

MASTEROPPGAVE

How do pupils at an upper secondary school in Østfold County
respond to literature in the English classroom?
Do they experience the joy of reading?

Utarbeidet av:
Claudine Wauthier

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how pupils at an upper secondary school in Østfold County in Norway respond to the use of literary texts in the English classroom. How do they relate to the English literary texts which they read in class? Do they enjoy reading them or do they find reading English literature and the connected school tasks boring?

In order to study how pupils relate to English literary texts I designed a qualitative survey looking into pupils' reading habits and interests, as well as their attitudes toward English literary texts read in school. I also reported on the use in my English classes (59 pupils at upper secondary school level, both general and vocational lines of study) of various literary texts (song lyrics, short story or novel extract, and an entire novel) with a reader response methodology, especially readers' diaries and reader response essays. However, before I started examining the data collected through the survey and the pupils' responses to texts, I looked into what the English subject curriculum says about reading English literature. I also referred to various studies about extensive reading, while stating that my own research focus would be on the aesthetic experience of reading based on reader response theories. I described the reading process and presented a developmental model of response to reading. I argue for an aesthetic stance in reading literary texts, which I believe is most likely to promote interest for reading and enjoyment.

My findings from the pupils' survey indicate among other things that the literary texts read in school often do not engage the pupils' interest and that pupils generally read few English books but spend a lot of time reading English material online. This represents a challenge for teachers who need to find ways to motivate pupils for reading literature which they will feel is relevant and interesting. Working with the reader response methods was generally a positive experience for the pupils involved and many of their texts show evidence of an aesthetic approach, though no definitive conclusion can be drawn from the pupils' evaluation survey of the teaching schemes.

Due to the limited number of participants the results presented in this thesis are not automatically transferable. They only show how my pupils responded to reading particular literary texts during a limited observation period. Large-scale follow-up surveys and implementation of reader response teaching schemes over time would be necessary to ensure transferability. Other implications for teaching are also discussed prior to the conclusion of this thesis.

Sammendrag

Målet for denne masteroppgaven er å studere hvordan elever på en videregående skole i Østfold forholder seg til bruk av litterære tekster i engelsk undervisning. Hvordan forholder de seg til de litterære tekster på engelsk som leses i klasserommet? Liker de å lese dem eller synes de at å lese engelsk litteratur og å arbeide med relaterte oppgaver i skolen er kjedelig?

For å studere hvordan elever forholder seg til engelsk litterære tekster, satte jeg opp en kvalitativ spørreundersøkelse om elevenes lesevaner og interesser, og om deres holdning til litterære tekster på engelsk som leses i skolen. Jeg gjorde også rede for bruken av forskjellige litterære tekster (sangtekster, novelle eller romanutdrag, og en hel roman) ut ifra en leserespons metodologi i mine engelskklasser (59 elever på videregående skole nivå i både studieforberedende og yrkesfaglige studieretninger). Men før jeg begynte å analysere dataene fra spørreundersøkelsen og elevenes responser til tekster, så jeg på hva læreplanen i engelsk sier om å lese engelsk litteratur. Jeg refererte også til diverse studier om ekstensiv lesing mens jeg gjorde det klart at mitt eget fokus ville være på den estetiske leseopplevelsen basert på leseresponsteoriene. Jeg beskrev leseprosessen og introduserte en utviklingsmodell for leserespons. Jeg argumenterte for en estetisk tilnærming ved lesing av litterære tekster, som jeg tror er mest egnet til å fremme leseinteresse og leseglede.

Mine funn fra elevundersøkelsen viser blant annet at de litterære tekstene som leses i skolen ofte ikke treffer elevenes interesser og at elever generelt leser få bøker på engelsk, men at de bruker mye tid på å lese engelsk stoff online. Dette er en utfordring for lærere som må finne måter å motivere elevene for å lese litteratur som de vil finne relevant og interessant. Å arbeide med leseresponsmetodene var generelt en positiv opplevelse for de involverte elevene og mange av deres tekster vitner om en estetisk tilnærming, selv om ingen definitiv konklusjon kan trekkes ut ifra elevenes evalueringundersøkelse av undervisningsoppleggene.

På grunn av det begrensede antallet deltagere er ikke resultatene som presenteres i denne avhandlingen automatisk overførbare. De bare viser hvordan mine elever responderte til lesing av visse litterære tekster innen en begrenset observasjonsperiode. For å sikre overførbarhet av resultatene, ville det være nødvendig å gjennomføre en stor kvantitativ oppfølgingsundersøkelse samt å gjennomføre leseresponsundervisningsopplegg over tid. Andre implikasjoner for undervisningen diskuteres også før konklusjonen.

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“Reading makes immigrants of us all. It takes us away from home, but more important, it finds homes for us everywhere.” (Jean Rhys, West Indian novelist, 1890-1979)

“The greatest gift is the passion for reading. It is cheap, it consoles, it distracts, it excites, it gives you knowledge of the world and experience of a wide kind. It is a moral illumination.”(Elizabeth Hardwick, American literary critic and novelist, 1916-2007)

1. Introduction

Anyone with an interest in literature will agree with the above cited quotes: reading takes us away on a journey, opens new worlds to us, reveals unknown territories and makes us settle into new homes. The person who has been smitten by the passion for reading has no problem understanding that there is no better guide into a new culture and a new language than reading literature.

