

ATTITUDINAL EFFECTS ON CRITICAL READING

by 4529

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INTRODUCTION

Reading in today's school systems is recognized as one of the most important processes to be learned. The ultimate goal of reading is critical reading. Critical reading necessitates the process of thinking in regard to all aspects of what is being read. The importance of this goal and efforts to achieve it are becoming more widespread as educators realize the need to not only teach students to read but to read critically to be able to cope with society's problems.

Statement of the Problem

The effects that the reader's attitudes have upon his critical reading are extensive. It is the purpose of this report to define critical reading, to show its relationship to the reading process, and to clarify what skills it involves. Some factors which limit the effectiveness of critical reading will be shown. The importance and effects that the reader's attitudes have upon critical reading will be presented.

Importance of the Study

The importance of reading has never been questioned. However, the quality of reading that is being taught has been questioned. Alarmist literature, such as Tomorrow's

Illiterates by Charles C. Walcutt, estimates that "three out of four young Americans are not reading as well as they should or could."¹ The necessity of creating good readers becomes more evident when one realizes the vast amount of literature available in our society. Today's reader must be able to not only read and understand the material but also recognize the validity of what is read. The reader must also be taught to understand the effects of his own attitudes on what he perceives, comprehends, selects, and retains in his reading. The critical reading skills enable the reader to interpret and evaluate what he reads with more competence in obtaining the author's true meaning.

Definition of Terms Used

Reading. "Reading is not a biological response as is hunger, nor is it an emotional reaction as is joy. It is a learned behavior, and it takes a lifetime to learn."² In this report the meaning of reading will be limited to the receiving of sense from written or printed materials.

Critical reading. Critical reading is the process

¹Charles C. Walcutt, Tomorrow's Illiterates: The State of Reading Instruction Today (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1961), p. 11.

²Harry A. Livermore, "Use of the Overhead Projector for the Instruction of Five Selected Reading Skills in High School English Classes" (unpublished Master's report, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, 1967), p. 3.

in which the critical reading skills are used. It is the process in which it is mandatory that "the reader severely judges the writer's ideas."¹ Critical reading is a student's "intelligent, purposeful reading involving more complex thinking than does simple recall."² Marksheffel states that "critical reading means purposeful reading in which the higher-level thinking processes are used in making sound judgments on the basis of all available evidence."³

Critical reading skills. Spache lists six skills that he believes are necessary for critical reading.

- (1) To investigate sources
- (2) To recognize author's purposes
- (3) To distinguish opinion from fact
- (4) To make inferences
- (5) To form judgments
- (6) To detect propaganda devices⁴

¹A. Sterl Artley, "Critical Reading in the Content Areas," Elementary English, XXXVI (February, 1959), 122.

²Gertrude Williams, "Provisions for Critical Reading in Basic Readers," Elementary English, XXXVI (May, 1959), 324.

³Ned D. Marksheffel, Better Reading in the Secondary School (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1966), p. 250.

⁴George Spache, Toward Better Reading (Champaign, Ill.: Garrard Press, 1961), pp. 89-93.

Attitude. "'Attitude' is a word used to refer to a general tendency of an individual to act in a certain way under certain conditions."¹ In this report attitude will refer to both a mental position and a feeling or an emotion toward a fact or statement.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Many factors influence critical reading. Actually, critical reading is not a form of reading but is the use of a specific set of skills for exact reading. The following review shows 1) the relationship of reading to critical reading, 2) the importance of critical reading, 3) the skills necessary for critical reading, 4) some of the requirements of critical reading, 5) three approaches in teaching critical reading, 6) factors which work against critical reading, and 7) the effects of attitudes on critical reading.

The Relationship of Reading to Critical Reading

Critical reading is the most advanced level to be achieved in reading. Pickarz established that there are three segments of reading.² These are the literal, the

¹Robert F. Mager, Developing Attitude Toward Learning (Palo Alto, California: Fearon Publishers, 1968), p. 14.

