Section 2

Description of The Critical Reading Inventory

Word Lists

The CRI begins with an assessment of the child's word recognition level in isolation from text. A graded list of words is presented to the readers in 1-second flash and untimed formats and their performance determines the starting point of the actual reading assessment. There are two word list forms at each grade level from Pre-Primer through Grade 12 to allow for pre- and posttest assessment. Each of the graded word lists contains 7 to 10 words from the narrative passages at corresponding grade levels of the CRI. Thus, users have the opportunity to contrast a student's ability to read words in isolation to the ability to read them within the context of a passage. Words used in the reading passages are designated with an asterisk in the examiner's copy of the word lists.

Flash

The Flash administration of the graded words lists is designed to provide a relatively quick and easy estimate of the level of the child's sight vocabulary. Sight vocabulary is defined as the fund of words that the child can recognize immediately, without the need for any word analysis skills. To administer the Flash segment of the test, you provide the child with a 1-second exposure to each word in a list of 20 words per grade level. The words have been chosen because of the frequency with which they appear in actual grade-level materials typically used in classroom instruction (see the discussion in Section 5). Because the word lists take very little time and are easy to administer and score, we also use the results to obtain an estimate of the level at which we should begin the reading of graded passages.

This estimate is based on an assumption that works most of the time: If children can identify all of the words in a specific grade level given just flash exposure, the chances are good that they will be able to read materials written at that grade level with very little difficulty. Of course, there are always exceptions to that rule, but because you want the reading segment of the CRI to be administered with maximum efficiency, a fairly good estimate of the appropriate starting point will be well worth your while as you will see in greater detail when we discuss the process of estimating reading levels.

Untimed

If children do not immediately recognize a word (or do not respond after about 5 seconds), give them an opportunity to use their fund of word analysis skills to identify the word. This is the Untimed segment of the Word List test. Note that you are not assessing reading; there is no real text involved and thus no context. When you give children unlimited time (in reality 10 to 15 seconds) to decode a word, they can do one of two things: They can use

either word analysis skills (breaking a word into component parts—prefixes, affixes, root words, etc.) or phonics skills (linking the correct sounds and syllables to the combination of letters). Obviously, there can be no syntactic (grammatical) or semantic (meaningful) clues involved if there is no real text.

Nonetheless, giving the Untimed word list can give you some additional information about the level of the child's decoding skills, how that child approaches decoding, how flexible the child is in trying different pronunciations or techniques, and even how effectively that child handles frustration. You can observe whether children try everything in their repertoire or whether they simply glance at a word, look up at you, and tell you they don't know what it is (and presumably will not know at any time in the near future). You can observe how the child deals with success as well as a lack of success. For all of these reasons, despite the limitations discussed below, you will want to administer a list of graded, isolated words. A video demonstration of the administration of the word lists is available on the website that accompanies the CRI.

What Word Lists Cannot Do

We need to discuss what Word Lists cannot do. Word lists cannot be used as the basis for the analysis of a child's pattern of errors in word recognition. We cannot develop a thorough program of word recognition instruction based on the word lists for one simple reason: The word lists are not actual reading. There is no coherent meaning in a list of words. Nor is there a grammatical structure in a word list; a reader cannot use context clues in word lists because the context does not exist. Frankly, based on the Word Lists alone, you will have no idea whether a child really knows what a word means. And until you observe children actually reading text, you will have no idea of the skills and strategies they use in the act of reading. All you are measuring at this point is whether the child can pronounce the word correctly. Needless to say, this is not the foundation upon which you want to build an instructional program. You use the Word Lists because they can give useful information about the starting point of The Critical Reading Inventory. But you cannot draw conclusions about a child's specific word recognition ability based solely on the recitation of a list of words.