Using literature as a means of introducing pupils to a new language and its culture has a long tradition in Norwegian schools. However, it remains to be proven whether school has succeeded in its endeavour to reveal to pupils the treasures of literature. In this thesis I will try to examine how Norwegian upper secondary school pupils relate to literature in the English classroom: does literature open new worlds to them, does it “console, distract, or excite” them, does it give them “knowledge of the world and experience of a wide kind”? Or do the pupils, in the most extreme cases, relate to literature as a necessary evil, that they have to accept as an inevitable part of school life?

Several scholars (Blair; Day and Bamford; Faye-Schjøll; Hellekjær; Melby; Waring) emphasize in their works the need for extensive reading in English in order for the pupils to develop the reading skills, fluency and speed which will prepare them for their further education. Since many of the course books used in college and university are in English good reading skills in English, they claim, are essential in coping with the demands of higher education; as a consequence, poor reading skills in the English language may have huge

repercussions on the students' academic lives and later professional prospects. Their studies demonstrate that there is a strong connection between the amount a person reads and his or her language proficiency. Richard Day and Julian Bamford in particular advocate the use of extensive reading programmes, which is far from Norwegian school habits. My focus, however, will be on the *aesthetic* aspect of reading, the experience of reading itself rather than on the quantitative aspect, although I believe that pupils who have experienced the joy of reading will, hopefully, continue to read for the rest of their lives. There need not be any contradiction between reading for joy and reading a lot, on the contrary.

My own interest in literature prompted me to do research in this field. During the 2011 spring term I wrote a term paper focusing on the use of literary texts in the English classroom (Wauthier 2011). The paper examined how Norwegian teachers in an upper secondary school used literary texts in their teaching of English as a foreign language, more particularly in the programmes for general studies (vg1) and vocational studies (vg2), which mark the end of English instruction as a common core subject in Norwegian schools. The research revealed in particular that most teachers rely a lot on the textbooks in their teaching. Furthermore, traditional and text-centered methods of teaching, like text summaries and comprehension questions, were still very popular among many teachers. Few of them used a conscious reader response approach and tasks like reading diaries were largely ignored by the majority. In brief, English literature was used as a means of teaching about the language, not as a goal in itself, but this is no surprise and is to be expected when literature is just one of the elements composing a course and not the main target.

These findings made me curious; I wanted to investigate further into how the *pupils* viewed literary texts in the English classroom, and this is the focus of the present master's thesis. How do the pupils relate to the literary texts they meet in their English lessons? Do those texts motivate them to read more? Do they experience the "joy of reading" which is one of the goals expressed in the national curriculum? In order to answer these questions and many more I designed a survey for the pupils. This survey aimed to investigate the pupils' reading habits, their reading background and environment; since the pupils' tuition was largely derived from the textbooks, I also wanted to get feedback on their attitudes to the texts used in the English lessons.

In addition to the pupils' survey I concentrated in my own English classes on having the pupils use a reader response approach in their encounter with literature. Inspired by the reader response theories of Louise Rosenblatt and Wolfgang Iser in particular, I firmly believe that a text is created in the meeting with the reader, and that there are as many texts as there are readers. Rosenblatt distinguishes between two different kinds of reading, efferent reading, which aims at retrieving information from a text, and aesthetic reading, which focuses on the unique engagement with the text: "the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text" (Rosenblatt, *The Reader* 25). In Rosenblatt's transaction theory the reader is not a passive recipient but each encounter between a reader and the text is a unique event (ibid. 35). The reader creates his own meaning by bringing into the text "personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition" and "the same text will have a very different meaning and value to us at different times or under different circumstances" (Rosenblatt, *Literature* 30; 35). In the aesthetic experience of reading the ultimate aim is to "help human beings ... to discover the pleasures and satisfactions of literature" (Rosenblatt, ibid 34). Instead of asking "What does the author mean?" and looking up to the teacher as the sole owner of the right answers the readers ask themselves "What does the text say to me?" This approach fundamentally differs from a simple textual approach where the meaning is considered to be primarily "in" the text, not in the readers' responses (Beach 1-14). Even though many of the tasks proposed in the textbooks center on an efferent reading of literature (looking for information, answering questions, summing up plots, etc.) the teacher does not need to blindly follow the textbooks suggestions. Several guidebooks offer useful advice and ideas to make working with literature an interesting, varied and lively experience (Collie and Slater; Duff and Maley; Lazar). It is also fully possible to prioritize tasks where pupils are invited to respond to the literary texts by expressing their opinions and feelings.

The scope of this thesis does not allow for a comprehensive report on all the reader responses collected in my English classes during a school year. Among the many texts read in class I will therefore limit my analysis to the pupils' responses to a song, a short story or novel excerpt and a novel respectively. The novel chosen was *Holes*, by Louis Sachar, to which I had devoted a teaching project in one of my preliminary literature courses (Wauthier 2010). This thesis will account for the use of *Holes* in the classroom during two consecutive school years. I will explain how the literary project was used the first year and analyze the pupils'

responses as expressed in their reading diaries and subsequent essays. I will also outline how the project was adapted and modified in response to the pupils' feedback the first year in order to be presented to another class the next year. Further, I will examine whether the pupils' responses to *Holes* differ from those of the pupils from the previous year. The methodology, however, remained basically the same: class discussions, reading logs and reader response essays.

To sum up, this thesis will consist of the following chapters: after this introductory chapter one, chapter two will try to answer the question of why it is important for pupils to read literature, with support from the curriculum and various studies. Chapter three will focus on the survey carried out among my own classes during the school year of 2011-2012; this survey intends to gain information about the pupils' reading habits and their reactions to the reading material proposed in the programmes for general studies (vg1) and vocational programmes (vg2), that is to say the textbooks and other materials, novels, etc. The presentation of the pupils' survey will be followed by an analysis of its results. A significant part of this thesis will be devoted to the reader response approach and its use in the classroom: in chapter four, I will define the reader response approach, explain my rationale for choosing this approach and introduce my methodology. Chapters five, six and seven will focus on pupils' responses to songs, a short story or novel excerpt, and finally the novel *Holes* respectively.