²Josephine A. Pickarz, "Attitudes and Critical Reading," Critical Reading, Martha L. King, Bernice D. Ellinger, Willavene Wolf, editors (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1967), p. 71.

interpretive, and the evaluative segments. The literal comprehension level of reading is known as the functional level. It is at this level that the reader simply obtains facts or follows directions. The literal comprehension level is the level at which most reading is done.¹ Since it involves merely the recognition of explicitly stated facts, no room is left for personal opinion or ambiguity.² The second level--interpretative comprehension--refers to the meanings that are implied in the writing and must be inferred by the reader. The reader must go beyond the literal comprehension of the facts to read between the lines. The third level is that of evaluation. This level involves the personal reactions of the reader to the material he reads and to the author of this material. "Judgments concerning accuracy, relevancy, authenticity, authoritativeness, validity, completeness, truthfulness, recency, recognition of fact and opinion, propaganda, slant, bias, prejudice, different points of view, ambiguities and discrepancies, omission of facts, irony and sarcasm, half truths, emotionally charged words, exaggerated claims; identification of the author's purpose, mood, tone, and

¹David H. Russell, "Contributions of Reading to Personal Development," Teachers College Record, LXI (May, 1960), 435.

²Piekarz, op. cit., p. 72.

intent"¹ are all essential characteristics for which an evaluative reader watches.

Critical reading is the most advanced level in reading because it includes all three segments of reading. The critical reader must be able to read literally, interpret or read between the lines, and then evaluate what he has read.

The process of learning to read critically should begin in the early years of school. Stauffer points out that reading is "akin" to thinking. If a reader wishes to read material intellectually, if he wishes to understand it, he must deal with it as a thinker.² "Proficiency in critical thinking enables one to be objective and unbiased in making a rational appraisal of any written material to which he is exposed."³ The importance of critical reading is easily seen. However, Schell presented a word of warning, especially for the elementary level, that "a teacher must be careful not to encourage too high a degree of criticism of stories the pupils read or she will wind up with pupils scrutinizing stories for errors and distortions rather than

¹Ibid., p. 73.

²Russel G. Stauffer, "Reading and Thinking," Grade Teacher, LXXXVII (March, 1970), 28.

³Will J. Massey and Virginia D. Moore, Helping High School Students to Read Better (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1965), p. 39.

following the plot and enjoying the story."¹

The relationship between reading and critical reading is difficult to define because the processes used by both are so intergrated. Critical reading is the most complicated level of reading. However, the critical reading skills should not be thought of as something that should be developed only by gifted students.² Rather they are skills that all should learn to develop and use to become good readers.

The Importance of Critical Reading

Chase believes "that the values which thoughtful men cherish are more endangered by illiteracy than by the atomic bomb or its offspring."³ Two kinds of illiteracy have been established. The first is simple illiteracy or the inability to receive and express ideas through reading and writing. The second kind is the higher illiteracy or the inability to relate the content of communication to the events which are shaping the future. It is this second

¹Leo M. Schell, "Evaluative Reading," Reading Quarterly, II (Spring-Summer, 1969), 40.

²Arthur V. Olson, "Teaching Critical Reading Skills," Reading Improvement, IV (Fall, 1966), 1.

³Francis S. Chase, "Demands on the Reader in the Next Decade," Critical Reading, Martha L. King, Bernice D. Ellinger, Willavene Wolf, editors (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1967), p. 6.

kind of illiteracy that the use of the critical reading skills tends to eliminate.

Olson states that "the primary reason for teaching critical reading skills is to enable the reader to get more from the material he reads."¹ With the great mass of materials printed today, the reader needs to learn to select, interpret, and evaluate the materials which he reads. "It is impossible to be a genuinely intelligent member of society without the ability to weigh the merits of all that is spoken or written concerning the affairs of society."² Since the reader lives in a democracy in which the people have a voice in the government, it is imperative that each citizen learn to read about his country's affairs critically.

Skills Necessary for Critical Reading

Huelsman developed a list of fifteen skills needed for critical reading.³ He obtained this list by reviewing articles and reports concerning critical reading and

¹Olson, loc. cit.

²Richard D. Altick, Preface to Critical Reading, (fourth edition, New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1960), p. 18.

³Charles B. Huelsman, Jr., "Problems Met When Reading Critically in Grades Seven to Ten," Reading in the Secondary Schools, M. Jerry Weiss, ed. (New York: The Odyssey Press, Inc., 1961), p. 227.

thinking.