Form A: Narrative Passages

Form A of the CRI includes three narrative passages for each grade level, beginning with Pre-Primer and ending with Grade 12. Narrative passages are designed to include the major story elements associated with a relatively simple story grammar. These include characters who experience a problem of some type, take action to solve that problem, and meet with varying levels of success in their progression toward a resolution. This action also occurs within a time frame and at a given place, either of which may influence actions or outcomes in the story. The story grammar structure enables the examiner to note which of the elements of a story are central and which are less so. Consequently, you will want to assess the effectiveness of a retelling by determining to what extent the child recalled or reacted to the central story elements. The scoring rubric for retellings that accompanies each passage is built upon these central story elements. In addition, we recommend that the first of the passages at each grade level be administered as oral reading and the second as silent reading. Although we acknowledge the contributions of miscue analysis research and the role of oral reading in that research (Goodman, 1970; Goodman & Burke, 1972), we also endorse Allington's (2001) observations about the authenticity of silent reading. Administering in both oral and silent format will offer you the opportunity to contrast the child's performance in two very different reading modes.

Form B: Informational Passages

Form B of the CRI includes three informational passages for each of the grade levels. These passages are designed to convey information to the reader, preferably information that is rather unusual so as to minimize the effects of prior knowledge insofar as that is possible. Informational passages tend to be more complex in structure than narrative passages

because they can be organized around one structure or a combination of structures, including comparison, contrast, cause-effect, examples, or enumeration. Thus children's recall of and ability to react to informational text often depend upon the skills they demonstrate in organizing the information around a logical structure. This alone makes the evaluation of retellings of informational text both more challenging and a very rich source of diagnostic information about any given child's reading.

Oral Reading and Miscue Analysis

It is at this point that you are ready to make some judgments about the child's word recognition ability since there is a meaningful context and a somewhat authentic task involved. Now you can obtain some insight into how a child handles unknown words or uses (or fails to use) the meaningful context of a passage. We can, of course, make no claims that having a child read aloud in front of an adult who is furiously noting any deviation the child makes from the printed text is a very authentic reading situation. But it is the best you can do under the circumstances to gather some insights into the child's overall approach to word recognition. And it is the overall perspective on reading and word recognition that matters at this point, not the specific skills that the child appears to have deficiencies in.

It may be helpful to think that at least part of your work as test administrator will be to identify the child's place along a continuum of proficiency in word recognition during oral reading. At one end of the scale are those children who read with fluency, accuracy, good pacing, and expression and who use their ear for the grammar and meaning of the language to monitor their reading and ensure that it "sounds right." These are the children who will immediately self-correct most miscues that violate the context of the passage, whether semantic (meaningful) or syntactic (grammatical). Consequently, they will earn consistently high marks when you assess their word recognition in the context of oral reading. Keep in mind that these high marks are no guarantee that these children have processed or critically reacted to what they have read. Rather, you will need to determine that later in the test.

Naturally, there are those children who stand at the opposite end of the word recognition spectrum. These children seem to see the task of oral reading as a one-word-at-a-time pronunciation task with little or no attention paid to the meaning or flow of the language. The oral reading of these children tends to sound as if they are reading a list of disconnected words with almost no intonation or inflection. The miscues that these children make are much more likely not to make sense in the context of their reading. These children may even create pseudo-words for the sake of attaching sounds to letters, particularly if their instructional program includes the use of nonwords. Their self-correction and consequent monitoring for the sense of what they read may be virtually nonexistent. Reading for these children appears to be word-by-word decoding and little more.

Of course, as you have probably suspected all along, there are innumerable gradations along the continuum of word recognition we have begun to define. But a key insight that you can hope to gain by engaging in *miscue analysis* of oral reading is that of the child's view of reading. This is where self-corrections come into play. Self-corrections occur when children notice that what they have read aloud violates either the sense of the language (semantics) or the grammar of the language (syntax). That is, children who self-correct are indicating that they expect what they read to make sense and to fit in with the grammar of the language and that, when it does not, they know that they must do something to correct the situation. This is a healthy perspective on reading. For this reason, every self-correction is important: It may indicate an emerging view of reading as a process of making meaning.