Will the pupils' responses to literary texts cast new light on the results of the survey, or will they show discrepancies? Chapter eight will discuss these questions and examine the implications of the findings for the teaching of literature in the English classroom, and not least their impact on the lifelong process of reading. Finally, chapter nine will sum up the thesis and open up for further investigation.

Before going on to proper thesis matter I find it necessary to include some comments about the ethical aspects of my project and the protection of the participants' identities. At the start my tutor informed me that since my research project involved gathering personal data by using a computer I had to apply for permission through Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste or NSD, the Norwegian Social Science Data Services for all the Norwegian universities, university colleges and research institutes. Personal data is data which directly or indirectly can identify a person. In spite of precautions taken to protect the anonymity of the

participants (for example by using fictional names) the content of my research still made it subject to notification to the NSD. I therefore had to fill out and submit a notification form which included a comprehensive and detailed description of the project: its objective and scope, the sample involved, the data collection and content, the information given to the pupils sample, the sample consent, etc. Attachments containing the pupils' survey and the tasks they would be working with as well as information letters addressed to the school headmaster and to the pupils involved were enclosed. The parents' permission was not required by the NSD since all pupils in the sample were over 16 years old. The NSD examined the project, suggested a few minor changes (for example on how to guarantee the participants' freedom to opt out of the project at any time if they changed their mind) and gave me its permission; further permission was asked for and granted by the headmaster, before getting the pupils' consent to their taking the survey and allowing me to use their response texts in writing this thesis. The process was long and comprehensive, but almost all the pupils agreed to participate, with the exception of some who have an absence issue. When the project is completed the NSD will contact me again in order to check whether and how any sensitive personal information gathered has been deleted.

2. Why Should Pupils Read Literature?

The benefits of reading literature in the second language classroom are numerous: Alan Duff and Alan Maley point to linguistic, cultural and personal growth factors:

- 1) literary texts are authentic texts with a huge variety of registers, styles and genres at varying levels of difficulty; reading such texts will enhance vocabulary acquisition and contribute to a greater language awareness and accuracy;
- 2) literary texts reflect cultural diversity, raise awareness of ‘difference’ and offer manifold opportunities for developing tolerance and understanding;
- 3) literature involves affect and emotion at a deep level, and reading literature is motivating and enjoyable (5-6).

A number of other scholars, e.g. Joanne Collie and Stephen Slater, agree with these points (3-6). In addition to these aspects, literature encourages the development of the reader’s interpretive abilities and “educates the whole person”, as learners will gain increasing confidence in expressing their ideas and emotions in English through personal response. “They will feel empowered by their ability to grapple with the text and its language, and to relate it to the values and traditions of their own society” (Lazar 19). In addition to knowledge about oneself and human nature in general, literature “makes people think”, facilitates understanding of different cultures and values and thus contributes to better equip the readers for the society of the future (Papadima-Sophocleous 121).

It is therefore not surprising that reading literature is an established practice in Norwegian schools. Before examining what different scholars have to say about reading and literature and their effect on the pupils’ academic and personal development I turn to the English subject curriculum which provides guidelines for all teachers of English in Norwegian schools.

2.1 The Curriculum

I refer to my presentation of the English subject curriculum in my project about *The Use of Literary Texts in the English Classroom* where I examine what the curriculum says about literature and literary texts (Wauthier 2011, 4-7). Reading literature is an integrated part of the

curriculum but not a distinct subject. Literature is considered as a means of learning English but not an end in itself. In the general objectives of the subject, the curriculum states the following intention: “Literature in English, from nursery rhymes to Shakespeare’s sonnets, may instill a lifelong joy of reading and provide a deeper understanding of oneself and others. English texts, films, music and other art forms may also inspire the pupil’s own artistic expression and creativity in many genres and media”.

The paragraph describing the main subject area *Culture, society and literature* concludes by stating that “reading literature may also help to instill the joy of reading in pupils and provide the basis for personal growth, maturity and creativity”. Nowhere, however, is there any further precision as to how the pupils might develop a “lifelong joy of reading”, nor does the curriculum define the “joy of reading”.

Since the programmes for general studies (vg1) and the vocational education programmes (vg2) are the area of study of the present thesis it is interesting to turn to the specific *Competence aims after vg1* and *Competence aims after vg2*. We notice that literature is a part of the subject area *Culture, society and literature*, which states the following aims: “The aims are that the pupil shall be able to discuss and elaborate on English texts from a selection of different genres, poems, short stories, novels, films and theatre plays from different epochs and parts of the world” and “discuss literature by and about indigenous peoples in the English-speaking world”.

Thus, although literature is not the main component of these school programmes, it occupies an important, undeniable place and the teacher has a lot of freedom as to how much literature he or she is going to present to the pupils in order to reach the aims of the curriculum. It is also up to the teacher to decide which methodology to apply.

In order to understand why it is important for our pupils to read literature I will now give an overview of different scholars’ findings about literature and reading. I will first refer to what some studies have revealed about extensive reading in particular and reading in general; further, I will explain what happens in the reading process and analyze the consequences this may have for the literature classroom.

