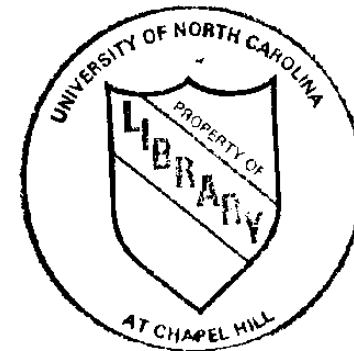


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INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE CURRICULUM

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curriculum areas other than the social studies, dealing particularly with English/language arts and the sciences. The conclusions consider an array of issues raised by this theory of educational development.

RESERVE

Eggen, Kierm

THE MYTHIC STAGE

Approximate ages,
up to about 7 years

CHARACTERISTICS

What children know best

It is a truism that in educating young children, we should start from what they know best and expand outward from that. This notion, so obvious to us today, is relatively new. When James Boswell asked Dr. Johnson what children should learn first, Johnson replied:

there is no matter what children should learn first, any more than what leg you shall put into your breeches first. Sir, you may stand disputing which is best to put in first, but in the meantime your backside is bare. Sir, while you stand considering which of two things you should teach your child first, another boy has learnt 'em both.'

We still tend to stand disputing while our educational backside is bare, but, these days, we do have some grounds for thinking it is

¹James Boswell, *London Journal, 1762-1763*, ed. Frederick A. Pottle (New York: McGraw Hill, 1950), p. 325.

important that children should learn certain things first and that there is a certain sequence in which things should be introduced.

Acceptance of the truism that one should begin from what children know best has led to various forms of the expanding horizons curriculum. Take, for example, the social studies curriculum that is dominant throughout North America and, increasingly, in Great Britain. We may infer at a glance what its designers assume children know best. It begins with units on families, homes, communities, and so on, those things children have daily contact with. Children, it is assumed, will have developed a concept of family, which can be used as the basis for the content of a unit that expands that concept. That is, despite rhetoric about inquiry-based curricula, the implicit question about what children know best is answered in terms of content.

Proponents of a child-centered curriculum propose "relevance to the child's needs" as one of the principles to be used in constructing the curriculum. A teacher might use the child's experience of shopping in a supermarket as a starting point for a unit; and this might lead to lessons on such topics as the typical layout of a supermarket, the sources of various products, the means by which the products are brought to the shelves, making change, the structure of neighborhoods, and other kinds of shops. That is, the child's needs are interpreted in terms of specific content to be learned. Even the more radical approach to early education that claims to construct a curriculum out of children's expressed interests seeks and accepts expression of these interests in terms of content. What alternative is there?

Instead of focusing on such content, we might examine those things that most engage children's interest (for example, fairy stories and games) and try to see "through" their content to the main mental categories children seem to use in making sense of them. I will consider stories and games in more detail below, but even a casual view from this perspective suggests that what children know best when they come to school are love, hate, joy, fear, good, and bad. That is, they know best the most profound human emotions and the bases of morality. Children, for instance, have direct access

to the wildest flights of fantasy—to princesses, monsters, and witches in bizarre places and once upon a times. Typical fairy stories are built on vivid and dramatic conflicts involving love, hate, joy, fear, good, bad, and so on. Their engaging power derives from their being the purest embodiments of the most basic emotions and moral conflicts.

This simple observation undermines the foundation of the typical expanding horizons curriculum, allowing us to see that children's access to the world need not be, as it were, along lines of content associations moving gradually out from families, homes, communities, and daily experience, or from things judged relevant on grounds of some kind of physical proximity. Far from condemning ourselves to provincial concerns in the early grades, we may provide direct access to anything in the world that can be connected with basic emotions and morality. We will see what effect this may have on the design of lessons, units, and curricula after considering some characteristics of children's thinking.

Mythic thinking

I call this first stage of educational development mythic because young children's thinking shares important features with the kind of thinking evident in the stories of myth-using people. I will consider four roughly parallel features.

First, a main function of myth is to provide its users with intellectual security. It does this by providing absolute accounts of why things are the way they are and by fixing the meaning of events by relating them to sacred models.² All people look for intellectual security amid the changes of life in the world, and young children in western industrial societies seem to establish a first security in a

²For some analyses of mythic thinking useful in this context see Bronislaw Malinowski, "Myth in Primitive Psychology," *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (New York: Doubleday, 1954); Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1963); and Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

manner not dissimilar from that evident in myth stories. They seek absolute accounts of things, and they want precise, fixed meanings. Young children have great difficulty deriving meaning from the ambiguous and complex. For reasons I will discuss later, children need to know how to feel about a thing in order for that thing to be clear and meaningful; they need to establish some personal and affective relationship with what is being learned.

Second, myth stories and children lack what has been generally called a sense of otherness—concepts of historical time, physical regularities, logical relationships, causality, and geographical space. Some analysts of myth suggest one of myth's functions is to obliterate history, to assert that nothing has changed in the world since the sacred beginning, thus providing a kind of eternally valid charter for things as they are. Children's lack of the concepts of otherness, however, may be accounted for simply as a lack of experience and knowledge of change and causality on a historical scale in a geographical arena.

A third feature of mythic thinking is its lack of a clear sense of the world as autonomous and objective. The conception of the world as an impersonal, objective entity is the achievement of a mature rationality. The child's world is full of entities charged with and given meaning by those things the child knows best: love, hate, joy, fear, good, bad. The world is, as it were, absorbed into the child's vivid mental life. Much more than is the case for an adult, children's imaginative life colors and charges their environment with a meaning derived from within. Piaget has expressed this well in the observation that at this age there is "a sort of confusion between the inner and the outer, or a tendency to fix in objects something which is the result of the activity of the thinking subject."³

Fourth, myth stories tend to be articulated on binary oppositions. In the case of myth stories, the oppositions may be between important elements in the life of their users: nature/culture, life/death, raw/cooked, honey/ashes. In the mental life of children, important basic oppositions include big/little, love/hate, security/

³Jean Piaget, "Children's Philosophies," *Handbook of Child Psychology*, ed. C. Murchison (Worcester, Mass.: Clark University Press, 1931), pp. 377-91.

fear, courage/cowardice, good/bad. Typical fairy stories are built on sets of such binary opposites, and children tend initially to make sense of things in binary terms, using only a couple of concepts at one time. These binary opposites are then elaborated by a process of mediation between the binary poles. For example, the concepts of hot and cold will normally be learned as the first temperature distinctions. These will then be mediated by warm or by quite hot and quite cold. Thereafter, children may learn to mediate between cold and warm, and warm and hot, leading gradually to a set of concepts along the temperature continuum. Attempts to mediate between other binary opposites perceived in their environments lead to more than simple conceptual elaborations along continua of size, speed, temperature. When the same process tries to mediate between humans and animals, we get those dressed and talking bears, dogs, rabbits that play so prominent a part in children's imaginations. Attempts to mediate between life and death give us ghosts and spirits of various kinds—things that are both alive and dead, as things warm are both hot and cold.

This is not to suggest that children at the mythic stage can understand things *only* if they are put in terms of binary opposites. Greater or lesser elaboration between binary opposites will have been achieved depending on the degree of progress they have made through the stage. However, binary opposites are still fundamental to children's thinking at this mythic stage; even though considerable elaboration from the initial binary terms may have been achieved, meaning derives most clearly from the basic binary distinctions. That is, if something is to be most clearly meaningful, it should be built on and elaborated from clear binary opposites.

Claude Lévi-Strauss concludes that myth stories are also built on or elaborated from basic binary opposites perceived in their users' environments.⁴ Lévi-Strauss has also argued, drawing on Roman Jakobson's work in phonetics, that the kind of binary thinking I have alluded to is basic to all thought and reflects a basic structure of

⁴See Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myths," *Structural Anthropology*; Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*; and Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*.

the human mind. Whether or not this is the case, it is evident that such binary structures are prominent in young children's thinking.