The Nature of Miscues

Aside from an overall assessment of a child's perspective on word recognition, you can also gain some insight into the child's view of the nature of reading by analyzing the miscues that have occurred (Goodman & Burke, 1972). Not all miscues are identical in terms of

their importance or their interpretation. When you look at the overall pattern of a child's miscues (a miscue is defined as any deviation from the printed text), you will find some that change the meaning intended by the author of the text but still fit in grammatically and make logical sense. For example, the text reads: *The boat was floating near the dock* and Reader A reads*: The boot was floating near the dock*. The reader has clearly altered the intended meaning but has substituted a noun (*boot*) for a noun (*boat*) and thus has created a sentence that keeps the grammar of the language intact. The reader has also created a sentence that makes some logical sense because it is entirely possible that a boot could be floating in the water near a dock. When we discuss the scoring of miscues in Section 3, we make the point that this type of miscue, even though it deviates from the actual text, can be classified as acceptable on the basis of both syntax and semantics. It can be viewed as the reader's attempt to make sense of the text. If a pattern of this type of miscue is evident, it suggests that the reader is developing some sensitivity to the structure of the language and expects what he or she has read to make sense. A pattern of these miscues does suggest that the reader is struggling to use words that fit logically or grammatically, and is demonstrating some elements of a view of reading as meaning making. In any case, you can observe whether the reader's confusion is cleared up by the context clues provided in the remaining text. If the story goes on to say that three boys jumped into the boat and the reader continues to read "boot," then you have a different type of problem.

Reader B, on the other hand, may demonstrate a consistent pattern of miscues that violate both grammar and logic. For example, the text reads: *The man rode the horse into town* and the child reads: *The man robe his horse into town*. In this case, the reader has substituted a noun (*robe*) for a verb (*rode*) and created a sentence that is not grammatically correct and makes no sense. Such a miscue fails to maintain meaning and suggests that the reader is not attempting to make sense of the text. Readers who make significant numbers of such miscues and who do not self-correct are suggesting that they view reading as a simple decoding task wherein once the words have been pronounced, the task is over. The difference between Reader A and Reader B discussed earlier is significant. Children who demonstrate either of these patterns of miscues will require instructional programs that are very different from one another if you are to help them become better readers.

Of course, there are numerous variations in the nature of miscues. Our first concern at this point is to gather diagnostic information centering on whether children, in spite of the number and nature of their miscues, still attempt to make sense of what they read. Once we have answered that question, it will be worth our while to seek out patterns in the reader's approach to unknown words. In this case, the Miscue Analysis Worksheet (discussed in detail in Section 3) will be helpful in that it provides a visual display of all of the miscues that the reader has made. It is then easier for us to identify when children use sounding out, for example, as their prime strategy in decoding words. Other children may take care to substitute syntactically appropriate words or word forms. Others may take care to consistently attempt to identify word parts or break unknown words into syllables. When these strategies are used with some degree of consistency, it allows us to identify the reader's overall approach to the identification of unknown words and shed some light on the child's instructional needs.

Readers will frequently use context clues and self-correct at reading levels that they find rather easy or only mildly challenging. However, when the reading becomes challenging they frequently focus more closely on graphophonemic cues and are much more likely to violate sense and language in their miscues. This is not a particularly unusual or alarming pattern.

In order to facilitate the analysis of miscues, we ask CRI users to calculate two different indices. The first is the Reading Accuracy Index (RAI). This is simply the percentage of the words in the passage that the child has read with complete faithfulness to the text. It is calculated by subtracting the number of scoreable miscues from the number of words in the passage, dividing by the number of words in the passage, then rounding off to the nearest whole number (see sample in Figure 2–1). The second index is the Meaning Maintenance Index (MMI). This is calculated by subtracting the number of scoreable miscues that violate the sense or grammar of the text from the total number of words, dividing by the total number of words, and then rounding off to the nearest whole number. Both of these indices will be discussed in greater depth in Section 3.

