Japanese] and just went for him being a baseball player. He looked past all that and wanted to teach him how to play.
2. [main idea] If you mess up, try to make it—stand up for what you did and try to make it right by whatever you had to by any means possible, I guess. If you make a mistake, fess up to it, admit that you did wrong and try to make it right.
3. [decisions based on love] You probably need to make more decisions—instead of that it could get him in the wrong spots, I guess. It could get him into some difficult spots he couldn't get out of, yet he could get into spots he would like to be in by doing it. I guess make a decision instead of just on love alone—on another point.
4. [author's view of war] He probably didn't like it, but he knew it was going to happen. It's going to happen through the world, and he just gave a little bit of what could happen and what did happen and what could—dealing with relationships—about how people view each other on the other sides of the world. About people liking them—the races—and stuff like that.
5. [Jax's definition of love] I'm not real sure how he would. There are two different kinds of love—a family love, and then a married type of love—where he would try to marry the person. A family type of love would not let anything happen to him or them. He'd do any way he could to keep harm from getting into his family.

**B—Author—book notes**

None

**B—Author—journal responses**

1. The author Rick Norman seems to be a huge baseball fan. He played college ball somewhere and was known for not being able to hit a curve ball. Although he didn't make it in the "big leagues," he leads a very successful life being a lawyer.
2. The narrator has a lot of problems to worry about.
3. Jugs was the catcher on the high school team while the narrator pitched. Jugs was a smart baseball player and kept up with each pitch that he [Jax] threw during the game.
4. At this point he probably feels like everyone is leaving him, and he can't depend on anybody else. He will have to do everything himself.
5. I think he was a little jealous of his brother because he had liked Dixie.
6. I think that he is feeling sorry for his father.
7. The narrator is growing up very fast.
8. I think this was an honor to him. He was surprised that Jugs and Dixie would want to name him [their baby] after a baseball player who always messed up.

**B—Author—interview**

1. [ what he liked about the book] The friendship between him and his brother.
2. [description of Jax] A good old country boy. He does what he thinks is right.
3. [description of Jugs] He's about the same. A little more level-headed, doesn't get as much tempered as his younger brother. He just kind of goes with the flow. He makes things funny in situations they don't need to be funny in.
4. Jugs did all the thinking for him. He relied too much on his older brother. I think it's kind of a brother thing. "I'll do what you tell me to do, so you don't beat me up afterward."
5. I could understand some of the [baseball] situations. The balk stuff that he went through. Being a baseball player, you know, it's kind of difficult in some situations and you make a mistake and you just feel like an idiot.
6. [description of Jude] There wasn't much to him. He seemed kind of like a lawyer. You don't know whether to trust him or not.
7. It seemed like after he went through all that he wanted to do something for his life—with his life—instead of just being a shadow of his older brother. He wanted to do something for himself, and it just gave him a little incentive to go back to the majors and pitch and do stuff like that. It just gave him a little incentive.
8. He starts thinking more like his brother instead of being—getting aggravated and hostile with everything that happens. He just kind of goes with it and says, "OK, I'm just going to do this instead of getting mad. He looks at it a different way, I guess.

**C—Audience—book notes**

None

**C—Audience—journal responses**

1. [Response to Passage A] The section that is chosen is horrible. They pick on a defenseless animal. This man must have some kind of fun when he does this or he is making a lot of money.

2. I can understand [about the unfair umpiring] because most of the MPSA (Mississippi Private School Association) umpires pull for the teams in Mississippi and give us a little bit of a hard time.
3. [Response to Jax's survival of "The Pipe"] This is the most courageous thing that I have ever heard of.

**C—Audience—interview**

None

**D—Text—book notes**

None

**D—Text—journal responses**

1. He has to convince the government that he didn't help the enemy and he is telling stories. He better show his point fast.

**D—Text—interview**

1. [what he liked about the book] Its being in the South.
2. [Response to the dialect] It was a little hard to get used to, but you got used to it real fast. It was just the small town—Arkansas—the way they talked.
3. It would have taken some away from it [if there hadn't been Southern dialect] There wouldn't have been as much emphasis on the Southern part, but it wouldn't take that much away I don't think.
4. [Response to flashbacks] It wouldn't have been as good or as interesting a book. It would have been entertaining, but it wouldn't have had as much detail about where he came from, about his brother, about how he had grown up. [Wouldn't have known Jax as well]
5. [Response to conclusion] I guess we would like to know an outcome, about what happened to him. More about what happened with him in the military. Besides just him getting blacklisted from baseball. A conclusion.
6. I like the way he wrote it, the way it flowed, the way he had his stories—like the old stories.
7. I think he kind of did it [told the stories] to show that he didn't mean anything by it—what he did. He just wanted to show that he made an honest mistake if he did.

## Taxonomic Outline: Bob

- I. Topic
  - A. Choices
  - B. Race relations
- II. Author
  - A. Mr. Norman
  - B. Jax
  - C. Jugs
  - D. Jude
- III. Audience
  - A. Horror
  - B. Sympathy
- IV. Text
  - A. Framework
  - B. Dialect
  - C. Flashbacks
  - D. Conclusion

## Coding: Goose

### **A—Topic—book notes**

1. [Response to Jax staying with his father in the hospital rather than playing in championship game] Maybe this is Fielder's choice?