2.2 Studies about Extensive Reading

Norwegian pupils are poor readers. In PISA 2009 (Programme for International Student Assessment) their reading literacy is scored higher than the average for pupils in OECD countries, but it has not improved since 2000, and as far as voluntary reading of various types of paper-based reading material is concerned, both boys and girls spend less time on this than they did in 2000 (Kjærnsli and Roe 18). This is alarming news considering that readers develop their reading competence by reading: the more, the better, as put forward by numerous scholars who have researched the effect on the reader of intensive exposure to the written text (Blair; Day and Bamford; Faye-Schjøll; Hellekjær; Melby; Waring). In his dissertation Glenn Ole Hellekjær shows how badly prepared most Norwegian pupils are to meet the requirements of higher academic education where many of the course books are in English (2005). With support in several studies he argues that from primary and secondary education Norwegian students are used to “heavy reliance on the careful reading for detailed understanding” and are not able to adjust their reading strategies for other reading purposes. Many of them have had too little reading practice and too little instruction in reading strategies (ibid. 60-84). Consequently, they are unable to shift to the appropriate strategies required for different reading purposes. Given the importance of good reading skills in English a lack of proficiency may have dramatic consequences for their academic progression in higher education. In her master’s thesis Linn Hovd Faye-Schjøll recounts how appalled she was when she discovered that many upper secondary school teachers, far from teaching about reading strategies, revealed their ignorance of what those strategies consist of (2009).

Richard Day and Julian Bamford strongly advocate the position that “second language students, like first language children, learn to read by reading” (35). They recommend extensive reading as an approach to learning to read a second language both inside and outside the classroom and give useful advice on how to include extensive reading in any second language reading programme: if their goal is to become fluent readers, learners should read as much as is reasonably possible (84). Extensive reading in the second language classroom brings about the following benefits: increased second language reading ability, positive attitudes toward reading and increased motivation to read, gains in vocabulary and improved writing and spelling skills (ibid. 32-39).

2.3 The Reading Process

What is reading and how does it work? Hellekjær describes reading in general, as an “interactive process involving primarily lower level (bottom-up) processing, but also drawing upon higher levels (top-down)” (2005, 82). The reading process is a complex one which starts with the recognition and decoding of words (bottom-up) and draws upon the reader’s language skills and background content knowledge (top-down). Efficient, fluent readers combine both bottom-up processing, the relatively automatic decoding of written words, and top-down processing, in which they contribute with information they possess about the language, text types and background content (ibid. 60-84). This is relevant for reading both in the native language and in a foreign language like English. Knowledge of the language of the text, including vocabulary knowledge and grammar knowledge, is evident in the reading process but familiarity with a text type, for example, also facilitates its understanding (ibid. 71-74; Tornberg 83). Further, subject matter knowledge may allow the fluent reader to guess or infer the meaning of unknown words from context. According to Hellekjær too much of the instruction in Norwegian schools emphasizes the bottom-up aspect of reading where much attention is devoted to “careful reading for detailed understanding”, the typical intensive reading applied to textbooks (ibid. 80). Pupils need instruction in reading strategies and practice in extensive reading in order to acquire the automatic skills necessary to become fluent and efficient readers.

Returning to the specific focus of this thesis I will now examine the reading process from an aesthetic point of view. “What happens when we read stories?” In trying to answer this question Michael Benton and Geoff Fox tell us that “the reader does quite half the labour” (1). In this they echo Rosenblatt for whom “reading is a constructive, selective process over time in a particular context” and “meaning emerges as the reader carries on a give-and-take with the signs on the page” (Rosenblatt, *Exploration* 26). Wolfgang Iser elaborates on ‘gaps’ or ‘blanks’ in the text which the reader must try to fill in: the reader “is drawn into the events and made to supply what is meant from what is not said” (168). Benton and Fox write about children, “*Nine to Fourteen*” but their description fits any reader age category. When we read, they say, we enter the story-maker’s “secondary world” which is an imagined world with its own rules and ‘truths’. In order to experience the magic of this world the reader has to accept its rules and surrender to what is often in literature referred to as ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ (Ref. : Samuel Taylor Coleridge – *Biographia Literaria*, 1817. qtd. in ibid. 2-3). “The trick is to shut out our primary world to enter the secondary world” (Benton and Fox 4).

This secondary world is essentially made of mental pictures emerging from the meeting between the text and what the reader brings into the text: individual associations, memories, knowledge of literary texts and life experiences. The result is highly individual and shapes a unique meaning for each reader: “the writer shapes his images, via the use of words, into a text; the reader shapes the text, via the use of images, into a meaning” (ibid. 5). Images come and go and may disappear as we become ‘lost’ in a book (ibid. 4-6). During the reading process the reader keeps the viewpoint of an ‘insider’ though this viewpoint moves constantly (ibid. 9).

This view is echoed in Thomson’s ‘onlooker’ where the reader takes the role of a spectator in which “freed of the need to act, we can re-evaluate our own experiences and evaluate other people’s in the full light of the beliefs we have derived from living” (81). These reflective and evaluative processes are for the reader “deeply satisfying”: in the role of the ‘onlooker’ the reader can confront his/her world representation with those of authors, which may lead him/her to revise or refine his/her own (ibid. 81-82). The process of reading does not only imply a real author and a real reader, but also an *implied author* and an *implied reader*, which are constructs made up by the reader from the textual details; the implied author is “the kind of person the text implies the author is, and possessing the kinds of values the text implies the author has”; the reader must be able to relate to this ‘ideal’ author to become the implied reader: “the kind of reader that the real reader is invited by the implied author to become so as to participate in the production of the text’s meaning” (Thomson 112-113). The position of implied reader may involve adopting perspectives or attitudes that the real reader might resent for a while, a ‘willing suspension of resentment’ (ibid. 113).