Figure 2–1

Sample Calculations
of the RAI and MMI

Second Grade II. "The Roller Coaster Ride" is 244 words in length.
If Student A makes 13 scoreable miscues, the RAI is calculated in this way:

RAI

244 words − 13 scoreable miscues = 231 words read accurately

231 words ÷ 244 total words = 94.67%

= **95% is Student A's RAI for this passage
(rounded off to the nearest whole number)**

MMI

If 7 of those 13 scoreable errors alter the grammar or meaning of the language, the MMI is calculated in the following way:

244 words − 7 meaning-violating errors = 237 words read in a manner that
preserves meaning.

237 words ÷ 244 total words = 97.13%

= **97% is Student A's MMI for this
passage
(rounded off to the nearest whole
number)**

Note: To simplify the calculations, we have included a miscue calculator box with every selection in the CRI. Simply find the number of scoreable miscues first, then the number of or meaning-violating miscues in that box and you will find the corresponding percentage for the RAI and the MMI, respectively. The ASII performs this calculation automatically.

Comprehension Check

We have included a statement in the Examiner's Copy of the CRI passages to introduce each assessment. In it we say, for example, prior to oral or silent reading of a passage: *"Would you read this passage about _____ (to yourself/out loud). When you are finished, I'll take away the passage. Then I'll ask you to tell me about what you read and what you think of it. After that, I'll ask you some questions about the passage."* Once the reader has completed the reading, you remove the Reader's Copy of the story and begin the assessment of comprehension.

There are several objectives for your use of the introductory statement. The most important of these is to give your readers a clear idea of what will be expected of them. Specifically, they will need to prepare to give a retelling and be ready to answer questions without the benefit of the passage in front of them. The objective in asking for the retelling is to try to determine which elements of the text that the reader felt were important enough to recall. You do not ask the child, for example, to "tell me everything you remember" about the story. You do not want to encourage the child to try to remember everything; at least some of the passage contains relatively incidental information or details. Instead, you want to see what children decide to emphasize in their interaction with the text. If the retelling lacks logical structure or emphasizes elements that are not central to the essence of the text (see examples of retellings and scoring rubrics in the Retelling Scoring Tutorial), then you have diagnostic information that can be valuable in framing a course of instruction.

For each of the selections in the CRI, we have provided a scoring rubric. In it you will find the elements of the text that are central to the intended message of the author. Instructions for translating the retelling into a numerical value are included in the Retelling Scoring Guides in the Examiner's Tools section of this text, or you may wish to use the Automated Scoring and Interpretation Interview (ASII) available online to CRI users. We have found that most children will anticipate that you are asking for a verbatim recall of the details of the text. For this reason, you extend an invitation ("Tell me about what you just read and what you thought about it.") for the student to respond to the text. If the child

does not provide a personal reaction in the initial retelling, you repeat that invitation and specifically ask the child what he or she thought of the story or text. Any hint of reaction to or interpretation of the message of the text is a welcome sign of a child's development of a healthy view of reading. Even a laugh or grimace or any expression of like or dislike for the text can be viewed as a most encouraging personal response. But in order to receive credit for a personal response in the retelling scoring, readers must be able to support their responses. Simply stating an opinion without an accompanying justification does not meet the criteria for a personal response.

After the unaided retelling of the selection, begin the open-ended questions that comprise the comprehension check of the IRI. As discussed earlier, we believe that remembering the details of what one has read is not a complete measure of one's understanding. Instead, comprehension involves the ability to remember what one reads, to think about it, and to respond to it. For these purposes, you will utilize three different types of items in your comprehension check.