These four characteristics of young children's thinking, then, are important because they influence profoundly how children can derive meaning from the world, how they learn, and what they can learn. Taken together, these characteristics help to explain the power of stories in the mental life of young children and lead to clear conclusions for teaching, learning, and motivation. The ability of stories to engage children's interest is worth dwelling on a little more, because features that give stories their power can also be used in engaging children's enthusiasm in learning about the world. First, though, we should consider the general *process* whereby the characteristics of children's thinking outlined above are used in their learning. That is, we should characterize in a general way *how* children learn at the mythic stage.

Projection and absorption: learning, feeling, and meaning

Learning at the mythic stage involves making sense of the unknown world without in terms of the known world within. The things children have available to learn with are those things they know best, love, hate, joy, fear, good, bad. These are the intellectual tools and conceptual categories that children can employ in making sense of the outside world. The process of learning at the mythic stage involves projecting these known things onto the outside world and, as it were, absorbing the world to them.

Initially, the world becomes known in terms of the basic forms and characteristics of children's mental life. It could hardly be otherwise. Learning is a matter of connecting the known categories to the outside world and fitting the things in the world to them. The clearer the connection between categories and things in the world, the more successful will be the learning. As children develop through the mythic stage, knowledge about the world expands the initial set of mental categories. The world provides not only knowledge as such, but the things in the world that the child perceives and experiences become concepts the child thinks with; that is, the child uses the

world to think with. I will discuss this in more detail at the beginning of the next chapter when considering the move from the mythic to the romantic stage.

The confusion between inner and outer that Piaget observed, which I have described as the result of making sense of the unknown world without in terms appropriate to the child's mental life, is not a confusion restricted to children. It persists in all of us to a greater or lesser degree, though, in at least one dimension, we measure development in terms of the clarity with which we can distinguish between what is true about the world and what we think about the world. This confusion is also a common feature of myth-using people's thinking.⁵ It is not, then, simply an error to be overcome; it is a valid way of making sense of the world and of one's place in it. For young children, it is a *necessary* way of making sense of things and of learning.

This is a point I will repeat in different ways for each stage; we must be sensitive to the changing character of children's thinking and learning and must not see any of the stages as confusions or errors. They are stages of development, and the achievement of further development does not come by hurrying children to make sense of things in more sophisticated ways. The first requirement for educational development is that children develop the characteristics of each stage as fully as possible.

Young children's thinking and learning are in important qualitative ways different from adults'. Children's major intellectual tools and categories are not rational and logical but emotional and moral. This is not a casual nor insignificant difference. It means that access to the world must be provided in the terms of emotion and morality, or knowledge will be simply meaningless. It will always be possible to make children store things in memory and repeat them on request, but such knowledge will remain inert and will contribute nothing toward the development of children's understanding of the world or their place in it. True learning at this stage must involve their being able to absorb the world to the categories of their own vivid mental life and to dialectically use the world to expand the intellectual

⁵See Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*.

categories they have available. The most effective teaching will be that which provides best access to the world, by organizing what is to be known in terms that children can best absorb and use.

Now we need to see how the characteristics of children's thinking that we have considered lead to principles for organizing knowledge in terms that children can best absorb and use. First, though, let us return to stories and see what clues their engaging power offers towards clarifying such principles.

The necessity of the story form

It is worth noting that analyses of the fairy stories that most powerfully engage children's interest suggest underlying characteristics similar to those outlined above as the basic characteristics of children's thinking.⁶ The Grimm-type stories lack realistic concepts of action, place, change, causality; they make little call on the simultaneous combination of ideas; the number of characters is small and homogeneous; the characters are composed from one or two outstanding characteristics (big and bad, beautiful and industrious, etc.); the characters are differentiated by simple contrasts, or binary opposites (rich or poor, big or little, obedient or disobedient, clever or stupid); meaning is always clear, in the sense that it is always understood who is to be approved of or disapproved of and what one should feel about the events.

The similarities are hardly surprising, though, given the close relationship between fairy stories, folktales, and myth stories. Like myth stories, fairy stories derive their power from being more or less pure reflections or embodiments of those characteristics basic to children's thinking. These are preeminently the terms in which children can make sense of things; they *understand* things put in these terms.

However, we need to ask what is a story? Perhaps the most important feature of a story is that it is the linguistic unit that can

⁶See Karl Bühler, *The Mental Development of the Child*, trans. Oscar Oeser (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1930).

ultimately fix the meaning of the events that compose it. Take, for example, the event, "He shot Tom." By itself the event is not very meaningful; we don't know how or why or where he shot Tom, or who he and Tom are, or, most important, whether to feel glad or sorry that he shot Tom. The only linguistic unit that can finally answer all these questions is the story. The story, as Aristotle⁷ pointed out, has a beginning that sets up expectations, a middle that complicates them, and an end that satisfies them. The meaning of an event in history cannot be fixed in any ultimate way because history has not ended—no one can establish finally that it was good or bad that, say, the French Revolution took place. As new things happen, we constantly reassess the meaning of all past events. We especially reassess how we *feel*—whether it was good or bad, whether we are glad or sorry that this or that happened. With a story, however, the meaning of events may be ultimately fixed. Each event has a place in the whole, and we know we have reached the end of a story when we know what to feel about all the events that compose it.

Another way of saying that the most important feature of stories is that they fix meaning is to say that the most important feature of stories is that they come to an end. That is, they don't just stop. The end involves satisfying the expectations set up in the beginning, thus creating a whole, a unit, within which meaning and feeling are bound together and ultimately fixed.⁸

If a necessary condition of best engaging children's interest in and understanding of knowledge is that it be organized into the kind of unit that fixes meaning and coheres with the other characteristics of children's thinking we have noted, then the story form is not something educators can ignore as significant only for fiction. Indeed, it must lie at the heart of all attempts to make the world meaningful to young children.

Before going on to consider how these characteristics common to simple stories and children's thinking yield principles for how to

⁷*Poetics*.

⁸See Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966).

organize lessons and units, it is important to observe a basic distinction between stories and the story form. Stories are composed of fictional content. The story form refers to the abstract structure that underlies the content. This form/content distinction is a little unreal, but it serves to emphasize that my concern is not with the content of stories, but with the story form. That is, I am not advocating that we should tell children stories *about* whatever is to be learned; I am advocating something much more radical—that we use the main features of the simple story form to organize whatever is to be learned.

Games

This brief analysis of some underlying features of the story form and, by extension, children's thinking may seem to be leading somewhere if we have social studies content in mind. It may, however, appear quite opaque if we try to relate it to the physical sciences or mathematics. The connection between the characteristics of children's thinking and these subjects may become a little clearer when we consider that the features we have found underlying stories are also fundamental to children's games.

That is, young children's games have beginnings, middles, and ends. As with stories, they are thus able to reduce and limit reality, providing an arena within which children may feel secure because they know the rules. Within the limits of the game, the meaning of behavior is established clearly and precisely. In the imaginative content of games, binary opposites—fairies and witches, cops and robbers, war and team games—are common. As with fairy stories, the basic concepts of good, bad, fear, security, love, hate are basic to these games.

The importance of play and games in young children's learning is increasingly being recognized. What is not adequately recognized by educators, however, are the changing characteristics of children's games and the features of the games that are most significant for encouraging learning at different stages of children's educational development. This theory may help to make a few useful initial

distinctions in the appropriate characteristics for educational games at different stages. As Iona and Peter Opie have observed:

When generalizing about children's play it is easy to forget that each child's attitude to each game, and his way of playing it, is constantly changing as he himself matures; his preferences moving from the fanciful to the ritualistic, from the ritualistic to the romantic (i.e., the free-ranging games, "Hide and Seek," "Cow-boys and Indians"), and from the romantic to the severely competitive.⁹

Even though the value of games is also increasingly recognized for teaching social studies content, I will concentrate, for economy's sake, on describing social studies examples in terms of the story form. I will consider games only briefly in the following three chapters, keeping more detailed discussion of how they can be used to organize teaching for chapter 7. Even though I discuss the principles derived from the characteristics of children's thinking in terms of the story form, I hope readers will translate those principles into the game form where appropriate.