- (1) To define and delimit a problem
- (2) To formulate hypotheses
- (3) To locate information bearing on specific problems
- (4) To determine that a statement is important for a given purpose
- (5) To distinguish the difference between facts and opinions
- (6) To evaluate the dependability of data
- (7) To recognize the limitations of given data even when the items are assumed to be dependable
- (8) To see elements common to several items of data
- (9) To make comparisons
- (10) To organize evidence that suggests relationships
- (11) To recognize the prevailing tendencies or trends in the data
- (12) To judge the competency of a given author to make a valid statement on a given topic
- (13) To criticize data on the basis of its completeness and accuracy
- (14) To criticize a presentation on the basis of the completeness and logic of its reasoning

- (15) To suspend judgment until all evidence is assembled and evaluated

In addition to the skills needed for critical reading, the reader should be aware of certain "pitfalls" that are met in the process of critical reading.

- (1) Failure to detect errors in inductive and deductive reasoning
- (2) Failure to examine all the alternatives
- (3) Failure to detect false analogies
- (4) Failure to detect overgeneralization
- (5) Failure to identify oversimplification
- (6) Failure to distinguish between observations and inferences
- (7) Failure to detect the shift in meaning of a term
- (8) Failure to detect distortion or suppression of the truth
- (9) Permitting emotions to anaesthetize critical powers¹

Requirements of Critical Reading

Just as a student needs to develop certain skills to be able to read, there are certain requirements for a student to be able to learn to read critically. The first

¹Ibid.

requirement is that the student has developed fairly adequate literal reading skills such as rate, vocabulary, and comprehension. Research shows that many students need a teacher's direction in order to develop and improve their abilities to read and think critically.¹

Naturally some factors may limit the extent of the development of critical reading. One factor which is significant is intelligence. "The level of mental ability and background will determine, to a great extent, the amount of critical reading skills which can be learned."² It can be assumed then that a student with an IQ of 130 will be more likely to develop greater critical reading skills than a student with an IQ of 90. Nevertheless, the student with the lower IQ should be encouraged to read critically to the highest level that he is capable of achieving.³

Another essential factor or requirement for critical reading is experience. Critical reading cannot take place unless it is related to the past. "Essentially, all understanding is dependent upon experience--a person's experience at any time being the sum of everything he has seen, heard,

¹Robert Karlin, "Sequence in Thoughtful and Critical Reaction to What Is Read," Improving Reading in Secondary Schools: Selected Readings, Lawrence E. Hafner, ed. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1967), p. 129.

²Olson, op. cit., p. 3.

³Karlin, loc. cit.

felt, smelled, and tasted--and intellectually processed."¹
 A student must be taught how to use these experiences to determine whether the material being read is relevant to the solution of the problem at hand. He must be able to judge whether the author's presentation is based on verifiable information or whether it is simply opinion presented as fact. Reading and thinking cannot take place in a vacuum but rather must be related to past experiences to be meaningful.

Another requirement for critical reading is that the reader has established a purpose for reading. Johnson states that "before a student can read critically to solve a problem, he must have a definite need for solving the problem. Critical reading actually begins before a student begins to read a particular selection."² Gray made a list of the fourteen purposes that were emphasized in classroom reading.³

- (1) To find answers to specific questions
- (2) To determine the author's aim or purpose

¹Josephine A. Piekarz, "Attitudes and Critical Reading," Critical Reading, Martha L. King, Bernice D. Ellinger, Willavene Wolf, editors (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1967), p. 72.

²Johnson, Marjorie S., "Readiness for Critical Reading," Education, LXXXVIII (February, 1953), 391.

³William S. Gray, "The Nature and Types of Reading," Teaching Reading: Selected Materials, Walter B. Barbe, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1965), p. 54.

- (3) To find the central thought of a selection
- (4) To follow a sequence of related events
- (5) To enjoy the facts or story presented
- (6) To find the most important points and supporting details
- (7) To select facts which relate to a problem
- (8) To judge the validity of statements
- (9) To find facts supporting a point of view
- (10) To draw valid conclusions from materials read
- (11) To discover problems for additional study
- (12) To remember what is read
- (13) To determine the essential conditions of a problem
- (14) To follow directions with reasonable speed and accuracy.

Three Approaches in Teaching Critical Reading

Huelsman made a study of literature and procedure used in classrooms to determine what methods were being used to teach critical reading. He determined that there were at least three methods to teach critical reading skills in current use.¹ The three methods are presented here showing some of their strengths and weaknesses.