Benton and Fox distinguish four phases in the reading process: feeling like reading, getting into a story, being lost in the book, and having an increasing sense of an ending. This implies that for reading to take place anticipation of pleasure is crucial (ibid. 11); then, in the second phase, the reader agrees to “play a game devised by the author” (ibid. 12); his fascination is paired with the need to experience a fitting conclusion. The process of *responding* involves four separate activities:

- 1) *picturing*, in which the reader creates in his mind images that may be ‘text-free’ or ‘text-bound’; these images may be used by the reader in narrative classroom activities like *retelling*, *analogizing* and *fantasizing*;

- 2) *anticipating and retrospecting*, in which the reader either looks forward, anticipating what is going to happen, or looks back and reflects upon the events so far;
- 3) *interacting*, by which the reader assimilates the text in his or her own experience, identifies with one or several of the characters and their actions or fate. Interacting may involve feelings of empathy, admiration, imitation and resemblance, or rejection;
- 4) *evaluating*, in which readers judge a story both during its reading and after it has been read. Evaluating includes comments on the skill of the author. (ibid. 13-15)

Benton and Fox's conclusion is without ambiguity: instead of emphasizing critical analysis and value judgments of stories the teacher must emphasize the act of reading and the expression of individual responses, since this is where delight in literature begins (18).

Beach operates with a comparable yet slightly different categorization (52-70). For him the response processes consist of:

- 1) *engaging*, which implies the emotions a text may provoke in a reader: involvement, sympathy, identification, empathy;
- 2) *constructing* an imagined world where they enter, but where they also can reflect on their previous knowledge and understanding;
- 3) *imaging* or *visualizing*, that is to say creating visual mental images of characters, places, actions in response to a text;
- 4) *connecting* past life experiences and events or previous reading to a current text;
- 5) *evaluating* or *judging* the quality of one's experience with a text, either from the point of view of certain expectations or according to aesthetic criteria.

Beach also advises readers to reflect on their own response to texts, a process which is difficult for many adolescents. This view is in line with Jack Thomson's findings, which will be discussed below (185-234).

2.4 A Developmental Model

Following written questionnaires answered by 1007 adolescents in 1978 and 1984 Thomson interviewed 51 of these (167-168). Basing his hypotheses on the work of reader response critics like Margaret Early, D.W. Harding and Jean Blunt, he set up a developmental model of response to literature with different process stages and strategies (360-361). According to this

model the reader develops his literary competence by going through six different stages, all postulating a basic enjoyment and elementary understanding. The stages are the following: “unreflective interest in action, empathizing, analogizing, reflecting on the significance of events (theme) and behavior (distanced evaluation of characters), reviewing the whole work as the author’s creation, and consciously considered relationship with the author”; this last stage includes “recognition of textual ideology, understanding of self (identity theme) and of one’s own reading processes” (360). Thomson has discovered that adolescents respond on the first three of these levels of reflection, but have difficulties reflecting on their responses. There seems to be a “progressive movement from close emotional involvement to more distanced reflective detachment, and from an interest in self to an interest in other people and the human condition”; the mature reader finds more and more satisfaction in “understanding the social, psychological, aesthetic, structural and ideological aspects of texts, as well as his or her own interpretative strategies” (153).

At stage one, *unreflective interest in action*, the readers are typically interested in “continuous action, spectacle and suspense” in which their heroes lead adventurous or romantic lives; their mental images are nourished by stereotypes from film and television and their expectations when reading concentrate on what will happen next in the short term (178). Descriptions of characters’ feelings are considered “boring” since “nothing is happening” (187). Not surprisingly, readers at this stage often find school texts boring too, because they are unable or unwilling to fill in the gaps in the texts and have little understanding of the conventions of fiction. They need to learn to “question the text” in order to become more reflective readers: “What is going on in your head while you are reading? What do you think might happen in this story?” (185-193).

Stage two, *empathizing*, engages the reader’s emotional involvement with the characters. This involvement reflects varying degrees of sensitivity, from a rudimentary understanding of a character’s feelings to a deeper psychological insight into his or her behavior. The readers at this stage understand why characters feel as they do and why they as readers react to these characters as they do. They “generate expectations about the characters’ feelings and motives” (197). At the most sophisticated level of empathizing the readers are able to reflect on the ‘otherness’ of fictional characters, sympathizing with them without feeling the same way themselves. The readers at this stage may be helped in their further development by “introducing them to more demanding and stimulating books” (179; 193-198).

At stage three, *analogizing*, the readers “draw on their repertoire of personal experiences, making connections between characters and their own life” (361). This leads to a greater understanding of themselves and others: they “compare themselves with the characters, learn about them from their own experience, and learn about themselves from the characters’ experiences” (200). Readers at this stage have developed a greater knowledge of literary conventions and boredom for them might mean for example predictable plots or endings: the questions they ask about the text are too easily answered (179; 198-203).

Readers at stage four *reflect on the significance of events and behavior*. They still empathize with characters but are also able to stand back and evaluate their behavior in the light of textual perspectives. In interrogating the text they formulate “expectations about alternative possible long-term outcomes” (361). They see literature as complex statements about the human condition and their questioning of the text, their filling in of the gaps is “more rigorous” (205). They see puzzles, enigmas in the text as fascinating gaps to fill and draw on their understanding of the patterns of different genres and on their own reading strategies to solve these (179; 203-209).