### **A—Topic—journal responses**

1. I feel that this book will appeal to my taste since I've basically lived, breathed, and worshipped baseball since I was a child.
2. Being familiar with baseball, I know what a fielder's choice is, but I am interested in seeing how a fielder's choice comes into play.
3. I am interested how this will all turn out. It is already 1944, which is close to the end of the war.
4. [Response to Passage A] Norman uses an analogy of an ape in a wrestling cage that wrestles those with a yellow coat and helmet. This story pops into Jax's head when he sees a baseball diamond in Japan. This [story] makes Jax question all the bad things people have said about Japan. Jax wonders if some high official is putting the yellow coat on him.
5. [Response to Passage C] This passage ties in the whole theme of the book. It tells us that "love is all." It tells us about how mothers love their children and children love their brothers. Basically it ties in all the misfortunes of the book. Even though many disappointing things happened to Jax, there is a happy ending. This passage also points out that it's not always the result of the decision that matters, but instead it's the reason you make these decisions.
5. [Connection between title and topic] in a newspaper they misspelled his name—Fielder—or something. And that's why I was thinking that that had something to do with the title and him making a choice. And his choices were made mainly under pressure. I think that was a big point of it—was his fielder's choice came under the pressure.

### **A—Topic—interview**

1. At first, because knowing and being familiar with baseball I knew what a fielder's choice was and what it is it's like a situation where the fielder has a choice as to which bag he's going to throw it to. He can either throw it to second base or first base or whatever the play calls for. And during the book I just noticed like there were many choices that he could have gone either way. He could have reacted to each situation differently. He could have, well, you know, even with Dixie and his brother, he could have just been angry. He could have just reacted any way.
2. What I think Jugs was trying to show him was that it would have to be fun, too, or it's no fun to be playing. I think that if it's not fun, then it's just pointless to even be out there. If you're out there, it's just like an aggravation. You can't really give 110% if you're not having fun.
3. [Response to Jax and Yoshi's friendship] That's just like with baseball, any time anyone asks you to help them with baseball—or most sports—you're just very willing to do that if you love the sport—if you like it, then it doesn't matter at all. It's just like when you're on the field, and say you get on an all-star team, and you're on a team with maybe—you're on a team with one of your arch-rivals—it's like you're a team. And you don't even think about, "Oh, I couldn't stand him a week ago." You know, you play against his team, you don't play

against him. It's just like they're fighting against the Japanese, they're not fighting against Yoshi. More of a collective [thing].

4. [Connecting Jax's telling the Major that everyone's controlling his life with the Browns winning the pennant through heart rather than great talent or skill] His whole life everyone's kind of been putting pressure on him to make a decision—to decide one way or the other. And when the Browns won the pennant, it was all heart. And I guess he needs to decide now that he can't look at the pressure, other people telling him what to do. He has to go on basic heart instinct—like he has to decide for himself instead of listening to peer pressure.
5. I reread that passage [Passage B] because I—I think it was more of him making the right decision. Like if he tries to make every decision perfect, then you just can't do that. So I think what it was mainly showing is that his choices—he just has to just kind of prioritize them to where—you know what I'm saying—he has to make good choices, but you can't always make the right decisions. Sometimes you're going to make the wrong ones. It's the choices and his ability pick and choose which choice to make—which baby to catch. He spends his whole time figuring out which one to catch. You spend your whole time trying to figure out what's your main priority and never get anything done.
6. [Jax's definition of love] I guess a basic relationship of trust and truth between two individuals

#### **B—Author—book notes**

None

#### **B—Author—journal responses**

1. After reading about the author's previous experience with baseball, I have a feeling he's going to use his own personal views in the book.
2. The author is a lawyer now, so I expect many twists, “loopholes,” and exaggerated detail in the story.
3. I think he was jealous because both his best friend and his brother were being taken from him in his eyes.
4. Who wouldn't want to leave a POW camp?

#### **B—Author—interview**

1. I was thinking, some of the baseball games he [the author] talks about were possibly something he himself played in or just situations he was in or where he messes up, like his own—in the state championship, which was a big pressure thing and he messed up, I was thinking he wrote that and that could have happened to him when he was playing baseball—like caving under pressure and stuff like that. Because I read that little “forethought” about him, and it said he played baseball.
2. [Lawyer-like twists and loopholes and exaggerated details] When he was talking about his [Jax's] friend in Mexico, he just was so sick, he really went off into the sickness and everything.
3. [Connection between the author being a lawyer and what he expected] Well, most lawyers are like that. It's like a personality thing.
4. [Relationship between Jax and Jugs] I thought that was like just the typical brother [relationship] because I have an older brother myself, and I'm the middle child just like Jax

was, and just listening to him, like he would—I used to pitch to my brother, and my brother would pitch to me.

5. [Dixie’s relationship with the Fielder boys] I guess it’s kind of weird to go from brother to brother to brother.
6. [Jude] He just got worse as the story progressed. He just became an abusive father.
7. [Bubba] Typical Louisiana. Throwing in that Louisiana heritage.

### **C—Audience—book notes**

None

### **C—Audience—journal responses**

[Response to Passage B] This is a very sad part in the book. I am not sure what the large tree or the apples mean yet. I am kind of confused on this passage.

### **C—Audience—interview**

1. [Response to the kitten story] Oh, that was gross!
2. [Jude] I didn’t like him at all.
3. [Bubba] I liked Bubba.

### **D—Text—book notes**

1. Possible relationship between the name Fielder and the title.
2. Pavlov’s weenie? Who is Pavlov?
3. Question marks to indicate lack of understanding of terms
  - a. Grant’s Bible
  - b. donnybrook
4. Keeps alluding to Japan.
5. Who’s Major?
6. Where is “here”?
7. Talking to someone named Major?