Three Dimensions of Comprehension

Text-Based Items. As their name suggests, these items call for the children to recall information that they have read in the passage. In the CRI we have limited text-based items to include only information that is important in light of the central story elements or the key factual information related to the passage. Text-based items call for information that is stated either verbatim in the passage or so nearly verbatim that the item would require little more than translation of the text into different words. In asking text-based items, you are attempting to find out if children can, without benefit of the passage in front of them, remember specific elements of what the author said. Text-based items assess memory for information, not the ability to use that information or even think about it. For example, in the narrative titled "The Race," the main character brags whenever he wins a race and he always wins. Consequently none of the other characters want to race against him. An example of a text-based item would be "Why didn't any of the other characters want to race against him?" Because the relationship between winning and bragging is stated explicitly in the text, an acceptable answer would be that the character bragged about his speed.

You ask text-based questions because these items measure part of the reading comprehension process. Many children, however, have come to believe that memory of the facts is the essence of reading. Children with this view of reading are likely to perform much better in the text-based comprehension arena than they are at levels that require thought and analysis.

Specifically, text-based items are those that
- Require the reader to recall explicitly stated information from the text.
- Involve the recognition of information in different words from those used in the original text. Such items require of the reader only a translation of the printed text.
- Require the reader to identify relationships that exist between ideas in the text. Such items as these are not completely verbatim. For example, the text reads*: I was late for the meeting. My car wouldn't start.* A question such as "Why was the character in the story late for the meeting?" would not be strictly verbatim only because the writer has not made the relationship explicit by using a grammatical marker (e.g., *because*). This is not to say that the skill of making such connections is unimportant. Classification of such an item as text-based merely reflects the fact that the writer assumes that at a given grade level, the reader can and will make the connection (Applegate et al., 2002).

Inference Items. Inference items require children to draw logical conclusions about elements of the passage they have read. These items frequently demand that children draw upon experiences that they have, but the link between experience and text is more logical than interpretive. Consequently, the inference items most often have a clearly identified link between experience and text. For example, in the narrative "The Race" already cited, the main character is finally beaten by a female cat who smiles when the main character challenges her to a race. An example of an inference item would be: "Do you think this is the first time this character has ever raced against anyone? Why or why not?" One can infer that

the smile signifies a certain level of confidence that could be based on a record of prior successes. An inference item requires a response that is not stated verbatim in the text and which requires the child to do more than merely paraphrase the text. Children must link experience with the text to draw a logical conclusion about what they have read.

Inferences are those items that require the reader to
- devise an alternative solution to a specific problem described in the text.
- describe a plausible motivation that explains a character's actions.
- provide a plausible explanation for a situation, problem, or action.
- predict a past or future action based on characteristics or qualities developed in the text.
- describe a character or action based on the events in a story.
- identify relationships between or among pieces of information in the text. (Applegate et al., 2002)

Critical Response Items. Critical response items require children to analyze, react, and respond to elements of the text based on their experiences and values. Because responses to these items can be based on the link between text and the child's unique experiences, critical response items do not generally lend themselves to single correct answers. What makes answers to critical response items correct is the children's ability to justify their responses by providing a clear and coherent rationale (which still includes elements from the text) for their thinking. For example, in "The Race" the main character loses several rematches before he walks away angry. The cat who beat him is disappointed because she had hoped he would become her friend. An example of a critical response item would be: "If another new family moved into the jungle, do you think Spencer would ask them to race or not? Explain." Both affirmative and negative responses could be justified, based on the character's actions and statements. Critical response items invite discussion about characters, situations, or ideas. But the reader must select information relevant to the question and ignore information that may be important in the story but not germane to the issue addressed in the question. If children can state opinions but are unable to discuss or support them, then their response is considered inadequate.

We regard critical response items as requiring the reader to
- describe the lesson(s) a character may have learned from experience.
- judge the efficacy of the actions or decisions of a character and defend the judgment.
- devise and defend alternative solutions to a complex problem described in a story.
- respond positively or negatively to a character based on a logical assessment of the actions or traits of that character
- use information in a passage in support of a judgment about the efficacy of an action or a solution to a problem (Applegate et al., 2002).