TEACHING AND LEARNING AT THE MYTHIC STAGE

The purpose of this section is to show how typical curriculum content can be embodied in a story form.

When we begin to organize a unit for very young children, our first question should not be, "How do scholars typically organize this?" or "What are its logical characteristics?" or "What are the most interesting bits?" or "What aspects of the content will children

⁹Iona and Peter Opie, *Children's Games in Street and Playground* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 4. For further discussion of games in education and for an excellent bibliography, see Elliott M. Avedon and Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Study of Games* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1971), pp. 315-46. See also Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Folkgames of Children* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972); and Jean Piaget, *The Moral Judgement of the Child*, trans. Marjorie Gabain (New York: The Free Press, 1965).

have been exposed to?" The first question should be, "What is mythic about this?" (That is, "mythic" in the sense outlined above.) Think about the subject to be presented through the categories used by a young child. What do you see? How does the subject become organized? The answers should be given in terms of the characteristics of children's thinking outlined above; these will yield direct principles for organizing the unit. Let us first consider the characteristics abstractly and then see what happens when we relate them to the examples.

Young children require a story form. They require a beginning that sets up an expectation, a puzzle, a problem, or what writers call a sense of tension. A unit should begin as a story begins; it must engage interest, and that interest must be so central that it can be developed and sustained and resolved at the end but not before the end. Developing a concept or conveying a specific body of knowledge *without* creating such a central expectation that is, in the end, resolved, prevents children from knowing how to feel about the concept or content. A storylike unit, in other words, provides precise affective orientation to the material and conveys it, accordingly, in a way that children understand. A storylike unit will set up expectations, develop them, and finally resolve them.

Young children require binary opposites, so we will look for the two most powerful and basic conflicting forces or elements or concepts or characters in our topic. The beginning, then, will set up an expectation from the dramatic conflict between these binary forces. Because children make sense of the world primarily in terms of those things they know best, the forces should be embodiments of a primary conflict between good/bad, big/little, brave/cowardly.

The conflicting forces should be personified to some degree. Causality, for example, should not be represented in abstract logical terms, but in terms of actions being willed by the major forces. "England was greedy and wanted to become richer, so it conquered people all over the world, took their raw materials and forced them to buy English goods." Whether or not this is accurate, it is the kind of personification that is appropriate to the child's understanding of England's actions. During the mythic stage, children are developing

a sense of the distinction between human emotions, human will, and what causes the behavior of physical entities or, in this example, a country. But the distinction does not become sufficiently refined as to require different concepts until the next stage. Indeed, it is the development of this perceived need for a distinct set of concepts that heralds the move to the next stage. That is, young children increasingly realize that countries do not feel and think the same way that they do, but during the mythic stage the concepts they use to understand their own behavior are the only ones they have available to understand that of countries. Using such personifications should present no confusions at this stage; the degree to which children have developed the distinction will be reflected in the degree to which they understand the personified concepts as having a metaphorical meaning.

The main principles we have for organizing our unit derive from: story form; binary oppositions; absolute meaning; lack of concepts of otherness and sense of an autonomous, objective world; emotional and moral categories.

Example 1.1 The Story of Civilization What is civilization about in a mythic perspective? We have a range of possible ways of representing it. The basically religious vision of history as a conflict between good and evil is probably the most accessible. Zoroaster's representation of the universe as a dramatic struggle between light and dark has been one of the most powerful and influential ideas in history. We might wisely borrow and secularize it to find our binary conflict. The story of civilization can be presented as the struggle between knowledge and ignorance, which, using Zoroaster's terms in a metaphorical sense, can be visualized as light and darkness. These are hardly unfamiliar terms, being basic to the way so many people in the west have viewed history.

Our beginning must introduce the drama in such a way as to create an expectation, a sense of tension, a puzzle. We may begin, then, with an image of primitive people involved in a daily struggle against hunger, disease, natural disasters, the destructive ambitions of others, wars, and the usual human vices that undermine civilized

life. Civilization is the story of people cooperating to defend themselves against these varied threats. The darkness constantly threatens to overwhelm the frail defences of the light. Our unit will look at various civilized groups, some of which were obliterated by the darkness, some of which managed to throw out a spark that caught and lit elsewhere, some of which flickered and glimmered and blazed and spluttered again.

The middle of the unit will involve a variety of smaller stories about specific ways people gathered together and kindled the light of knowledge and tried to defend it. In each case, the struggle to preserve the light of knowledge against external threats, internal vices, institutional ossification will form the focus of attention. Ignorance of soil exhaustion for instance, the sack of Rome, various demonstrations of human greed, fear, hate, anxiety will all be forms of darkness that threaten the light of knowledge and civilization. The love and joy of St. Francis, the energy, courage, and nobility of Pericles, Alfred, and Charlemagne, for instance, will all be sources of light. The unit can end with a consideration of the greater defences civilized light has built against darkness during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: in enormously expanded knowledge; in a scientifically based technology; and in the liberal and humane institutions of modern societies.¹⁰ We might add that while we are more secure than people have been in the past against hunger, disease, the greed and ambition of others, and so on, our security is still quite frail.

Example 1.2 North American Indians Typically in the social studies curriculum in North America, children during their mythic stage learn about the past way of life of one or more Indian tribes. The unit is usually organized around concepts of food, shelter, clothing, artifacts, myths, and these are usually presented as more or less discrete bits that are intended to add up to a culture. The Indians are presented as having lived in a happy inter-

¹⁰I realize that some people might want to object to this kind of value-laden presentation on ideological grounds. My present purpose is to exemplify some principles of content organization; the ideological implications I will discuss later.

action with nature; their social systems functioned smoothly; their clothing and shelters were made and their food gathered from a compliant environment, with which they lived in close harmony; the turn of the year was a leisurely and peaceful swing through a fixed set of activities, punctuated with odd rituals and fun. War is occasionally referred to but never actually takes place. This is no exaggeration. Children are typically presented with a watered down, bowdlerized, anthropological view of a culture.

If a unit about the life of a tribe of Indians begins from a consideration of what is the most profound binary opposition around which knowledge can be organized, we may decide on the conflict between survival and destruction. This is, of course, basic to all cultures and will likely be a quite pervasive theme in early social studies. What does such an organizing principle do to the knowledge it is used to organize?

We will begin our unit by choosing an anecdote or incident that will expose this inherent conflict most powerfully. For example, plains hunters carried enough food for four days; it was the fifth day, and they had not yet found prey. How did they survive? Did they survive? What happened to their families? One can make a small dramatic story of this. Instead of treating the various aspects of their lives as more or less discrete "concepts," each aspect should be seen in terms of the same conflict, exemplifying, elaborating, and vivifying further the constant struggle for survival. Shelters, for example, would not be seen only in terms of their structure and appropriateness, but would be considered primarily as machines built against the destructive threats of nature. This would draw attention to the limits of their ability to protect. By considering each aspect of the tribe's life in terms of the same basic conflict, one builds a systematic image of the culture as first a defence against nature's destructiveness and as second an accommodation with nature in its beneficent moods. Presenting nature as having a will and moods is quite appropriate during the mythic stage. The presentation makes nature comprehensible in a way that an ironic "witless nature" cannot be comprehensible to children, and the terms of this pathetic fallacy, even if understood more or less liter-

ally, will by gradual degrees be understood metaphorically as the child develops.