### **D—Text—journal responses**

1. My first prediction is that the title represents a metaphor for a choice that the author had to make.
2. I find the dialect and way he writes easy to relate to at times, but hard to follow others. I would rather his style than that of Charles Dickens in *David Copperfield*.
3. [Response to a “twist”] The father left the house and lives in the furniture store.
4. The line “he even had a different smell,” made me think he [Paw] had an affair.
5. Another detail that struck me was that the narrator got his name in the paper and it was misspelled, Fiedler.
6. I am still wondering—who is Jax talking to???
7. He flashes to when the Browns won the pennant, not because of their talent, but because of their heart. He flashes back to talking to Mr. White about the monotony of being a coach.
8. [Response to Passage D] This passage is an afterword and tells what happened to little Jackson. Big Jackson gets to throw his gooseball, but he messes up. This doesn’t bother him because baseball is no longer the only love in his life. Dixie and his son Jackson are now the major part in his life.

## D—Text--Interview

1. It was real easy to relate to and follow even during the baseball games, listening to, you know, the situations.
2. [Connection between misspelling of Jax's last name and the title] I was just thinking like it was eventually, later on, it was going to have something to do with it. There was going to be a newspaper article or something named "Fielder's Choice" or "Fielder Made His Choice" or something like that.
3. [Response to dialect] At first it was kind of hard to follow, but once you got used to it, it was so easy to read. Like at first it was kind of hard to get into it, but then after a few chapters of it, you're just reading it like it's normal. I mean, you don't even have to delay. At first I was going back and reading, just kind of double-checking because I mean, you know we use some of those slang words down in Louisiana. But some of them were just—it was just kind of hard to follow at first.
4. [Norman's style of writing] It was very—it was like focused—it was written to where—for the average person, for anybody, you know, a kid can, you know, a 15-year-old kid can read and doesn't have to know these big, complex words or you know, like sentences that have subject and verb inverted, and you know what I'm saying? It's just so much easier to read. I'm not really English focused—I can't pick up on those real big words and stuff, and so I'm sitting there reading them and like, gosh, you get to the point where you just don't even want to read it anymore. You're just sick of all these big words. So I like the way he writes. I really do.
5. [Major] Towards the end I figured out who he was talking to.
6. [Major] Well, I like the way it was written because it was kind of like—he would say "Major" but in a way I felt that he was talking to me. The way it was written it was like directed at the reader. And I'm saying, even though he was talking to the major, it's kind of like you could associate with him.



## Taxonomic Outline: Goose

- I. Topic
  - A. Choice
  - B. War
- II. Author
  - A. Mr. Norman
  - B. Jax
  - C. Jugs
  - D. Dixie
- III. Audience
  - A. Sadness
  - B. Disgust
- IV. Text
  - A. Style
  - B. Analogies
  - C. Metaphors
  - D. Afterword
  - E. Allusions
  - F. Major (pseudo-audience)
  - G. Dialect

**A—Topic—book notes**

1. *Fielder's Choice*—more than baseball ref[erence]?
2. [Response to “I used to hear the jokes in it—theirs on us and ours on them and God’s on all of us”] Very profound.
3. [Response to Passage B] Decisions. It’s his own life, not the baby.
4. [Response to Admiral addressing Jax as “Gooseball”] Back to the humanity thing again.
5. [Response to “Yellow or not, the Admiral knew his baseball.”] How ironic! See, they are people too.
6. [Response to Jax’s dream about the babies after Yoshi went off] Choices.
7. [Response to story about Jeffrey the batboy] Hope and aspirations in the heart.

**A—Topic—journal responses**

1. Judging by the front and back covers, the book *Fielder's Choice* seems to be a story about baseball, but it is mixed with another more universal theme of family life, possibly during the Great Depression.
2. Though it is sad that the Smackover team loses, it is nice to see a team more concerned with unity. If more players were like that, I might consider watching professional sports.
3. Instead of just being a baseball book, the novel becomes something deeper. The novel becomes a book about a choice—a life altering choice—though what exactly this choice is remains unknown.
4. Jax is pushed into positions that he does not like. This may be what he is referring about when he talks about making choices back in the first chapter.
5. [Response to Passage A] In this passage Jax has a revelation about the war and how people construe things. More specifically, he has a revelation about the Japanese. Sure there is a war on and the Japanese started it, but they are people too. They play baseball, as Jax explained, and so they must be human and have a heart. Jax feels that all the Japanese are not bad, just a few. These few create a yellow coat, which is placed upon the whole group. They are not bad, but from the perspective of the monkey (the United States), they are wearing the coat of the one who beats him. Obviously, they must be the guilty party. This idea is profound in its truth about race relations and war as a whole. (typed)
6. [Response to Passage B] If I was a Freudian, I would think this passage is about Jax’s latent sexual desires for his fellow POW’s. Suffice it to say, I am not a Freudian. The babies represent the flow and ebb of life. Jax is himself and his choices make or break the rest of his life. Much like in the dream, Jax has not done a good job thus far with the decisions. His life, like the babies, slips away and he cannot control it beyond his own choices. He must stop and decide one course of action. He must stop and think instead of running around like a chicken with its head cut off. (typed)
7. [Response to Passage C] This simple statement resolves the conflict in the book and is the response, as it were, to Passage B. Jax finally made a decision, decisions that he does not regret. Sure, they did not all work out to be peachy keen, but Jax made them because he felt they were right. They are his decisions and his life; no one can tell him that he made the wrong choice as long as he is right with himself. (typed)

8. The Browns, it seems, won the pennant not because of the skills of the players but with heart. Such is the simple message of the novel. Choices, good or bad, must be made for the right reasons.
9. The simple message of the chapter, and indeed the story, is one of hope. Choices are made by everyone every day, but why do we make them? If we are making them for the wrong reasons, then they are wrong regardless of outcome. Only a choice made for the right reasons can truly sit right in the grand scheme of things.
10. [Response to Passage D] This passage is the final resolution to the book. It is not the resolution of the central theme but of the chronology. He is happy, or so he indicates. Jax makes a joke about the turn of events and it shows that he is happy. He and his family are all happy because he made the right choice all those nights ago. I think it is a wonderful conclusion to the book. (typed)