The use of three types of items in the CRI will enable you to seek patterns of responses that give evidence of strengths and weaknesses. Many children, for example, will be able to answer only text-based items. Other children, particularly verbally proficient children, will respond effectively to text-based and critical response items, largely because they can link experiences to text and justify their thinking naturally. If that is all they can do, however, they will experience difficulty with inference items that require them to draw logical conclusions and that frequently require multiple text connections. Other children will recall and draw logical conclusions but may not have the slightest idea that they are supposed to think about and discuss ideas that are implied in the text. Thus the pattern of a child's comprehension response will often enable you to develop a plan of instruction that is specifically geared to their needs.

Profiles in Comprehension

In the course of their assessment, teachers can often identify obstacles to clearer and more sophisticated thinking, and ultimately adjust their instruction to meet the needs of their students. For example, in the course of our preparation of this edition of the CRI, we conducted an extensive study of the responses of more than 400 students to CRI comprehension items (Applegate et al., 2006). From this analysis there emerged eight distinct profiles of

thinking that we believe represent pitfalls that readers can encounter on their way to thoughtful literacy.

1. Literalists. The Literalist is characterized by the fundamental belief that all answers to all types of questions will ultimately be found in the text. Literalists often express the belief that their thoughts and reactions to text are of little consequence and that their primary objective as readers is to commit the details of a story to memory. They often find it very difficult to distinguish between questions that require them to think and those that require them to find information. Before responding to a question they will engage in a systematic search of their memories or of the text in an attempt to locate answers. Literalists will frequently refer to "what the story said" in their responses or explanations. They often respond to thought-provoking questions with statements such as "I don't remember that part" or "It didn't say anything about that," occasionally with indignation that they had been asked a question that could not be answered on the basis of pure recall.

A final point about Literalists is in order. Accomplished Literalists are often viewed by teachers as exemplary readers because they recall all or most of what they have read. Equally often these same teachers are stunned by the poor performance of literalists on accountability measures of reading comprehension that focus less and less on literal reading at higher grade levels.

2. Fuzzy Thinkers. Fuzzy Thinkers are characterized by vague and imprecise concepts that are often expressed in vague and imprecise language. Fuzzy Thinkers will nearly always respond to any type of question they are asked, but the thinking behind their responses will be elusive and ambiguous. If they are asked questions that follow up on their initial responses, they are often unable to explain what they meant, probably because they never had a clear idea of the significance of their original answer. Frequent use of trite descriptors such as *happy, sad, nice, mean, good*, and so on is often a red flag indicating the presence of a Fuzzy Thinker.

3. Left Fielders. Left Fielders are so named because their unpredictable responses seem to come from the deepest recesses of that part of the baseball playing field. Their responses frequently have nothing whatever to do with the text and may even seem incoherent or illogical. Left Fielders often deliver these responses with remarkable confidence and assurance. They may even elaborate upon them when asked to do so, but their elaborations will often be equally incoherent. Left Fielders seem to believe that any answer will serve in response to any question. They differ from those readers who make a personal, idiosyncratic link with the text that others cannot easily understand. These readers can explain their thinking; Left Fielders have a great deal of difficulty doing so.

4. Quiz Contestants. Quiz Contestants respond to questions about text by searching their memory banks for any explanation that will serve as a plausible response, whether it is alluded to in the text or not. Thus Quiz Contestants most certainly use their background experiences, but they do so without consideration of the text they have read. Quiz Contestants are related to Left Fielders in their disconnection from the text, but they differ significantly in that they feel compelled to provide a logical response to a question. In that sense their view of reading is more accurate than that of the Left Fielder because they are monitoring their responses to ensure that they are logical. The problem is that they believe that their task is to provide a plausible answer to a question without using the details included in the text. An intriguing observation we made of Quiz Contestants is that they are frequent underachievers in state and national accountability assessments. It seems that Quiz Contestants are susceptible to a form of distractor that is common in standardized multiple-choice tests: answers that sound logical but have little or nothing to do with the text. Helping children identify such distractors can be beneficial as long as you encourage them to apply the skill in more authentic reading.