From a unit on Indians that is organized on the binary opposition of survival/destruction, children learn that Indians' lives were relatively insecure, that they were open to casual destruction when nature was less than benign, that they were disrupted generation after generation by famine, sickness, inter-tribal war, that their tenuous security was held by often exhausting and brutal labor, and so on. That is, they suffered the lot of nearly all humans, nearly everywhere, through nearly all time. And in what way is this presentation more educationally valuable than the one I have described as typical?

First, and incidentally, one does not have to be a right-wing fanatic to observe the social and individual destructiveness that follows from the tyranny of provincial knowledge and experience over so many modern western children's minds, particularly with regard to their assumption about the easy security of human life and society. They do not normally come to realize that this relative security is very rare and is one of the great achievements of western technological culture; an achievement which only those who have known and can imagine nothing else tend to undervalue. Seeing cultures as systematic defences against destruction and deprivation, rather than as collocations of shelters, clothes, food should tend to encourage respect for their own security and should help them not take it entirely for granted.

Second, this kind of presentation is more educationally valuable for the simple reason that it is more meaningful to children. The typical presentation of a unit on Indians gives the child scraps of information without any clear access to that information or without any way to use it as an "aliment," to borrow Piaget's term, for further educational development. The typical presentation will not, of course, be an absolute waste of time. Children will learn something about a different time and place and style of living. Without recapitulating the reasons given above for the kind of presentation I recommend being more meaningful, it may be stressed here that the conflict between survival and destruction is already

profoundly meaningful to the child. Children know in their very nervous system what this conflict means—we may elaborate and become more self-consciously aware of its meaning as we develop, but when children come to school they have those categories already available and ready for use. Access to knowledge about Indians' lives is thus provided by means of the basic terms in which that knowledge is organized.

It will be necessary to organize individual lessons within units like these on exactly the same principles. Here we might wisely learn from the soap operas. Within the structure of an overarching story, they tell a series of mini-stories, each one of which carries forward the main story, increasing its tension. However, each mini-story has its own beginning, expectation, middle, and end. Each lesson should be planned not only to carry on the main story of the unit, but also to create similar expectations that are elaborated and resolved in the course of the lesson. Or it may be better to keep the end until the next lesson, leaving the children cliff-hanging. In the unit on civilization, a lesson might consider the growth of knowledge and light in threatening circumstances, chart its brightening and something of its specific character, and elaborate on the darkness threatening it. One may save the end until the next lesson: "did Roman light survive or was it overwhelmed?" Then one may begin another segment with the discovery that some tiny sparks seemed to have caught tenuously on the far coasts of Ireland and Scotland, but they were threatened by Vikings and all the usual horrors. "What has St. Columba got to do with us?" In a story like this, one does not question his relevance.

It may seem distasteful that educators should learn from fairy stories and television soap operas, but our concern is meaning and access to meaning. These ancient and modern forms of popular entertainment work at or near a mythic level, and we might wisely examine their power of engaging that immature kind of thinking. Our purpose is to connect the child's imaginative and vivid feeling and thinking to the wonders of the real world and to provide the child with a means of using knowledge about the real world both to

satisfy the psychological needs that fairy stories satisfy and to begin the process of developing a more sophisticated and mature manner of thinking.

From the examples, it may seem that the story form operates only with quite elaborate content over a relatively long period of instructional time. This need not be the case. The story form and its power of engaging interest can be used to communicate content that requires only a few seconds. The U.S. Children's Television Workshop's show *Sesame Street* constantly exemplifies this use of the story form in teaching almost anything, from recognition of the letters of the alphabet to appreciation of the social values of sympathy and kindness.

CONCLUSION

By allowing *educational* concerns to determine our search, we have reached a more or less unfamiliar characterization of young children's thinking and a quite different way of considering teaching and learning. Successful learning becomes a process of projecting what young children know best onto the world and absorbing the world to their basically emotional and moral conceptual categories. Successful teaching requires being sensitive to these main characteristics of children's thinking and organizing knowledge into a story form so that it may be most readily accessible to them. One of the most important tools for teaching young people becomes a repertoire of story plots and a facility for embodying in them the knowledge to be learned.

I have been primarily concerned in this chapter with what characteristics of young children's thinking tell us about *how* to organize knowledge so that it is most engaging and meaningful. These characteristics also clearly yield principles for selecting *what* content is most appropriate for encouraging children's educational development, and I will consider the matter of appropriate content in some detail in chapter 6.

The mythic stage may be described in general as the critical

period for connecting the child's mental life in a meaningful way with the real world. (In chapter 6, I will consider the sensitive or critical period which each stage represents.) An aspect of connecting children's vivid mental life to knowledge about the world, we call the development of imagination; that is, being able to project mental images onto the world and absorb the world to them with ease and flexibility. This connecting process should not serve to restrict and dull the child's mental life. Rather, knowledge about the world should feed it, encouraging G. K. Chesterton's childlike image of a world more full of wonder than we can understand.

The move from the assumptions underlying an expanding horizons structure and those underlying this scheme is not very great. Both schemes accept that one should start from what children know best and build on what they will have learned from family and community life. The crucial difference, as we have seen, lies in identifying what children know best from their earliest years (i.e., their experience of family and community) in terms of emotion and morality, not content. Interpreting relevance to the child's needs in terms of content leads to a curriculum of local and provincial matters. Interpreting relevance to the child's needs in terms of emotions, morality, and the characteristics of thinking identified in this chapter leads to a curriculum of the most dramatic and powerful themes of human life, history, and the natural world. Children have the means of direct access to these; it is our responsibility as educators to facilitate that access in every way our imaginations can suggest.

THE ROMANTIC STAGE

Approximate ages, 7 to 14/15 years

* CHARACTERISTICS

From mythic to romantic

The move from the mythic to the romantic stage may be seen in the development of rudimentary but serviceable concepts of "otherness"; concepts of historical time, geographical space, physical regularities, logical relationships, and causality. In developing through the mythic stage, children seem to perceive increasingly clearly that the fundamental emotional and moral concepts derived from a knowledge of self, family, and basic human relationships are inadequate to make full sense of the outside world that they are learning about. Knowledge and experience of the world provide the concepts of otherness. It is in this sense that children begin to use the world to think with.¹ Chairs and countries are increasingly clearly seen to be

¹Or as Piaget writes, "all mental life . . . tends progressively to assimilate the surrounding environment." Jean Piaget, *Six Psychological Studies*, ed. David Elkind and trans. Anita Tenger (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1968), p. 8.

inadequately conceived of as thinking, willing, and feeling entities, and they begin to generate in the child concepts appropriate to their particular forms of being and behavior. Another way of putting this is to say that the passage from the mythic stage coincides with the perception that the world is autonomous, is separate, and fundamentally different from the child.

Increasing perception of the primary emotional and moral concepts as inadequate seems to develop gradually through the mythic stage and provides a criterion for measuring progress through that stage. Actual use of the new concepts of otherness, however, seems to happen relatively suddenly. I want to stress that these stages are not simply artificial segmentations in a gradual continuum. They are, of course, to some degree artificial, but they do seem to reflect relatively sudden transitional periods that bring quite fundamental changes to the general character of the way we make sense of things.

With the development from the mythic to the romantic stage, the outside world is no longer securely known as an extension of the inside self, but it is full of strange entities, working by alien laws, unfeeling, vast, mysterious, and threatening. With the development of a sense of an autonomous world comes the reciprocal perception of a self separate from it. During the mythic stage the young child's absorption of the world obviates the need for the child to develop a sense of its separate identity. "Le monde, c'est moi!" the young child assumed. Children face two immediate and connected tasks in order to establish a sense of intellectual security in the romantic stage: first, they must forge a new relationship and connections with the autonomous world and so achieve some method of dealing with its threatening alienness, and, second, they have to develop a sense of their distinct identity.² I will mark the move from the mythic to the romantic stage by using the term *student* rather than *child*.