#### **A—Topic—interview**

1. [Jax's life-altering choice] I think the choice he ultimately made—he made a lot of choices—just in the end when he finally decided that it was *his* life, and *he* was going to control it, not someone else and all the events that came of that.
2. [Jax's development of a moral compass] Basically—well, I think it was actually stated in the book—but regardless of what everyone else says is right or wrong, if you do it for the right reasons, then it can't be wrong.
3. [That choice that he made all those nights ago, what choice was that?] The choice to—well, he was running away, and he could have just left and not decided to confront his brother, not tell Bubba the truth, just disappeared, but he decided to stay and do what was right.
4. [Choices made for the right reasons] I think that—yeah—that's generally a good way to look at things. You know, if you do it for the right reasons, something bad might come of it, and you might have to deal with that, but at least you know I didn't do this because "I want to kill this guy." I did it because I was trying to help him.
5. [Jax's definition of love] I don't know. It seems to me that the way he identifies with people—not love in a romantic sense—more of an emotional brotherly love, even with Dixie whom he *is* romantically in love with, he tends to identify more with, "This person's like me; they don't try to hurt me." So, that's what love is.
6. [Author's attitude toward war] Well, I think, you know, I didn't really see a lot in it about war, but that cynical view of the world kind of reflects that whole idea.
7. [Author's attitude toward race relations] The story about the monkey which didn't seem to have any place until after. But the idea that people paint each other a certain way and say, "This is what you are, and I don't care whether or not it's true," and the fact that Jax discovers that, you know. "So they bombed us. Big deal. It's a war and they're human beings too."

#### **B—Author—book notes**

1. [Jax] Blames [younger] brother for nothing. Something else turned him against Jude.
2. [Jude] Peculiar—not disobedient like other two [Jugs & Jax]
3. [Bubba] Wow! One tough guy!
4. Jax seems a little paranoid.
5. Jugs seems to have a good attitude—not like most athletes.
6. Gosh, Jugs is never serious. Not at all like an officer.

7. [Response to anecdote about Paw telling Jax he had a head like a potato] This guy needs a better sense of humor.
8. [Response to story of Jugs & Jax through ball through pipes] Gosh, I guess all small-town kids are the same.
9. [Jugs & Dixie's relationship] Hmm...I think Jax might be jealous.
10. Jax keeps saying he doesn't mind Dixie and Jugs. Defensive. I think he does!
11. Ah, Jude's a little too quick to please. That must be where the break comes from.
12. [After Paw leaves home] I think Jude misses his father but doesn't want to upset his mother.
13. [Jax] He seems selfish. His father is dying and all he sees is his stupid game.
14. [Jax] Blames him [Jude] for everything.
15. [Jax's account of his father's death] Jax's own guilt showing.
16. [Jax not looking at his father in the coffin] Reminds me of me.
17. [Jax having to get rid of Lilly] He feels bad.
18. [Jax] He sleeps on his glove?
19. [Jax being sent to the minors] Awe. At least he's not a total failure.
20. [Jax's report that he was learning with the minor team] 'Bout time he started learning.
21. [Jax unable to sleep before a big game] Seems about right.
22. [Jax praying he doesn't have to pitch] Guess the idea of making it real scares him.
23. [Jax pitching] Hey, he's doing all right.
24. [Jax vowing to "whomp" Jude if he says anything about his balk] Takes out all his anger on his lil' bro.
25. [Jax deciding he didn't want to play baseball anymore] What a change!
26. [Jax unable to handle pressure of becoming a pilot] He's upset with succeeding.
27. [Jax telling Jude to mind his own business with respect to Dixie and Little Jackson] Touchy!
28. [Jax deciding the Japanese were human because they played baseball] I suppose. Interpreting how his mind works.
29. [Jax rejecting the "yellow-devil" talk about the Japanese] Very profound.
30. [Jax surviving his plane being shot down] Guilt hits Jax easily.
31. [Jude's "Dud Ranch] Oh, maybe Jude has some problems.
32. [Jax's decision that there are good and bad Japanese] Wow! Real people. He seems to be identifying.
33. [Jax dreaming about the baby tree his first night at the Admiral's] His mind is definitely messed up.
34. [Dixie's marriage to Jude] She married him for a car!
35. [Jax's determination not to be put in prison for treason] Good for you!
36. Bubba's not a bad guy after all.

### **B—Author—journal responses**

1. It does seem to me that the book, or at least the author, is somewhat humorous. The note about the author contains comments which are quite obviously designed to poke fun at the author, not necessarily to ridicule him but to impart some of his personality through the description rather than having an astringent synopsis of his life. This signals that the tone of the book will probably have comic undertones from time to time. (journal)
2. Jax seems to think that whatever trouble he is in is somebody else's fault. Back to blaming other people for his bad decisions, it seems; but he also says he does not regret this one (whatever that may be). It seems to go back pretty far, too; Jax states that it is the people

around him that have held grudges though it seems more like he's holding the grudge.  
(journal)