¹Charles B. Huelsman, Jr., "Problems Met When Reading Critically in Grades Seven to Ten," Reading in the Secondary Schools, M. Jerry Weiss, ed. (New York: The Odyssey Press, Inc., 1961), p. 231.

The direct approach. The teacher must provide some exercises wherein the student reacts critically. These exercises should be over material such as obvious propaganda or controversial editorials. The teacher should encourage the students to discuss the author, his purpose, and his language. The teacher must make the students aware that their reaction depends upon their own values, beliefs, ideals, and attitudes. In this way the student is forced to think critically in order to read and discuss the material. However, a weakness of the direct approach is that some students, although successful in using these critical reading skills in a unit teaching critical reading, will not carry through by using these skills on their own in their content subject reading or in their independent reading.

The incidental approach. The incidental approach assumes that many teachers are teaching critical reading skills without being fully aware of it. In this approach the teacher does not give any direct instructions on reading critically. However, this procedure is not of value for all students. Marksheffel states in his book that "critical reading is learned only from adequate, systematic, continuous guidance. Teachers must not assume that every student will become a critical reader without

competent instruction in critical reading."¹ The incidental approach usually is more oriented to learning in the content fields without any direct critical reading instruction.² Therefore, what skills that are learned are used in a more realistic reading situation and are more likely to be used in other reading situations.

The functional approach. The teacher does not plan a unit on critical reading as such in the functional approach. Instead, when the occasion arises, she teaches the critical reading skills necessary to solve the problem while trying to reach the objective which has already been set as a goal. In this way errors in logic are noted, and critical reading skills are taught. Thus, this training is practiced in a real reading situation. To be effective, the functional approach should involve the teachers in all areas of the curriculum. In this way continuity and sequence in teaching critical reading skills could be achieved.³

Of the three methods presented, each has obvious strengths and weaknesses. Huelsman, however, believes that the functional approach could be the most effective method

¹Ned D. Marksheffel, Better Reading in the Secondary School (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1966), p. 251.

²Huelsman, loc. cit.

³Ibid.

for teaching critical reading skills. The major difficulty that the functional approach presents is involving all teachers in the school to recognize and teach the critical reading skills necessary in covering the material in their field.¹ However, if such organization can be developed, the critical reading skills can be presented both in a realistic reading situation and when they are needed.

Factors Which Work Against Critical Reading

While there are certain requirements--intelligence, experience, and purpose--which limit the development of critical reading, there are also factors which work as obstacles. To a certain degree the teacher can control and minimize these obstacles. Olson lists five of these obstacles: the use of a single textbook, the "halo effect" attached to the printed word, the desire on the part of the school administrators and teachers to avoid controversial subjects, the emphasis on conformity, and the influence of attitudes and prejudices.²

The use of a single textbook in a class deters the student from reading critically. First, as Marksheffel points out, an argument against the use of a single textbook is that all students in a class are not able to read

¹Ibid.

²Arthur V. Olson, "Teaching Critical Reading Skills," Reading Improvement, IV (Fall, 1966), 2.

material written for one specific grade level.¹ Secondly, even a single textbook for a subject that would seem to present only facts without opinions is an unwise policy, for the author has selected what facts are presented and excluded. "A writer's viewpoint, no matter how objective he may desire to be, will be affected by certain predilections or prejudices that worm their way into much of his material."² If a student is only exposed to one set of facts, he will probably accept them without question. In a school where there is real interest in reading improvement, there must be a provision for an abundance of reading materials. "In many schools, the greatest single thing an administrator could do to improve reading is to increase the textbook and library budget."³

In the process of teaching reading and emphasizing its importance, educators have created in students a very high regard for the "sacredness" of printed materials known as the "halo effect."⁴ Students often accept at face value the information they read without considering why it was

¹Marksheffel, ibid., p. 176.

²Ibid., p. 178.

³Earle W. Wiltse, "Improving the Quality of Reading Instruction Throughout a School System," Reading in the Secondary Schools, M. Jerry Weiss, ed. (New York: The Odyssey Press, Inc., 1961), p. 40.

⁴Olson, loc. cit.

written, what the author's purpose was, what sources were used, and how complete and accurate it is. Therefore, the student is easily "taken in" by propaganda devices and emotional-appeal literature. It becomes the teacher's task to force the student to question the reliability of the printed material.