²It will be evident that this reflects in large part Erikson's fifth developmental task, the integration of ego identity in face of the threat of role confusion though, of course, in a different context and with regard to largely different phenomena from those I go on to discuss. See Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2d ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), pp. 261-63.

Romantic associations

The most apparent response students make to the threat posed by the newly perceived alien world is to associate themselves with those elements in the world that are most powerful, noble, courageous; in short, with those things that preeminently transcend the threats the world poses to the immature ego.

An association with the ingenuity and courage of Ulysses or Captain Kirk of the Starship Enterprise, or with the nobility and determination of Florence Nightingale or St. Teresa of Avila, involves the student's ego in the implicit claim that "I could do that too," or, rather, "I *am* doing that too." Students, then, no longer need to fear the vast mysterious world that is opening up before them because they can transcend every threat by means of romantic associations. By such means the threats are transmuted into adventure.

This capacity to associate oneself with powerful forces, characters, movements, ideas seems to be a development of the mythic capacity to connect with the world by means of those best known emotions and bases of morality. Just as the child at the mythic stage can absorb any information provided in these familiar terms, the student at the romantic stage may form associations with anything in the universe embodying those qualities that best transcend the challenges posed by daily living in the real world: qualities like courage, nobility, fortitude, genius, power, energy, creativity, and so on. Again, we see that children have a means of direct access to almost anything in the universe, and need not be led outwards, as it were, along content associations. Indeed, it will be argued below that children most naturally explore the real world completely the other way about; they begin at the outside limits and work in.

The connected tasks of establishing a sense of intellectual security and a sense of identity in an alien world are successfully achieved by romantic association with the most powerful and transcendent things the student learns about.³ Such a process, of course,

³In chapter 5, I will discuss what happens when the move from stage to stage is either not achieved at all or is achieved with only partial success. In chapters 1-4, I am outlining an ideal educational development.

supports and glorifies the ego. Romantic students essentially deify themselves, and this is *necessary* for the establishment of a first security within a world of alien reality. It is not a fault or vice that needs to be eradicated as quickly as possible. It needs to be fed with knowledge of the powerful and transcendent in every discipline, both to help students develop through this stage and to help them feel in themselves the power and glory of the real world. Their glorified identities derive from identifying with the glorious.

Romantic reality

At the mythic stage, the major categories the child uses to think with determine how the world is perceived to work. At the romantic stage, the student's mind has to accommodate itself to the alien rules of how the world in fact works. That is to say, students have to develop their romantic sense of identity within a context of *reality*. The typical romantic manner of exploring and discovering what is real and possible in the world seems to involve a development of the mythic thinker's use of binary opposites. Instead of projecting binary opposites from within, however, the romantic mind searches outside itself to the *limits* of the world for external binary opposites within which reality exists.

A defining characteristic of the move into the romantic stage, then, is the development of a quite sudden fascination with the extremes of what exists and what is known. In the mythic stage, the sense of scale pays no heed to the limits imposed by reality; for example, going toward the king's throne, the hero may have to pass a series of guards, the biggest of which is three miles high and the smallest of which is no larger than your thumb nail. At the romantic stage, students' interest in scale similarly focuses on the extremes, but is constrained by *reality*. Thus, *The Guinness Book of World Records* fascinates the romantic student with its accounts of the biggest, the smallest, the fastest, the highest, the furthest, and so on. It is between such extremes that students locate reality and within them that they construct their identity.

I call this stage romantic because it shares with romanticism the

tension that comes from the desire to transcend a threatening reality while seeking to secure one's identity within it. The mythic projection that treated reality with contempt now has to be, reluctantly, confined within it. So romance is, as it were, myth confined to the real world, but it constantly beats against its limits.

An important characteristic of knowledge that engages students at the romantic stage is that it tells them something about what is real and possible. The impossible fantasies of the mythic stage are quite suddenly treated with contempt as "stupid kids' stuff." A further characteristic required for knowledge to be engaging at this stage is that it be *different*; different from everything mundane and conventional, different from everything the students have known and experienced. Just as romantic exploration of the real world begins with the probing of its limits, so it is the fantastic and spectacular that the romantic perception highlights. Erich Von Daniken and Immanuel Velikovsky are more interesting guides to history than Arnold Toynbee or Karl Marx; Herodotus, his text packed with wonders and Guinness-Book-of-Ancient-Records details, is more interesting than Thucydides.

To use an analogy: the mythic stage might be seen as a cognitive recapitulation of Sigmund Freud's primary process. As the baby does not distinguish the world from itself, so the young child has no separate concepts to distinguish the world's working from that of its own mind. Similarly, the romantic stage may be seen as a cognitive recapitulation of Freud's secondary process. As the ego dominates the personality and demands gratification from everything, so the romantic mind is interested in the world only to the degree that it satisfies the desire for difference, for the spectacular, the fantastic, the extreme, and, thus, to the degree that it gives pleasure.

This romantic search for limits enables students to explore the vastness of the worlds of nature, culture, and history, to get a sense of their size and scope, and to get a sense of what is real within them. This is, as it were, the period of sniffing around and establishing boundaries; only when boundaries are securely known does one turn and explore the world within them.

As with the mythic stage, few content restrictions affect what

can be taught successfully during the romantic stage. Anything with which a romantic student can associate, anything that involves the characteristics outlined above, becomes "relevant to students' needs." One needs simply to be sensitive to these characteristics and to organize the material at hand accordingly. I will demonstrate below the organization of material that best engages interest and promotes understanding for this stage.

One reflection of students' desire to explore limits and to form personal associations with whatever is to be learned leads students to want to know "What was it like then, or there, or doing that?" They want to sense different forms of human life but not in the way that a scholar might. Their concern is to *feel* different forms of life, to try them on, as it were. Realistic detail becomes important; and the more different from the student's experience, the better. Incas and an imaginary martian colony have a head start over the histories and lives of their grandparents. The association is made personal *not* through proximity of relationship or physical familiarity but through those human qualities that lead to a transcendence over the everyday and commonplace world. Grandparents' lives can, of course, be made engaging by these principles, but, in general, it seems to me much easier to engage teenage students at a romantic stage with a medieval scholar/saint like Ramon Lull than with knowledge about grandparents' lives. It is not the development of the students' own society that will be most engaging, but that of the most exotic and bizarre societies. Having established a sense of the limits of possible societies, they will have a framework to begin making sense of their own. Before developing such a framework, details of their own society will remain largely meaningless in any educational sense.

Romantic stories

We might again get some clues about how best to organize knowledge so that it engages students at this stage by looking briefly at the kinds of stories that most appeal to them. I am clearly not using *romantic stories* to mean only the kind of love stories to which the

term commonly refers. Here, a romantic story is one in which a hero or heroine (or institution, nation, idea), with whom or with which the reader may identify, struggles against odds to a glory and transcendence over threatening nature (or persons, events, institutions, ideas, nations), in which glory the reader may then share. Such stories have a crucial characteristic that makes them ideal for this stage—they are ego-supporting. They allow and encourage the reader to associate with some noble and powerful force that achieves success against a threatening world. Occasionally, they allow the hero or heroine to die or lose, but only in a context which enables the reader to deliciously share the hero's or heroine's moral or other superiority, which is not recognized by the unfeeling world.

Karl Bühler calls the stories that most appeal at this stage the "Hans Christian Andersen-type." They have more complex plots than the Grimm-type. They are realistic. Even when they deal with imaginary worlds, there is always a concern with realistic detail or plausibility. They have clear and powerful heroes and heroines. They tend to have exotic, though realistic or plausible, settings. They are often concerned with the differences between people who have more complex motives than those in the Grimm-type stories. Their meaning is always clear, in the sense that readers know clearly what they should feel about the events and characters. Bühler mentions *Robinson Crusoe* as a paradigm of this kind of story—one might add much of science fiction, adventure stories, animal stories to this category.