3. I don't really see how he blames Jude for what happened. Jugs is the one who made the slingshot and shot Paw; Jugs is the one who laughed so hard that he squandered any chances for leniency; how is it in any way Jude's fault? (journal)
4. I suppose I can agree that Bubba was a bit of a jerk and the melon prank was very funny, but I do not think a simple grudge would make someone frame another person for what seems to amount to high treason. Yet, somehow Jax seems to feel that it is in some part Bubba's fault because of a menacing gesture after the prank. (journal)
5. Jax uses this incident to explain his dislike of his younger brother Jude, but I find this idea quite strange. Jugs is the one who made the slingshot, shot Paw, and laughed after the three were almost off the hook; yet, Jax seems to love Jugs and despise Jude, who did nothing. I find this very strange. Jax goes as far as to say that Jude is peculiar; just because Jude is not a menacing little boy does not mean he is a terrible person. I cannot understand why Jax feels this way. (typed)
6. Jax seems to feel that Bubba holds this high school incident against him, even to present day. Why? I do not know, but I am curious to find out. (typed)
7. It is interesting to see how Jugs keeps Jax's ego in check. (journal)
8. It seems odd to me that even after undergoing his officer's training Jugs still has his inappropriate sense of humor; but perhaps being at home will do that to you. (journal)
9. Jax has relied on him [Jugs] heavily not only in baseball games but in life. It seems to me almost like one losing one's conscience or common sense. (typed)
10. What I find particularly fascinating about Jugs leaving is that he does not change; as another incident in the chapter illustrates, even after flight school and becoming an officer Jugs still has his sometimes inappropriate sense of humor. (typed)
11. I find Jax's need to say that he did not mind an indicator of jealousy on some level; perhaps he has a thing for Miss Dixie Palmer. My idea about this also stems from Jax's mention of not being interested in girls and being unsure about ever changing this stance. (typed)
12. Jax...seems to be suffering from an empty-nest syndrome, but obviously he has no kids leaving him. It is more the fact that these people who have played the most important roles in his life (i.e., his father, Jugs, and Dixie) are leaving him, and with them goes his own childhood. He is finally becoming an independent individual but is unsure about whether or not he wants to. (journal)
13. He [Jude] seems to want to please everyone, and Jax only seems to hate him more for it. Jax himself refuses to take a side in the matter. Instead, he seems to want to handle his own life and concentrate on baseball. He is hurting inside but has no way to show it without disgusting himself. (typed)
14. Though a wedding is usually a happy occasion, Jax seems saddened by this turn of events. Jax has a secret crush on Dixie and has no interest in letting it be known, but her marriage, especially to his brother, puts her out of play. Jax does not lash out but takes the change like a man; yet, he is uncomfortable with the change in his relationship with Dixie and indirectly, his brother. (journal)
15. Jax, of course, blames Jude for not only the bee stings but also for his father's cancer. This seems to be the reason why Jax has such a horrible view of Jude, not because Jude is a bad person, but because Jax blames him for the death of their father. It seems that Jude blames himself as well. (journal)

16. More telling than that is Jax's own mention of locking the door. Had he not locked the door, Paw would never have been stung and thus never would have gotten cancer, or so the reason follows. (journal)
17. Though Jax denies it, he seems to be a little upset that Dixie is now out of play. She is now his sister-in-law, not the girl next door, and Jax does not want to be angry. In fact, he cannot be angry; she married his beloved brother, not Jude. (typed)
18. I think that Jude may be struggling with his parents' situation and is using the party as a way to see his father without making his mother feel upset. I cannot help but wonder why Jax hates Jude so much. There must be more than what is being revealed thus far. (typed)
19. Jax seems to blame Jude because had Jude not had the bees Paw would never have been in the hospital. Maybe this is why Jax has been so biased against Jude, but Jax also mentions in the chapter that he is the one who locked the door. Perhaps he blames himself in the same way that he blames Jude. (typed)
20. He also seems to feel trapped in his situation. As oldest, he is now the Alpha male of sorts, but he does not want the job. Yeah, sure he loves his family, but who wants another world on his shoulders? (journal)
21. It seems that Jackson dies with his father, but he may still have some hope. (journal)
22. Jax has no closure and no way to sort these things in his mind. He needs to develop a strong moral compass to guide him through all his life changes. (typed)
23. Well, it seems Jax finally got his contract and finally started acting like a boy. Jax, after having died spiritually, rises as a phoenix from the ashes when he is offered a pro contract. (journal)
24. Frankly, I see nothing of importance except the revelation that Jax has a lot of heart, is a good pitcher, and cannot cut it in the majors. (typed)
25. Jax meets guy who are just as goofy as Jugs. The team has become a surrogate in the absence of Jugs. (typed)
26. Jax seems to be a bit afraid of actually making it. Maybe, he thinks that if he achieves his dream of being a major leaguer he will have nowhere else to go. (typed)
27. He is hurt by the death of his brother, but he seems to use it as a way to rationalize dropping out of flight school. Jax is content in being a gunner (still in the war effort but not in a position of much success or notice). (typed)
28. He mourns his brother and copes by remembering the great jokes that they have played and that have been played on them. (typed)
29. I do not blame Jax for his feelings. He has been through a lot thus far. It may also upset Jax to know that Jugs went down as he lived, alleviating others' feeling of anger with his amazing sense of humor. (typed)
30. Jax cannot accept that he will not choke in a tough situation as he has done many times before. (typed)
31. Jax may in some ways feel guilty for being the only survivor; if only he had had a better shot at the Zeros, his crew would have survived and be home by now. (typed)
32. Maybe Jax thinks the war is one of God's horrible experiments. (typed)
33. Jax is hurt and cannot understand why anyone would want to commit suicide, especially so close to the end of the war. Jax does not and probably will never understand the Japanese patriotic sentiments. Yoshi believes that he can change the war, and Jax is hurt that he loses his young apprentice. (typed)
34. Jude is a jerk. I cannot believe he got Dixie. (typed)