Another factor which works against critical reading is the desire of some school systems or a teacher's personal decision to avoid controversial subjects. This is detrimental to learning critical reading skills because the student needs an opportunity to read this type of literature, interpret and evaluate what he has read, and have an opportunity to discuss this material. Students need to be exposed to controversial materials to learn that there are various points of view on almost any topic. Many adults are not critical readers because they were not given the opportunity to read about controversial issues under the guidance of a competent teacher.¹

Conformity deters critical reading because many students want to be "part of the group." To be "part of the group," they feel they must think as the group does. Therefore, they tend to lose the ability to think for themselves but merely parrot the ideas of the group or a leader of the group. To read critically, a student must

¹Marksheffel, op. cit., p. 254.

think critically. Olson feels that it is the task of the teacher to create a classroom atmosphere that will allow a lack of conformity in thinking and reacting to material read.¹

Another factor is the influence of attitudes and prejudices on critical reading. When a student first comes to school, he has developed certain attitudes and prejudices that may prevent the unbiased evaluation of what is read. The effects of this factor on critical reading are presented in the following section.

The Effects of Attitude on Critical Reading

The relationship between the attitudes of the readers and their reading performance should be a major consideration when one is teaching critical reading. The teacher must strive to make the student aware of the effects of his attitudes on his reading. Attitudes affect the perceptual and conceptual abilities, the selection of the material read, and what is remembered.

The process of reading involves both perceptual abilities and conceptual abilities. Perceptual abilities are used more in word identification while conceptual abilities are used more in the understanding of meaning

¹Olson, op. cit., p. 3.

which is presented through language symbols.¹ Research shows that the students' attitudes affect both the perceptual as well as the conceptual abilities in reading.

Attitudes affect perceptual abilities. Basic to the reading process is visual word perception, for what meaning we derive from reading depends upon what words we see. However, the words that we see may be affected by our attitudes and may not necessarily be the actual printed words. Piekarz relates a story which exemplifies this process.

"I'm sure that you have all heard of the tired Wall Street broker who was commuting home to the suburbs at the end of a hard day of work. As he sat down in the train, he opened up his newspaper to read and was elated to see a big headline that said, STACKS OF BLONDES. He grabbed his briefcase ready to disembark before the train moved. However, a close second look revealed that the headline really said, STOCKS AND BONDS, so he relaxed and continued on home."²

Siipola conducted a study which showed that the reader often sees what he expects to see in agreement with his attitudes, emotions, and expectations rather than what is actually there. In his study a number of words,

¹Marksheffel, op. cit., p. 186.

²Josephine A. Piekarz, "Attitudes and Critical Reading," Critical Reading, Martha L. King, Bernice D. Ellinger, Willavene Wolf, editors (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1967), p. 74.

including six nonsense syllables, were projected on a screen by tachistoscope to a group of students. Half of the students had been told that the words would be related to birds or animals; the other half had been told that they would relate to travel or transportation. It was found that the majority of students expecting to see words relating to birds and animals saw the six nonsense syllables as real words relating to birds and animals; those expecting to see words relating to travel or transportation actually saw real words relating to travel and transportation rather than nonsense syllables. Examples of the nonsense syllables are clack which was seen as chick or check; sacl which was seen as seal or sail; and pasrort which was seen as parrot or passport.¹

Frenkel-Brunswich showed in a study that attitudes affect what a person sees when ambiguity is present. He showed that people who cannot tolerate ambiguity show it not only in their social attitudes but also in their perceptual responses. Two groups of people were established. One group was prejudiced and the other unprejudiced to minority groups. Both groups were shown a series of pictures. The first picture was obviously that of a dog. The series of pictures gradually made a

¹E. Siipola, "A Study of Some Effects of Preparatory Set," Psychological Monograph, XLVI (No. 210, 1935), 27-38.

transition from the picture of the dog to one of a cat. By comparing the interpretations of the two groups to the series of pictures, it was discovered that the prejudiced group held to the first object significantly longer than the unprejudiced group. A second study using a gradually changing series of numbers produced a similiar reaction.