Again, we are considering what characteristics of stories appeal at this stage not in order to select stories for students but to learn about the character of students' thinking, about the kinds of meaning they seek, and, consequently, about how we should organize knowledge so that it is most accessible, meaningful, and engaging to students at this stage.

Similar changes may be seen in the kinds of games that appeal to children at this stage. Again, *reality* plays a centrally important role. Games that do not adhere to a realistic or plausible world are rejected contemptuously as "kid's games." Romantic games involve a hesitant, ambivalent grappling with serious problems in a context

insulated by playfulness. Intellectual games become important, particularly those that serve the general search for the limits of what is possible and for the necessarily true. Zeno's paradoxes, for example, tend to become fascinating, as does the kind of playful dealing with serious ideas found in Lewis Carroll.

Detail

A further aspect of students' search for limits during the romantic stage is evident in the development of obsessive hobbies and pastimes. There is a desire to learn something exhaustively or collect something completely: to know the score of every football game played by the team with which an association is formed; to collect every postage stamp of a particular era and place; to know every detail of the life and to collect every photograph of a film star or member of royalty; to know the shape of every leaf of every tree; to know everything about Saturn or about costume through the ages. It is a kind of intense specialization, but I think it is more properly seen as a further expression of the desire to find the limits of things. By exhaustively knowing something, one gets a sense of the scale of everything.

The obsession with detail may be seen in the science fiction films or television series that most interest students at a romantic stage. There is virtually no positive correlation between the quality or even good sense of the stories and the amount of interest generated. There is a very high correlation between interest generated and the amount of money spent in creating precise realistic, *Robinson Crusoe*-like detail.⁴ Students' interest and their educational development through this stage will be fed by the opportunity to spend time learning some part of any unit in massive detail. A unit on the medieval world, for example, might provide an opportunity for

⁴In 1977, the film *Star Wars* proved to be one of the most popular films ever made. Some of the principles outlined so far help to explain its success. It is articulated on a simple mythic conflict of good versus bad, and it appeals to the romantic fascination both with a power that allows the hero to transcend mundane reality and with awe-inspiring detailed illusions of different worlds and images.

some students to look at David Macaulay's wonderfully romantic book, *Cathedral*.⁵ This is an account of the building of a fictional medieval cathedral, or rather of a typical composite cathedral. There is just sufficient text to provide a story context for the beautifully detailed drawings of each stage in the building. The impact of the page by page gradual rise of the enormous structure in the middle of the crowded, walled town is fantastic. Many students at a romantic stage go from the book to ransack libraries for yet more and more knowledge about the building of cathedrals, about medieval towns, about the medieval church, and so on.

With this zest for collecting or exhausting an area of knowledge comes an ability to memorize and retain massive amounts of detail, with an efficiency apparently much superior to any other stage of one's life. The educational significance of this characteristic is obvious. The problem, however, is to harness it to the mastery of the kind of material that will best help the student's educational development. The way to do this will be discussed in the following section.

Sentimental education

This book begins with a verse from Stevie Smith about the giggling and doating of a fourteen year old. Giggling and doating are aspects of the sentimentality that is a prominent part of the romantic stage. Sentimentality is sentiment out of control, sentiment that is excessive or inappropriate to its chosen object. Excesses of love, devotion, hatred, rejection are common in romantic students. The excess is occasionally seen in immoderate reserve or withdrawal, a fear of expressing any sentiment at all.

The development of sentiment is not a gradual and orderly step by step process. It seems to begin suddenly and wildly, with students' sentiments flooding uncontrolled all over the place, and then, ideally, is brought gradually to proportionate expression for ap-

propriate objects. The process is one of excess and extremes being gradually controlled. It is, again, a kind of exploration of limits and extremes, locating appropriate and proportionate sentimental attachments within these.

Sentimentality, which is so embarrassing to many people, is not inappropriate at the romantic stage. If learning how to proportionately allot sentiment to appropriate objects comes by gradual control and refinement from initially uncontrolled sentimental excesses, then to suppress the excesses is to undermine the possibility of the student learning to control them.

Sentimental immaturity seems quite common in our culture, and this is reflected in our teachers. Immature adults often defend with cynicism and ridicule their inability to handle students' sentimentality. Romantic students should not be made to feel shame about expressions of sentiment that are disproportionate to their objects. They should be encouraged and helped sympathetically toward increasing control.

Romantic students defend themselves against the inner wildness and lack of control of their sentiments by extreme outward conformity. During the romantic stage students are greater conventionalists than at any other period of their lives. The rigidity of their conformity to styles and fashions of clothes and of hair is proportionate to their inner lack of control. The fear that accompanies this lack of control is evident also in the ridicule addressed to those who do not conform.⁶

TEACHING AND LEARNING AT THE ROMANTIC STAGE

The first question we ask about the material to be taught at this stage is, "What is romantic about this?" and the answer will be

⁵I have suggested that this conformity is in part a defensive response to typical adolescent students' initial difficulties in controlling sentiments. This, in turn, I would locate as a part of what Erikson has called more generally their "identity confusion"—conformity to a group's mores and fashions being a defense against this. See Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2d ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), p. 262.

⁶David Macaulay, *Cathedral: The Story of Its Construction* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973). See also his other books: *City: A Story of Roman Planning and Construction* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974); *Pyramid* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975); *Underground* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976); and *Castle* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977).

given in terms of the characteristics outlined above. That is, our romantic organization will involve an exploration of reality in detail, concepts of otherness, access through something as different as possible from students' everyday experience, and connection to the different element by means of association with some transcendent human quality.

In addition, because students still require determinate meaning in order fully to make sense of what is being learned, the story form is important. Students at the romantic stage do not require the absolute meaning of the mythic stage, so the story form may be somewhat more diffuse and more sophisticated than before. But, they do require sharper beginnings and endings to units than a mature adult understanding would normally consider proper. Opposing elements in dramatic conflict, therefore, and setting up and resolving an expectation, will still be important features, but we no longer need the stark primitive polar opposites of the mythic stage.

Below, I will show how these principles can be used in organizing a unit on the Industrial Revolution. Following that I will consider a unit that more readily lends itself to a romantic presentation: a unit on ancient Greece. The desirability of introducing students to this Graeco-Roman period will be discussed in chapter 6.

Example 2.1 The Industrial Revolution What comes into focus when we view the Industrial Revolution from a romantic perspective? (Romantic is used here only in terms of the characteristics outlined above, not in any other sense.) How do we best provide students at the romantic stage with access to the meaning of the revolution? The typical response of those who work with the expanding horizons assumptions is to look for aspects of the Industrial Revolution with which students are already familiar. Typically, they begin with children and consider that many of them had to work long and brutal hours in coal mines and in factories. This does, of course, have an immediate romantic appeal, but it is quickly exhausted and does not lead easily to a sense of what the Industrial Revolution was primarily about.

Drawing on the principles outlined above, we will look not for something with which students will be familiar but for something that will be entirely strange. We will look for something far from anything they will have experienced but which nevertheless can be connected to them by some transcendent quality with which they can associate. Furthermore, this quality should also lead them to the heart of the Industrial Revolution.

One might begin by showing the students a picture of Isambard Kingdom Brunel. There were a few photographs taken of Brunel in 1857, one of which is available in Great Britain and North America as a poster. The name alone is odd. In the photographs, he appears a small, stiff, top-hatted Victorian in a crumpled black suit and dusty boots. He seems a million miles from anything modern students have access to. We have, then, our something different; how do we connect students with him and, through him, with the Industrial Revolution?