## **B—Author—interview**

1. He [Norman] seems like a very odd man. Oh, you know, he has kind of an off-beat sense of humor. But he seems intelligent, judging by his writing style and the fact that he has a law degree.
2. [Pranks] I've kind of been raised around guys, and that's pretty realistic. You know, they don't seem to comprehend the consequences of their actions.
3. Jugs—you know, I think that helps picture his character a lot. You know, just those ears and the weird sense of humor.
4. [Small-town kids] Well, it's just that they found whatever was there, and they played in an old stack of pipes. When I was little—my dad's a mechanic—and they used to overhaul engines. And my brother and just little friends from around the neighborhood—we played with the valves that came out of the engines. And, you know, we'd just make up ridiculous games, and thinking back, I mean, it's like, "Why did we ever do that?" But it's all we had.
5. Well, I think even though his [Jax's] parents were separated, he still loved both his parents and not being with his father kind of hurt him and then just his father's death on top of all that finalized that he's not here anymore. And, I mean like anyone would react to a parent's death especially, he went into a depression and it wasn't until he got this pro contract that he suddenly realized that life did go on.
6. By the end of the book, yes, he's successful in developing the moral compass. I don't think he really figures out who he is until after he's been in solitaire for all those weeks. But the whole time he's kind of switching back and forth between "This is right," "This is wrong," and his family—all that comes into play—whether or not it's appropriate to lust after his brother's wife, and you know, all that just kind of affects his final decision to be who he is.
7. Well, it's just the fact that he saw life as being a prank on him by God, and just the idea that life is pointless, and that someone else is laughing at you. There are no real motives involved. That was right after his brother had died, and so, you know, that emotional death. He gets so attached to the people in his life. When they die, he feels that he's dying, and he becomes very cynical for periods of time. I think he just goes in and out of it. You know, right after the deaths he's very cynical, but then something comes around and he wakes up.
8. I don't really think Jax is an Alpha male because he stands for them controlling him a little too much. But I don't really think there is a strong character in the book who would be it—an Alpha male.
9. I think he's afraid of success because there are certain responsibilities and ideas that come along with it. And there's the concept that if he finally achieves this great success, what's left to do with his life?
10. [Dreamer] He thinks about things, he plans them, but you can tell he doesn't really expect them to come through. And when they do, it's just—he does everything in his power to avoid them.
11. [Changing mind about Jude] I don't think I really changed—that point right there with the science experiment I thought he was maybe a little off—that was right—but not that he was a bad person. I don't think it was until it was revealed that he was abusive, and he was very vindictive about having married Dixie before Jax got a chance, and that's when it really became clear that he was a terrible person.

## **C—Audience—book notes**

1. [Rumor about Bubba] Poor thing. Wonder what really happened?

2. ["Greeny-gray brains"—Bubba] Ewe!
3. [Jugs & Dixie's marriage] Poor Jax. That must be strange for him. I am sure he won't say it, though.
4. Poor Jude! Stuck in the middle trying to please everyone.
5. [Maggots crawling in the eye sockets of the kitten] Ugh!
6. [Neckless's prank of calling cab] He he he
7. [Joke on train porter] Ha ha
8. [Prank on Neckless] Those rotten cheats!
9. [Death of Jugs] How sad!
10. [Jude's "Dud Ranch"] Poor Jude.
11. [Conditions in "The Pipe"] Ugh!
12. [Things crawling on Jax] I hate that feeling.
13. [Jax battling flies in "The Pipe"] How terrible!
14. [Jax getting hit by the guard] Ouch!
15. [Jax's eyeball popped out] Ugh
16. [Jax's feeling that people were going to start staring at him] How terrible!
17. [Curly trying to bat] He He
18. [Curly getting hit by Yoshi's pitch] Serves him right.
19. [Jude's inflated view of himself] Ha ha
20. [Grinning frog story] Ha ha
21. [Jax's story to Jude about his killing a tail-gunner who asked too many questions] Ha ha ha
22. [Little Jackson with whelps on his legs] Poor kid.

### **C—Audience—journal response**

1. It is sad to see how the boys are alienated from the group for having humor and being fallible.
2. What I find most fascinating in the chapter is Jugs's decision to join the Navy and flee his small town—a decision I sympathize with wholeheartedly.
3. To tell the truth, I sympathize with Jackson when it comes to funerals. I go out of my way not to get near them. Not that it is a fear of death, I just do not grieve like most people. Jackson seems the same way. (journal)
4. I can sympathize with Jax in that I myself cannot stand funerals and try to get out of going. It has nothing to do with the way one feels for the deceased, but there are other ways of mourning. (typed)
5. The haunting image of the cat sticks with me even now.
6. As I said before, I think the pranks in this chapter are despicable.
7. I hope something happens to him [Jude].
8. [Jax declaring his love for Dixie & then finding out that Jude had married her] It is sad how the timing worked out on this one. (typed)

### **C—Audience—interview**

None

### **D—Text—book notes**

1. Good opening.
2. What is "aspirin"?



3. [Reference to “here”] Where?
4. First mention of his last name—Fielder’s choice
5. [Jax’s guilt about his father’s death] Accentuated with change of subject.
6. Abrupt change of subject.
7. [“Lost as Grant’s Bible] Interesting comparison.
8. That whole paragraph just sounds familiar. (p. 55)
9. Interesting Civil War references.
10. [I was in the Big Leagues] Simple statement seems to say it all.
11. And I’m sure the Major cares about his little story. (p. 75)
12. [“That’s psychology.”] He says that a lot.
13. [“Remember him?”] Not really. (p. 76)
14. [“you remember him”] No, I don’t. (p. 85)
15. [“sermon on the mound”] Amazing how all these associations are built.
16. [“That’s psychology.”] There’s that phrase again.
17. [“I guess”] Marked through “guess” and substituted “I suppose”