Attitudes affect conceptual abilities. Conceptual abilities are even more likely to be affected by attitudes of the reader. Crossen made a study to determine the relationship between the ability to read critically and the reader's attitude toward a topic. She discovered that "the critical reading performance of pupils favorable to a topic was not significantly different from that of pupils whose attitude was indifferent to the topic. However, the critical reading performance of those unfavorable to the Negro was definitely inferior to that of pupils indifferent to the Negro."² She concluded that an unfavorable attitude toward a topic of some personal and immediate concern tended to interfere with the critical reading of

¹D. Frenkel-Brunswick, "Intolerance of Ambiguity as an Emotional and Perceptual Personality Variable," Journal of Personality, XVIII (September, 1949), 108-143.

²Helen J. Crossen, "Effect of the Attitudes of the Reader Upon Critical Reading Ability," Journal of Educational Research, XLII (December, 1948), 289-298.

material about that topic. Moreover, the more personal, immediate or intense the feeling, the greater the likelihood that it would prove a barrier between the reader and an accurate interpretation of the material to be read.¹

Attitudes affect selection. Attitudes to a great extent determine what the student reads and how he reacts to the reading. Betts points out that favorable attitudes increase interest in a subject, and therefore, it is more likely that the student will select materials to read about this topic.² While on the other hand, a negative attitude about a topic will lessen the desire to read about that subject.

Betts also pointed out that an individual's attitudes and reading selections are modified by peers.³ A personal observation exemplifies this process. A student's friends were reacting violently to the United States' involvement in the war in Viet Nam. The friends were actively protesting against the involvement. However, the student's parents were at the other extreme, being for the involvement and supporting the war. The student reacted to the conflict of ideas of those close to him by refusing to

¹Ibid.

²Emmett A. Betts, "Reading Is Thinking," The Reading Teacher, XII (February, 1959), 150.

³Ibid.

acknowledge the existence of the war. When the topic was brought up, he left. He avoided reading any newspaper or magazine articles or books about the war. Because his attitude toward the war could reach neither extreme of his peers, he developed a negative attitude toward the topic and avoided it.

Attitudes affect retention. "Attitudes affect another area closely related to reading--memory, or the retention of what is read."¹ Research shows that readers tend to remember the facts that support their viewpoint or attitude but to forget those facts that disagree. This process of forgetting can occur even after the disagreeable facts were acknowledged in the original reading. Or the student might reject all arguments or facts that disagree with his views initially when he has definite preconceived ideas.²

It appears that "self preservation is a strong characteristic of attitudes."³ Once formed, attitudes resist change. Therefore, the reader, consciously or unconsciously, does not want to acknowledge the validity

¹Josephine A. Piekarz, "Attitudes and Critical Reading," Critical Reading, Martha L. King, Bernice D. Ellinger, Willavene Wolf, editors (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1967), p. 75.

²Ned D. Marksheffel, Better Reading in the Secondary School (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1966), p. 255.

³Ibid.

of the facts which disagree with his established attitudes.

Teaching methods to decrease the attitudinal effects.

"Critical reading--and critical thinking, too--depends upon the teacher's ability to encourage and develop it, not on the children's ability to grasp it."¹ Although intelligence and experience may limit the degree of critical reading that the student may achieve, all students should be taught the critical reading skills.

Since attitudes and beliefs are products of years of experience and living, it not a simple task to expect a student to disregard those which are incorrect.² Rather it is important that the teachers at each grade level help the student develop unbiased attitudes and beliefs. This can be done by making the students support their statements with facts. And by learning and using the critical reading skills, the student will be able to determine how valid the material he reads is--thereby, avoiding the development of incorrect attitudes and beliefs through reading.

Since the student's interpretation of a selection depends upon the attitudes that he takes to it, the preparation for reading includes the assessment of attitudes

¹Anna Waltzman, "The Early Grades," Grade Teacher, LXXXVII (March, 1970), 37.

²Marksheffel, op. cit., p. 256.

toward the topic.¹ It should not be considered the teacher's task to change these attitudes. However, she must make the student aware of the attitudes he possesses and show him the effects of these attitudes on his reading comprehension, selection, and retention.

In an effort to show the students the effects of attitudes on what they remember, the following exercise may be used. After spending some time discussing and reading about a controversial subject such as the legalization of abortion, the teacher could either select or ask for volunteers of two students for this experiment. One student must be for the legalization of abortion and the other against it. The entire class should be given a copy of the material about this topic that is to be read for the experiment. Without telling the students the expected results, the two students are asked to write on the blackboard in separate columns the facts that they remember from the material that they have just read. It will be discovered that the first facts and probably the majority of facts recalled by the student who is for the legalization of abortion will be those that support his attitude; the facts recalled by the other student will be those that support the negative side. In this manner the students are able to see that attitudes and opinions do affect what they remember.