One may talk about Brunel for a minute or so, telling the students just a few basic facts about him. In the background of the photograph mentioned above are the iron chains specially forged to launch his ship the *Great Eastern*. The technology for building iron ships had only recently been mastered, and the biggest so far had been 700 tons. Brunel's *Great Eastern* was 22,500 tons. It was large enough to make trans-Atlantic travel positively comfortable. Brunel also built the Great Western Railway across the south and west of England, leveling hills, bridging valleys with some of the most beautiful and ingeniously designed iron bridges ever built, and driving tunnels through miles of solid rock. He was most fascinated by what was supposed to be impossible, and all his plans and designs bordered on the limits of the possible—some failing, others triumphing. When he was only twenty, he built the first tunnel under the Thames, to be used for the underground railway. Half way through, he cleared everything up, brought in banqueting tables and chandeliers, and gave a huge banquet for London's dignitaries. Typical of him, further along the tunnel, he gave an equally splendid banquet for one hundred and fifty of his laborers.

Students, then, may be connected with the odd little Victorian in the hazy photograph by means of his confidence, power, courage, energy, daring, ingenuity.

These qualities, with which the student wants to associate, are also the means by which the student may move from Brunel to an understanding of the Industrial Revolution itself. As students have access to Brunel through his confidence, courage, and energy, so, too, they can have access to the Industrial Revolution as an expression of these same qualities.

The interest generated by connecting students with something far from their experience needs to be sustained and developed. It must lead toward as fully meaningful an understanding of the Industrial Revolution as possible. The technical tool that will help us achieve so much is the story form. We still need to generate a binary conflict which will develop an expectation, a sense of tension that can be satisfied by the ending of the unit. Already we have identified the protagonist in our drama as the energy and confidence embodied initially in Brunel. A conflicting force may be seen in fear; fear of crop failure, fear of change and the unknown, fear of speed, fear of foul weather at sea, fear of all the things that make life nasty, brutal, and short. The story unit on the Industrial Revolution may be presented as a confrontation between confidence and energy on the one hand and fear of change and the unknown on the other.

It will, of course, be necessary to present students with William Blake's or John Ruskin's vision of the Industrial Revolution as a creator of filth and horror and as the brutalizer of men, women and children in degrading labor. But the roar of Blake's dark, satanic mills must also be heard as a roaring expression of human energy. Certainly it was a period that shows starkly the exploitation of human by human, but that is not all the Industrial Revolution was about. Look out any window and you see its triumphs as well as its scars, and, if you look at its heroic intellectual as well as material products, you cannot but feel the fascinating adventure into which its amazing burst of confident energy has flung this planet. It is this that grips the student's imagination at the romantic stage, and it is

association with this confident energy that helps the student establish a secure identity in the world created by the Industrial Revolution. Only by these means will students develop through this educational stage to more sophisticated perceptions both of themselves and of the specific material they have mastered.

The middle of our romantic unit will sustain the expectation set up by seeing the Industrial Revolution as a conflict between confident energy and fear. Our focus then will be on those things that best exemplify the two qualities and show them in conflict. Examples of confident energy will include the key inventions that made the revolution possible. These must not, however, be presented only as a series of technical achievements. Rather, they should be thought of in terms of the quality with which we want students to associate, and this is usually best achieved by presenting the inventions as products of the lives and personalities of their inventors; that is, as expressions of their confident energy. The other force that sustains our story should not be forgotten; the inventions and the changes they create should continually be counterpointed by the problems they raise. We will stress here those very varied elements that complicate the unbridled expression of this confident energy: technical failures; the damage and destruction of beautiful country and harmonious life styles; the ruthlessness (see Blake's and Ruskin's diatribes); the aristocratic contempt for new manufacturing wealth as against wealth derived from land; attempts at political controls over labor conditions. Elaboration of our story at this stage adds sophistication; the confident energy may be seen to tend toward excess, toward ruthless manipulation. The student's association should not be destroyed by this, but only refined; that is, their romantic association will be with those good expressions of confident energy and, though they recognize the quality can also yield bad expressions, they will restrict their association so as to exclude these.

The end requires some kind of resolution. What happened in the clash of confident energy and fear? A sophisticated understanding might want to argue that the outcome is still unclear, that this

opposition is no longer a good way to view the processes set in motion by the Industrial Revolution. Students at this stage, however, need some sense of closure, some conclusion that clarifies what they should feel about all the elements that have constituted the beginning and middle. The end, on the other hand, need not be an absolute assertion.

We may end our unit with a generalized picture of the world as changed by the Industrial Revolution. It created a kind of world undreamed of both by those who created the revolution and by those who opposed it. It is neither the utopia preached by some nor the nightmare predicted by others. A conclusion might well be a multimedia presentation of the best things that have resulted from the confident energy that created the Industrial Revolution; speed, powerful engines, machines, roads, bridges, huge cities, massive buildings, images of increased health, wealth, and freedom, and so on.

Clearly, these are not the only terms in which one may view the Industrial Revolution. My concern here is not to make claims about the revolution, but simply to show how the principles derived from the characteristics of students' thinking at this stage can be applied to organizing any topic. The same principles could lead to a multitude of different approaches; the Blakean vision of ordered harmony might be presented as the characteristic with which students could associate, and the opposition could be wild, improvident technological innovation. Or wholly different qualities could form the basic structuring opposition. To try to present an adult's perception, however, by adding qualifications and complexities—by stressing, for example, the excesses to which confident energy may lead—is simply to deprive students of access to the material.

Example 2.2 The Glory that was Greece Herodotus' *Histories* is one of the best guides for presenting the history of ancient Greece in a romantic way. The book by itself, of course, is largely inaccessible to typical modern students, but Herodotus seems to exemplify most of the characteristics of the romantic stage; his book is

full of fascinating details, is concerned with the extreme achievements of the hitherto largely unknown world of the East, is articulated on a binary opposition between Greek liberty and Persian tyranny, and is organized in a story form that sets up the opposition early, develops it in a diffuse middle, and concludes it in the defeat of the huge tyrannous Persia by small, courageous, and liberty-loving Greece.

To begin, then, we might borrow Herodotus' opposition between liberty and tyranny. We need also something different, something that will take us to the heart of the quality of the Greek sense of liberty with which we want students to associate. One could begin with Herodotus' story of Croesus. The phenomenally wealthy Persian king asks the wise Athenian, Solon, "Who is the happiest man you have ever seen?" Herodotus tells us:

The point of the question was that Croesus supposed himself to be the happiest of men. Solon, however, refused to flatter, and answered in strict accordance with his view of the truth. "An Athenian," he said, "called Tellus."

Croesus was taken aback. "And what," he asked sharply, "is your reason for this choice?"

"There are two good reasons," said Solon, "first, his city was prosperous, and he had fine sons, and lived to see children born to each of them, and all these children surviving; and, secondly, after a life which by our standards was a good one, he had a glorious death."²

Croesus then asks who is the second happiest, but again was told about Greeks whose lives embodied those virtues and good fortune the Greeks prized most highly—the virtues of free men living harmonious lives.

Greek history is full of incidents that could be used to engage interest in something different that directly carries one to the center of our unit's opposition. One might role-play Aristides the Just

²Herodotus *Histories* I. 31 (trans. Aubrey de Selincourt, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1954), pp. 23–24.

being approached by a blind beggar. Aristеides was an Athenian leader, honored and respected, a moderate and wise man. The beggar, not knowing who he is, asks him to mark the name *Aristeides* on a piece of pottery and put it into the jar in which votes were put for exile. "Why," Aristеides asks the beggar, "do you want Aristеides to be exiled?" "Because I can't bear hearing anyone called 'the Just.'" Needless to say, Aristеides helps the blind beggar. The role-play can involve others in creating the context and meaning of the incident, showing how the Athenians would send into exile even the best and most prominent citizens simply because they were becoming too respected and too influential. Such power would likely lead to pride, and pride would upset a person's sense of harmony and justice. The liberty of all, including the exiled, would best be preserved by the maintenance of harmony.