#### **D—Text—journal response**

1. The use of baseball as a framework is to make the subject easier to relate. (journal)
2. It is my sincerest hope that the story itself is nearly as intriguing as the dedication. The names all seem as alien as in most books where the authors mention some figure who has touched them personally but few publicly. (journal)
3. Mickey Owens seems somewhat familiar. I believe he was a baseball player in the thirties (somewhat coinciding with the apparent nature of the book), but I do not know precisely who he was or what he did. Judging by the rest of the dedication, he and the others may have been involved in a devastating World Series loss and may relate to the story itself. (journal)
4. The first chapter of *Fielder’s Choice* is excellently written. It grabs the reader and begins the story in such a way that it does not give away the rest of the plot. (journal)
5. *Fielder’s Choice* hints at the grave matter at hand without giving it away before the situation has been set up. (journal)
6. The first chapter of *Fielder’s Choice* is one of the best-written openings in any book I have ever read. It is immediately captivating because it opens directly into action but does not give away the plot or ending to the book. I find this particularly attractive in the novel. (typed)
7. Jax continues to develop his background by pushing the story forward chronologically. (journal)
8. The second chapter doesn’t shine much light on the first. I imagine it will not until the end chapters. (journal)
9. The second chapter provides more insight into Jax’s life as the story continues forward almost chronologically. The chapter covers a few incidents, but I only find some of them to be of any interest. (typed)
10. Chapter Three gives yet more insight into the speaker’s life; in fact, the reader finally receives confirmation that his name is Jax Fielder. Why is this important? This simple fact is important because it lends another meaning to the title. (journal)
11. I am really getting tired of flashbacks. (journal)
12. It seems the story is finally starting to move forward. (typed)
13. The story is unfolding very rapidly now, which means tragedy is inevitable. (typed)

14. The beginning of the book is beginning to take shape in terms of the story as a whole. (typed)
15. The last lines of the chapter (10) provide more than any of the rest of the chapter. (typed)
16. He is quite sure that it is not at the POW camp (funny the language used to say that is very present, not at all like he knew what it was until he told that part of the story). (typed)
17. Jax is being investigated for treason, so we are obviously nearing the sequence in the beginning of the book. (typed)

**D—Text—interview**

1. [Pranks] didn't take away from the dramatic part of the book; [they] just added to it.
2. [Overall structure and tone] Structure—it was interesting, you know, the way he put it together. A little bit of the flashbacks inside of the flashbacks would get annoying and tedious, but overall it was very well assembled. And the tone—it was a very serious story, but it was realistic.
3. Being from the South and knowing how everyone here takes the Civil War so seriously, I think it [Civil War references] just kind of fit in with where he was supposedly from, and it just kind of added to—that's the kind of thing that guys around here think about.
4. Dixie and Bubba—very, very stereotypical Southern names.
5. [Referring to flashbacks] Well, in the beginning—just setting up the novel—it was really good. And then about halfway through the book where you could just figure out basically what was going to happen, but instead of going forward he started going backwards more. And it just got really frustrating because it's like, "Well, I'm going to read this because there might be something important, but I want to know what's happening."
6. [Author's use of present tense when Jax is telling about the mysterious home—the Admiral's—he was marched to] I really didn't know what to think about that part. It seems like he's still in shock over everything that's happened to him, and so he's just telling this story as it's coming to him. He doesn't really realize what's happened in the grand scheme of things.
7. [flashbacks] Well, part of it I can see as a good way to set up the book because if he had just come out and said, "This is what happened" then there would have been no reason to read, and the longer he kept flashing back, the more suspense there was. And actually, once you get toward the end of the book some of those flashbacks that seemed pointless actually tie in very well so without them it would have had a different effect.
8. [Flashbacks distracting for the general reader?] Yeah. Because, like I said, it gets a little distracting when you just want to know what's happening, but all you're getting is, "Well, when I was two years old..."

## Taxonomic Outline: Loki

- I. Topic
  - A. Choices
  - B. War
  - C. Race relations
- II. Author
  - A. Mr. Norman
  - B. Jax
  - C. Jude
  - D. Jugs
  - E. Bubba
  - F. Paw
  - G. Dixie
- III. Audience
  - A. Aversion
  - B. Sympathy
  - C. Sadness
  - D. Outrage
- IV. Text
  - A. Opening
  - B. Baseball framework
  - C. Allusions
  - D. Reality devices
  - E. Flashbacks
  - F. Organization
  - G. Major (pseudo-audience)
  - H. Tone

## APPENDIX E: OUTLINE OF INTERACTIVE INTERVIEW

- I. Young adults “limited” in literary experience
  - A. Characteristics of pleasurable reading
    - 1. Immediate hook
    - 2. Relationship with character(s)
    - 3. Interesting topic
  - B. (Non) Importance of humor
  - C. Dialogue/dialect
    - 1. Identification
    - 2. Dislike
  - D. Voluntary reading
    - 1. Thelma—10+
    - 2. Chatrick—5 (2 after *Fielder’s Choice*)
    - 3. Bob—2
    - 4. Loki (Many)
- II. Young adults “limited” in worldly experience and knowledge
  - A. Baseball (scale of 1-10)
    - 1. Chatrick—2
    - 2. Thelma—8
    - 3. Bob—8 1/2-9
    - 4. Loki—8
  - B. World War Two (scale of 1-10)
    - 1. Chatrick—6
    - 2. Thelma—7
    - 3. Bob—6
    - 4. Loki—9 1/2
- III. Young adults able to distinguish “reality” from “fiction”
  - A. “Real” events
    - 1. Hunting trip
    - 2. Kitten story
    - 3. Baseball situations
    - 4. Orangutan wrestling
  - B. “Fictional” events
    - 1. Japanese episode
    - 2. Slingshot scene
- IV. General “generic” reader
  - A. Causal connections
    - 1. One responsible for getting Jax in trouble
    - 2. Sudden end of interview with the Major
  - B. Extremely likeable or interesting character(s)
- V. Students/children
- V. The “offended”
- VI. “Expert” readers
- VII. “Plaintiffs”