5. Politicians. These readers weigh the question and then do their best to tell you what it is that they believe you want to hear. Politicians often quote or devise slogans or platitudes that sound meaningful and weighty, but which have rather vague connections to the themes of the text they have read. It sometimes seems that the objective of Politicians is to convince

you that they can think profoundly on issues related to the text, but when you ask them to explain what they mean, they are often unable to do so with clarity.

6. Dodgers. Dodgers are those readers who focus on the comprehension question itself. If it is not to their liking, they change the question into one that they feel is more suitable and then respond to the new question. Dodgers are often very voluble in their responses, and their sheer verbiage can sometimes overcome teachers and distract them from the fact that the Dodger has not actually answered the question at hand. Dodgers can be creative in their efforts to avoid questions that they cannot answer. One ploy that they commonly use is to paraphrase the question and try to pass it off as a valid answer.

Less sophisticated Dodgers may miss the point of the question because they have misunderstood or misinterpreted it in the first place. Others may have little or no realization of the role of the question in setting up the parameters of the reader's thinking.

7. Authors. Authors are those readers who add details, characters, and even entirely new story lines to the text that they have read. Authors may create entirely new stories, some of which have a markedly tenuous link to the text they have read. When they are questioned, they frequently show remarkable consistency by using their idiosyncratic text as the basis for their responses. Authors sometimes seem to be embarrassed by the fact that they have not comprehended what they have read, and they attempt to compensate by elaborating on the few details that they do recall.

8. Minimalists. Minimalists, on the other hand, are characterized by simple and unelaborated responses to even the most complex and thought-provoking of questions. Minimalists are maddeningly reluctant to elucidate their responses or explain their thinking. When they are asked to do so by teachers, they frequently respond with "I don't know" or "That's all I can think of." The difficulty with Minimalists (and the source of much teacher frustration) is that some elements of their responses may be correct. The problem is that they leave it to the questioners to create the logical links between their thoughts. Consequently Minimalists are difficult to instruct because they give teachers so little to work with in terms of diagnostic information. They are further complicated by the fact that they may be of two distinct types.

Type A Minimalists refuse to elaborate because they have little or no confidence in their language skills. Teachers can find Type A Minimalists particularly frustrating because they often feel that these children are capable of much more effective thinking. Indeed, Minimalists differ from Fuzzy Thinkers in that they may show tantalizing glimpses of their ability to think clearly and articulate their thinking effectively. But their unwillingness to elucidate their responses is rooted in the fear that they will "say the wrong things" or "say the things wrong."

Type B Minimalists have a profound fear of being wrong. They have somehow internalized the notion that reading, and indeed all of education, is about "getting it right" and getting it right the first time. Type B Minimalists often show physical signs of frustration such as fidgeting or frequent requests for breaks when they are faced with questions about what they have read. They will be particularly uncomfortable or frustrated if they believe that their responses are wrong (Applegate et al., 2006).

Conclusions

If anything at all is evident from our analysis of student responses, it is the power of the higher-level question as a tool for identifying habits of reading and thinking that merits your attention as a teacher. If you can remove some of the obstacles to thoughtful literacy that students experience, you will be able to offer them more opportunities for engaged reading. Thoughtful reactions to text are more than simply mechanisms to sort out good readers from poor readers. There are many instructional tools in a teacher's professional arsenal to teach virtually all students to respond thoughtfully to what they read. Well-timed and well-executed lessons from teaching professionals who are themselves thoughtful readers is often all it takes to begin the process of altering the fundamental view of reading that children hold (Applegate et al., 2006).