Reviewing the whole work as a construct is characteristic of stage five. In Thomson’s research, few pupils had reached this stage because they were not able to see the “individual writer’s role as artificer or pattern-maker, communicating a personal (and often subversive) interpretation of the human condition” (209). They believed their role as readers was to “unquestioningly accept the writer’s values and attitudes” rather than to confront them with their own representations of the world and to “continually question their own and the author’s values” (210). They were not able to see texts as “constructs of authors who had individual attitudes, interests and styles” (212). On the other hand, the mature readers who reach this stage reflect on the text by “drawing on their literary and cultural repertoire, interrogating the text to match the author’s representation with their own and recognizing the implied author” (361). Due to the quantity and quality of their reading they have attained a high level of critical sense, can identify the author’s ideology and recognize the text as one among many possible evaluations of human experience. Thomson claims that most of the literature teaching in schools operates at this level, placing demands on “distanced evaluation” and “reviewing the whole work as the author’s creation” on pupils who may not even have reached the stage of “analogizing” (223). This is a contradiction: in Thomson’s opinion, readers cannot reach the higher stages of reflective reading before they have enjoyed reading

at the more basic stages (180; 223-229; 230-234). This is the case in the Australian schools where Thomson did his research; there is no reason to believe that it is not the case in Norwegian schools as well. As we will see in chapter three the results of my pupils' survey seem to imply that many pupils at upper secondary school mostly relate to the first stage of Thomson's developmental level.

Stage six is defined as including a "consciously considered relationship with the author, recognition of textual ideology, and understanding of self (identity theme) and of one's own reading processes" (223; 360). Thomson sees it as a logical development of stage five: the readers "consider both the implications of the text's constructedness and the significance for them personally of their own ways of interpreting it" (223). The process strategies involved at this stage include "recognition of implied reader in the text, and the relationship between implied author and implied reader" as well as "reflexiveness, leading to understanding of textual ideology, personal identity and one's own reading processes" (361). As mentioned earlier, the implied author is "the kind of person a text implies the author is" and the implied reader is "the kind of reader the implied author invites the real reader to become" (ibid. 112-113). Thomson thinks that pupils rarely attain this stage because literature teaching in schools does not emphasize these processes. He further argues that one way of helping the pupils to develop their reflexiveness – and this is valid at all stages – is to invite them to write reading journals about what happens in their minds while reading. (179; 223-226).

Prerequisites at each stage of reading development, however, are enjoyment and elementary understanding (360). "Without pleasure, no one would learn from reading literature because without it no one would read" (154). The question is: what can we teachers do to enhance our pupils' reading pleasure?

2.5 Conclusion: a Lifelong Joy of Reading?

Writing about the joy of reading Daniel Pennac has formulated ten undeniable "reader's rights" which we allow ourselves as readers. However, these are the same rights we deny young people whom we claim we want to initiate into the joy of reading:

- 1) the right not to read
- 2) the right to jump over pages

- 3) the right not to finish a book
- 4) the right to read again
- 5) the right to read whatever we wish
- 6) the right to let oneself be influenced
- 7) the right to read anywhere
- 8) the right to skimread
- 9) the right to read aloud
- 10) the right to remain silent (83-84)

If these ten “reader’s rights” are the Ten Commandments leading to the joy of reading, we are all guilty of daily transgression. Ideally, our pupils should read as much as possible, and developing an interest in reading and literature is best implemented by letting them choose their own books, and drop those they do not like. Thomson joins the many scholars already mentioned under 2.2 who advocate extensive reading programmes in the context of language and literature teaching. Unfortunately, as far as I know, this is not a familiar practice in Norwegian upper secondary schools. Do primary schools and lower secondary schools implement wide reading programmes with their pupils? Are pupils at these levels given an opportunity to enjoy reading at the basic developmental stages? Can they develop their literary competence in a natural way through extensive reading, as advocates of extensive reading claim is the case (Thomson 230)? My experience as a teacher in upper secondary school does not qualify me to answer these questions. I can only analyze my own pupils’ status. Finding out about the quality and volume of their literary experience before upper secondary school would demand research exceeding the scope of this paper.

What can be done in order to avoid at least some of the errors which are so common in teaching literature in schools? Thomson’s developmental model suggests a few implications. Thomson places much of the blame for the “trouble” with the teaching of literature in school on the “ignorance of the perceived sequence of literary response” (180). Pupils who are only at the stage of unreflective interest in action (stage one) must be encouraged to progress and reach stages two and three before they can be expected to do literary analysis as demanded under stage five. Thomson calls this “expecting students to arrive without having travelled” (229). Demanding too much of pupils too early might reinforce their impression of their own “incompetence” and put them off reading as “boring” (227-228). On the contrary, realizing their own reading powers will make pupils more curious and motivated for reading. The good

news, according to Thompson, is that pupils can be taught how to reflect on their own reading strategies, and helped to move on to higher levels of reading (180).

Thomson suggests the need for a change in the role of the teacher. It is likely that the readers in any class will be at different stages of development and the teacher will have to start where the pupils are, encouraging each pupil to “begin from his or her present store of experience” (230). Teachers must not impose their own interpretations of texts on their pupils, but they can create the most favourable conditions for genuine response, both giving individual consideration to pupils and encouraging their co-operation with others on shared texts. Further, teachers should encourage pupils to evaluate their own reading (232). The pupils must also become aware of the artificiality of literature and their own creative process must be encouraged (232-233).