APPENDIX F: OUTLINE OF THE SOCIAL DYNAMICS  
OF THE INTERACTIVE INTERVIEW

- I. Setting
  - A. Windowless meeting room at university
  - B. Table in middle of room
  - C. Seating arrangement
    - 1. Norman at end closest to door
    - 2. Chatrick to right side of Norman
    - 3. Thelma next to Chatrick
    - 4. Keitha next to Thelma
    - 5. Bob to left side of Norman
    - 6. Loki next to Bob
    - 7. Videotaper against wall opposit Norman
- II. Participants
  - A. Rick Norman
    - 1. Author
    - 2. Lead Conversant
    - 3. Initiator of laughter
    - 4. Teaser
  - B. Thelma
    - 1. Involved student participant
    - 2. Initiator of laughter
  - C. Chatrick
    - 1. Involved student participant
    - 2. Lead initiator of laughter
    - 3. Recipient of teasing
  - D. Bob
    - 1. “Disconnected” student participant
    - 2. Initiator of laughter
    - 3. Teaser
  - E. Loki
    - 1. “Disconnected” student participant
    - 2. “Observer”
- III. Action and interaction/eye contact
  - A. Mr. Norman—primarily with students to his right (Chatrick & Thelma)
  - B. Chatrick—primarily with Mr. Norman and Thelma
  - C. Thelma—primarily with Mr. Norman and Chatrick
  - D. Bob—very little eye contact
  - E. Loki—general lack of eye contact
- IV. Subtle factors
  - A. Chatrick
    - 1. Folded arms
    - 2. Relaxed body
    - 3. Uninhibited participation

- B. Thelma
  - 1. Folded arms
  - 2. Somewhat relaxed body
  - 3. Activated hand gestures
- C. Bob
  - 1. Downcast eyes
  - 2. “Bored” attitude
- D. Loki
  - 1. Attention “distracted”
  - 2. “Bored” attitude
  - 3. Downcast or distant eyes
- V. Conversation
  - A. “Apprentice” writer to “expert” reader
  - B. Teacher parent to students/children
  - C. Mea culpa “apologist” to the “offended”
  - D. Teacher/defendant to students/“plaintiffs”

## APPENDIX G: AUGUST HOUSE PERMISSION

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July 13, 2001

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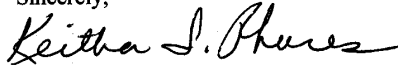
I am a doctoral candidate in Curriculum and Instruction at Louisiana State University and am doing a case study of the relationship between an author and his young-adult audience for my Ph.D. dissertation. Rick Norman, author of *Fielder's Choice*, has been working with me on this study, and I would like permission to include credited portions of *Fielder's Choice* in my dissertation and articles and conference presentations based on the study.

There are four specific passages that I plan to use: (1) pages 105-107, a passage beginning with the sentence "All at once, I got to thinking that maybe the Japs was human beings" and ending with the sentence "Still, I got to thinking that all that yellow-devil talk about how evil they all was might be somebody's way of putting the yellow coat on them"; (2) pages 129-130, beginning with "As I come up under the tree, I seen the most terrible sight" and ending with "My face started hurting"; (3) page 191, beginning with "I've had a thousand choices to make in my time" and ending with "Love is all"; and (4) the epilogue, beginning with its title "Gooseball Flies Again" and ending with "When asked for a reaction to his son pitching one day for the Browns' archrival, the Yankees, Fielder said, 'I spent all those years trying to teach him how to throw my gooseball and I reckon I ought to have been teaching him how to keep better company.'" I have attached the full versions of these passages.

In addition to these four specific passages, there will be several other brief excerpts of no more than 100 words each that I would like to include. All passages—the four I mentioned above and these other brief excerpts—will be introduced with credit to the source, will be set in quotation marks or indented, and will be properly cited in the text with APA format. The full citation will appear when the book is first mentioned and will also appear in the References. In addition, I will also mention August House in my Acknowledgements.

If this meets with your approval, please sign the permission form below and return one copy in the self-addressed stamped envelope. Please keep the other copy for your records.

Sincerely,



Keitha I. Phares

August House Publishers gives permission to Keitha I. Phares to include fully credited portions of *Fielder's Choice* in her dissertation and articles (\*permission to be sought as the need arises) and conference presentations based on her study of the relationship between Rick Norman and his young-adult audience. (Originally signed Oct. 3, 2001. \*Addendum added March 20, 2002: Bell and Howell Information and Learning may supply copies on demand when copies of the dissertation are ordered either in paper form or microfiche form through Dissertation Abstracts International.)

  
Signature

3/22/2002  
Date

## VITA

A native of Louisiana, Keitha Phares was born the fourth of five children to Donald Jones and Mildred Eileen Gunter Phares. She grew up on a dairy farm, but the farm work was the domain of the men in the family. Reading and sports, especially tennis, are lifelong pastimes that were cultivated in childhood. Introduced to conversational French in fourth grade, she went on to major in French and minor in English and secondary education, graduating with honors from Belhaven College in Jackson, Mississippi, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1977. In 1986 she received her Master of Education degree in school administration from the School of Education at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. In 1998 she returned to graduate school to pursue a doctorate from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge in curriculum and instruction.

At various times throughout her twenty-two-year teaching career, she has taught French, English, yearbook, world history and helped coach volleyball. Realizing that education is much broader than that which is contained within the four walls of a classroom, she has also traveled a number of times in Europe, especially in France. Many of these trips have been with high school students through educational tours that she initiated and organized. She is currently teaching two senior high English classes.