If either of these incidents is our beginning, we need to see this Greek harmony and liberty in contrast to, and then in conflict with, Persian luxury and tyranny. Our middle might follow Herodotus around the eastern and southern lands conquered by the Persians (Persian meaning "destroyer"), characterizing them by means of Herodotus' most choice and vivid stories and details. The tension may be increased by a discussion of the constant clashes between the tiny Greek states and the massive Persian Empire and the sense that soon the all-devouring tyrannous Persians would turn on and devour the Greeks as well. This will lead to the enormous armies collected by Persia to crush the Greeks and the amazing battles at Marathon, Thermopylae, and Salamis, with all their dramatic force and fascinating detail.

The unit might end with the Greek success and the rise of the Athenian Empire. One might conclude it with a consideration of the wonders created by the outburst of the Greek spirit of liberty. After such a unit, most students would be moved by Pericles' Funeral Oration read directly from a clear translation of Thucydides. Such an ending has in it the germ of an expectation that could begin a second unit on ancient Greece. Here the conflict might be between order and strife, involving the tragedy of Athens' fall, the endless bloodshed of inter-city war, and ending in the career of Alexander,

the ideal romantic hero who blazed across the world like fire from heaven.

One of the dangers at this stage, under pressure of students' ready withdrawal to boredom, is that of being driven to pick out all the romantic bits and string them more or less loosely together. It is not just the bits that need to be romantic, however, to sustain interest; the bits have to be felt as coherent parts of a romantic whole. That is, the *unit* must be organized romantically. This can be problematic, in that students at this stage do require constant romantic bits to sustain interest. Again, one may consider the typical soap-opera format of stories within a story. History is best understood at this stage as a kind of mosaic of bright elements— anecdotes, facts, dramatic events—which are composed into a small story, which in turn is a segment of a larger story. It is important to realize that students' concepts of historical causality, and additional concepts of otherness, are still quite primitive. The history that engages them does so not because it is true and has determined our present forms of life and consciousness. Rather, it engages in so far as it entertains them and meets the requirements set out above. Students at the romantic stage have only the vaguest sense of history as a single and continuous process of which they and their world are a part.

An important principle, perhaps not ideally illustrated in the above examples, is that normally the further from the students' experience the element is with which the romantic association is formed, the more interest will be generated. To use a rather imprecise metaphor, it is a bit like a spark of electricity shooting across two terminals. The farther apart they are, the greater the energy generated to make the connection. Making a connection with something distant from students' experience creates a spark of intellectual energy that may by itself fuel interest for a considerable time. A great romantic writer like Mary Renault practices this constantly. She frequently begins with the unusual, the different, and connects us to it by means of transcendent human qualities—like courage and fortitude—with which we readily associate. In order to tell the exploits of Alexander in *The Persian Boy*, for example, she begins

with the wholly alien world of a Persian eunuch, and, having connected us with this, she can provide a fresh perspective on what is to many a familiar story.

The obsessive fascination with detail once connection has been made with any topic must determine some of the learning activities that will form the middle of the story unit. The tendency to cover a body of material at a uniform level of detail must be resisted. At the romantic stage the student requires both a general context that generates a story form and that engages interest and an opportunity to fasten onto some area in minute detail. If one is teaching a unit on the Renaissance explorers, for example, it would be well not to be concerned solely with who went where when but to look in minute detail at how a ship was stocked, exactly how much and what kinds of food would be on board, what kind of people formed the crew, what were their backgrounds and expectations, what was the detailed structure of a typical ship, who slept where, what facilities and powers did each member of the crew have, and so on. One might want to compare in such exhaustive detail a ship and voyage of an English venturer, like Sir Francis Drake, with a Portuguese or Spanish exploratory journey or with Christopher Columbus' voyage to America. This, of course, requires that the teacher make available the sources students can go to for this kind of information. Initially, the more attractive the source materials the better—Macaulay's books would provide ideal starting points—but once students become interested they will ransack the dullest sources with a sense of excitement that is fed rather than diminished by the dullness or relative inaccessibility of the source.

Frequently, when teaching about ancient Greece or Rome, teachers focus on those aspects of ancient life that have something in common with life today (for example, family life and homes) or with things that have left a direct and clear mark on the present (for example, words derived from Greek and Latin). Here again, a criterion for selecting what is to be studied in the past is what content students may be familiar with in the present. Some teachers who find these content associations trivial, argue that knowledge of ancient Greece and Rome is thus irrelevant to typical modern high-

school students. Other teachers frequently defend the relevance of Greece and Rome on the grounds of these content associations with the modern world. My claim is that content has little to do with relevance, which may be achieved at this stage by romantic association with some transcendent human quality. And, to run the risk of overstating the point, the more alien the world with which students can be connected, the more relevant is knowledge about it to their educational development.

CONCLUSION

We may characterize the romantic stage as that during which students explore the limits of the reality with which they have to deal. They do this primarily by focusing attention on extremes. They connect themselves with the extremes through the human qualities that most transcend the threats of everyday life—power, courage, nobility, beauty, genius, and all the old virtues.

The kind of curriculum this scheme leads to at this stage contrasts even more starkly than that at the mythic stage with typical expanding horizons curricula. The expanding horizons curricula are based on the assumption that students discover the world by progressively moving further outwards along lines of content associations, whereas the characteristics outlined here suggest that students explore reality by first making contact with its most extreme limits and then working inwards. I am claiming that all curricula that are composed on the assumption that students' knowledge of the world must be gradually extended on lines of content associations from the self and local experiences, perform an enormous disservice to students' educational development. They will also, incidentally, bore most students out of their minds.

It is perhaps not surprising that this stage of intellectual wonder and excitement is also the stage of most acute boredom. If the mind is not caught up and flying in wonderful realms, it has to descend into the everyday world against which it has developed little conceptual defence. The mind at the romantic stage largely lacks the

ability to derive much meaning from the everyday world. It does not yet know the context in which the everyday and commonplace are meaningful. For this reason alone, a curriculum that focuses on local matters ("How your city council works"; "Chemical reactions around the home"; "Local flora and fauna") is likely to drive most students to withdraw entirely. If they are literate, they will read westerns, love stories, or science fiction under the desk. If they are not, they will simply go catatonic or arrive in class stoned. My brutal claim is that those well-meaning teachers who try to engage students in what is relevant and assume that the relevant is to be found in their everyday environment are simply moving further in the direction of boring students and alienating them from their world.

Many scholars and teachers with a precise sense of how their discipline should be studied consider the kind of knowledge that engages students at the romantic stage in some way disreputable. Romantic-stage students seem like wide-eyed tourists interested only in the spectacular sights and bored by the background and detail that most interests scholars and teachers. Such teachers find their educational duty in ridiculing the romantic search for the extreme and the kind of knowledge that this entails, and they concentrate on trying to turn students into mini-researchers. It is hard to persuade some people that the immature require immature concepts and methods of inquiry and that this romantic engagement with the awesome, the wonderful, the different is not only acceptable but *necessary* for students' educational development.

I will discuss appropriate content for each stage in chapters 6 and 7, but want here to make one point about students' great ability to memorize and retain detail at this stage. Frequently in educational writing, memorization, or, pejoratively, rote learning, is depreciated, as though it is somehow necessarily incompatible with inquiry or exploration. Particularly, in recent decades, rote learning of poetry seems to have become educationally disreputable. Yet a mind stocked with fine poetry and prose enriches both the rhythms of one's language and the range of one's thought and sentiment and provides an infinitely rich treasure that can be drawn on at will through the rest of one's life. Similarly, a crude mass of factual

knowledge about any discipline area (apart from being important for the best fulfillment of the next stage, as I shall show) has an important intellectual and aesthetic value. Only people without such treasures depreciate their value, and it is inappropriate to accept the advice and guidance of the ignorant in matters of education.