In my opinion, these processes are most likely to happen through the adoption of a reader response approach in reading. In chapters five to seven I refer to my experience applying reader response to the English classroom. Approaching literature this way for a limited period of time in the course of a school year may not be sufficient to turn all pupils into mature readers capable of reflexiveness at the highest stages, but hopefully it may give them a better understanding of what is going on in their minds while reading and maybe increase their curiosity and motivation for reading more. Before examining the reader response theories, in chapter four, I now turn to the survey I carried out about my pupils’ reading habits.

3. The Survey about the Pupils' Reading Habits

3.1 Presentation of the Survey

Thomson argues that teaching literature raises more questions than answers (10). There is, he writes, a “gigantic chasm” between what we claim to be teaching in literature and what most of the students are actually experiencing (ibid. 12). Do our pupils read for pleasure, or do they read because it is required at school? Does the reading material we provide them with speak to them about the issues they are interested in? These are some of the questions this chapter will try to shed a light on. I will briefly introduce the target respondents and present the survey before proceeding to an analysis of the answers collected through the survey.

I drew advice and inspiration for the survey set-up and questions from Sandra McKay (36-41) and Glenn Ole Hellekjær (*Acid*, 266-286). The target classes for the survey are the English classes I am teaching presently at an upper secondary school in Østfold County: one first-year class (vg1) of 29 pupils in the programme for general studies and two second-year classes (vg2) in vocational education programmes, 16 pupils in *Electricity and Electronic Studies* and 15 pupils in *Service and Trade Studies* respectively, and it is the same classes that have provided the reader-response texts which will be analyzed in chapters five, six and seven. Ideally, I should have collected 59 answers but I only got 52; more precisely, 52 pupils started the survey but only 49 completed it by answering all the questions, which gives the survey a 94.2% answer rate. Since participation on the survey was optional a few pupils chose not to participate. In addition, some never had a chance to consider taking the survey due to their high rate of absence from class. The fact that I am using my own classes as participants in the survey is referred to as a *sample of convenience*, and it is important that the group should be representative of the larger population (McKay 37). The upper secondary school in question is attended by about 1200 pupils, of whom approximately 500 are registered in the English courses in either a general or vocational programme of studies. The pupils I am teaching form a diverse group as far as ethnicity, interests and academic level are concerned. I believe they are quite representative for the larger local school population. It is also likely that the pupils' answers would be relatively comparable if the same survey were given to similar classes in a different school.

The survey's purpose was to collect honest answers to general questions about the pupils' reading habits, not to test their understanding of English questions in this context. Therefore, although the survey questions will be presented in English here, the survey itself was written in Norwegian in order to make it more "accessible" to the pupils (McKay 39). Norwegian is not the native language of all the pupils but it remains the language they are most exposed to in everyday life. Prior to collecting the pupils' answers the survey was tested by two neutral readers in order to register and correct any lack of clarity. This pilot test confirmed that answering the survey would not take more than ten minutes.

Due to the young age of my pupils I was conscious of the necessity to make the survey easy to answer and not too long. I designed ten questions of varying kinds. The survey starts with an introductory note which reminds the pupils about the information they have received beforehand and gives them a short overview of the content of the survey: two general questions about their reading habits and interests, three questions concerning their reading habits in English, four questions dealing with their response to literary texts in the English classroom, and finally some background data about the respondents.

Among the ten questions seven are close-ended, which means that the respondents can choose one of several specified answers; this form of question is easy to answer for the respondent; in addition, it provides uniformity of answers for the researcher, making analysis easier (McKay 39). Questions seven, eight and nine are open-ended questions which demand short answers from the respondents and aim at collecting richer, more detailed data; a drawback with open-ended questions is that less interested pupils might easily skip them.

Questions one and two are aimed at finding out about the respondents' general reading habits and interests. Question one is an alternative-answer question, where the respondents choose their answers from three drop-down menus. The first drop-down menu with the heading: *number of books in your home regardless of language* proposes these alternative answers: *None, 1-10, 11-50, 51-100, 101-250, 251-500*. The second drop-down menu offers the same answer alternatives to a question about *the number of English books in your home*. The third drop-down menu asks the question: *Were you read to when you were little?* The respondents can answer with one of three alternatives: *I can't remember, I don't think so; Yes, sometimes; Yes, every day*. These sub-questions were prompted by a belief that the reading environment at home and the first language reading attitudes may influence the second language reading attitudes (Day and Bamford 21-31). Australian studies referred to by Thomson also show a

connection between the reading environment at home and the development of an interest in reading (34). According to Gordon Wells, listening to stories is the most significant factor in the development of learning in pre-school children, as they develop a “sense of narrative so important in reasoning and making sense of the world as well as in learning to read and write” (qtd. in Thomson 79).

Question two is an attempt to find out which elements may determine whether a book will be popular with pupils. The close-ended question *What does it take for you to say that you like a novel or a short story?* has a checklist format. The pupils can tick several answers among the following: *The book must be easy to read, without too many difficult words; The story must be interesting and I must be able to find myself in it; The book must be full of suspense and action; I must be able to identify with one or several characters; When I read this kind of book I forget time and place; the book takes up important issues (war, love, racism, bullying...); The book should deal with a favourite topic (hobby like horse-riding, history, sport...)*. The need to identify with one or several characters who “are behaving like they would behave” and to “find themselves in the book” is according to Charles Sarland essential in getting pupils interested in a book (84). Question two also includes a comment field; here the pupils are invited to name the best book they have read so far; if they have forgotten its title, they can mention its topic and explain why the book made an impression on them.