¹Betts, loc. cit.

In addition to using such an exercise which is specifically for showing the effects of attitudes, other materials prepared for teaching the critical reading skills can be used very effectively to deal with attitudes. The appendix lists some films, filmstrips, texts and workbooks recommended for teaching the critical reading skills at the junior and senior high school levels.

SUMMARY

"The ultimate goal of reading instruction is to develop independence so that the reader can, in the privacy of his own study, read materials in a critical and creative fashion."¹ To achieve this goal, the teacher must understand all of the factors which affect and influence critical reading.

This report attempts to present these factors and their influence. A summation of the relationship of reading to critical reading is presented. An attempt is made to show the importance of critical reading, and what skills it involves. Several requirements--intelligence, experience, and purpose--are given. Some obstacles to the teaching of critical reading, such as 1) the use of a single textbook, 2) the "halo effect" attached to the printed word, 3) the desire to avoid controversial

¹R. L. Cramer, "Setting Purposes and Making Predictions: Essential to Critical Reading," Journal of Reading, XIII (January, 1970), p. 259.

subjects, 4) the emphasis on conformity, 5) the influence of attitudes and prejudices, are given.

Since one of the major factors or obstacles working against critical reading is the reader's attitude, some of the effects of attitude are examined. These include the effects of attitude on 1) the reader's perceptual abilities, 2) his conceptual abilities, 3) the selection of material that he reads, and 4) his retention of information presented in this material. Although it is not considered the teacher's responsibility to change these attitudes, her role in helping the student form attitudes and beliefs is presented. Finally, several teaching methods which may decrease the effects of the reader's attitudes on his critical reading abilities are examined. In conclusion, enough research has been done showing the importance of the effects of attitudes on critical reading that all teachers should be informed of this influence.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

AUDIO-VISUAL AIDS, TEXTS, AND WORKBOOKS
OF USE IN TEACHING CRITICAL READING¹Films

How to Judge Authorities. Training in evaluating sources of statements. Jr. and Sr. High School. 11 minutes. Coronet.

How to Judge Facts. Points out common errors in thinking and logic and the dangers of assumptions based on these. Jr. and Sr. High School. 11 minutes. Coronet.

How to Read Newspapers. Stresses the importance of critical evaluation in newspaper reading. 11 minutes. Coronet.

Literature Appreciation. A series of films emphasizing appropriate ways of reading various literary forms. Separate films on reading essays, novels, plays, poetry, etc. 11-13 minutes. Coronet.

Pathways to Reading. The film "Was It Worth Reading?" in this series may be used to evoke critical reactions. For intermediate-Jr. High School. C-B Educational Films.

Propaganda Techniques. Discussion of propaganda techniques as found in politics. 10 minutes. New York University.

Filmstrips

How to Read: To Understand, to Evaluate, to Use. In cartoon style, attempts to promote more intelligent reading. SVE.

How to Read Literature. Six filmstrips stressing the structure of literary forms such as the play, short story, novel, etc. Popular Science.

Mass Communication Series. Four filmstrips on common media of mass communication: their impact and effects. For Junior High School to College. Young America.

¹George D. Spache, Toward Better Reading (Champaign, Ill.: Garrard Press, 1961), pp. 96-97.

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ATTITUDINAL EFFECTS ON CRITICAL READING

by

DEANNA DEE SIPPLE

B.S., University of Kansas, 1967

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
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The purpose of this report is to present some of the effects of attitudes of a reader on critical reading. A brief summation of the relationship of reading to critical reading is presented. An attempt is made to show the importance of critical reading, and what skills it involves. Several of the requirements for critical reading and three approaches for teaching critical reading are given.

There are factors which work against the effectiveness of critical reading. One of the major factors is the attitude of the reader. Some of the effects of attitude on critical reading are examined. These include the effects of attitude on 1) the reader's perceptual abilities, 2) his conceptual abilities, 3) the selection of material that he reads, and 4) his retention of information presented in this material. Finally, several teaching methods which may decrease the effects of the reader's attitudes on his critical reading abilities are examined.