Questions three, four and five deal with the respondents’ interest in English and their reading habits in English and are directly inspired by Hellekjær (*Acid*, 276-277, 281-282, 285). Question three is an alternative-answer question, where the respondents choose their answers from two drop-down menus. The first sub-question asks *How interested are you in English as a subject?* Here the pupils can choose between the following alternatives: *Very interested, Interested, Neutral, Not interested, I hate this subject*. The second drop-down sub-question asks, *How many English books have you read approximately, both at home and at school?* There are seven possible options: *None, 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-50, More than 50*. The respondents’ answers to question three might illustrate whether there is a connection between the pupils’ interest in English and the amount of reading they have done in English.

Question four is a Likert-scale question where the pupils have to rate the frequency (*Never, From time to time, Each month, Each week, Several times per week, Every day, Several hours each day*) of their reading of different types of English reading material (*books/novels,*

magazines and newspapers, material on the internet, including computer game instructions, lyrics, chatting, etc.).

Question five is also a Likert-scale question: *What do you usually do when you come across unknown words in reading English novels, school textbooks, magazines and newspapers, or in reading English on the Internet?* The alternatives proposed are the following: *Check the word in a dictionary; Guess the meaning of the word from my knowledge of the topic; Guess the meaning of the word from the reading context; Ask a teacher; Ask other pupils; Continue to read; Give up reading.* The pupils have to rate the frequency (*Never, Sometimes, Often, Very often*) of their reactions. The two last alternatives, asking how often the respondents *continue to read* and *give up reading* are actually the same question in different forms; they are meant to check the consistency of the responses and achieve reliability (McKay 41). There is also a comment field for additional comments closing question five.

Questions six, seven, eight and nine enquire about the pupils' response to the use of literary texts in the English classroom. It is difficult to measure the degree of enjoyment pupils experience through reading literary texts but these questions are asked in an attempt to do just that, or at least to get some qualitative response. For the respondents this is the most demanding part of the survey because these questions require a bit more reflection and even writing in the case of questions seven, eight and nine (short-answer questions). Question six is a close-ended question of the Likert-scale type with four answering options (*I fully agree, I partly agree, I partly disagree, I completely disagree*). The pupils are asked how nine different statements match their reading experience of literary texts (poems, short stories, novel excerpts from the textbooks or from the textbooks websites) in the English classroom. The statements they are asked to express their opinion about are the following: *The literary texts in the textbook treat topics that are interesting for teenagers, such as love, friendship, prejudices, loneliness, etc; I can identify with the characters in the textbook's literary texts; I learn about life and the world in reading the textbook's literary texts; I think that the textbook's literary texts take up universal and timeless questions; Some of the textbook's literary texts surprise me because things develop differently from what I had expected at the beginning; some of the textbook's literary texts provoke me because they collide with my values; Some of the textbook's literary texts seem too remote from my reality; I always find it exciting to read literature, and this also applies to the textbook's literary texts; I only read literary texts because they are a part of the English course.* Question six also includes a comment field where pupils can write down additional comments if they have any.

Questions seven, eight and nine are shaped according to the same pattern and are likely not to be answered by all the pupils, firstly because they require short answers, which is more demanding than ticking an answer among alternatives and secondly because not all pupils may have a positive attitude to literature to begin with. Nevertheless, it is all the more important to ask these questions and to get any feedback they may offer, either positive in the form of comments, or negative in the form of omitted comments. Question seven asks, *If you ever read a novel excerpt at school that made you want to read the whole novel please specify its title or topic in the comment field. Please also explain what it was that made you want to read more.* Question eight asks, *If you ever felt like reading more novels by a writer you “became acquainted with” at school please specify the title of the school text or topic in the comment field. Please also explain what attracted you in this writer’s work.* Finally, question nine asks, *Among the literary texts (poem or song, short story or novel excerpt) we have worked with so far in the English lessons, which did you like best? Please explain briefly why in the comment field.*

Question ten only intends to gather respondent information, or demographics, and as McKay suggests this close-ended question is placed last in order to be less intrusive (50). The pupils have to choose appropriate answers from six drop-down menus with the following headings: *Gender (boy, girl), Study programme (general, vocational), Mother tongue (Norwegian, English, other European language, other non-European language), I speak English at home (No; Yes, all the time; Yes, almost all the time; Yes, 50% of the time; Yes, ¼ of the time; Yes, less than ¼ of the time), How many years of English tuition have you had before this school year? (1-2 years, 3-5 years, 6-9 years, 10 years, More than 10 years), How many hours of English have you had on average per week before this school year? (1 hour a week, 2 hours a week, 3 hours a week, 4 hours a week, 5 hours a week, More than 5 hours a week).* Finally, there is a comment field where the respondents can complete the answers they have given through the drop-down menus if necessary.

3.2 Analysis of the Survey Results

I begin my analysis of the survey by examining the profiles of the respondents. As mentioned under 3.1, 52 pupils answered the survey; more precisely, 52 pupils started the survey but only 49 completed it by answering all the questions, which gives the survey a 94.2% answer rate. As revealed in the demographics collected in question ten of the survey, 65.3% of these

respondents are boys, and 34.7% are girls. The fact that boys are more represented than girls is certainly linked to the fact that one vocational class consists of 15 boys and only one girl, the other classes involved in the survey being equally divided between genders. 52.1% of the respondents are attending the programme for general studies, while 47.9% are attending vocational programmes. As mentioned under 3.1, 29 pupils in general studies and 31 pupils in two vocational classes responded to the survey. However, the percentage of respondents belonging to general studies is higher than that in vocational classes; this result can be traced to a higher absence rate in one of the two vocational classes.

The vast majority of respondents, 83.7% have Norwegian as their mother tongue. 6.1% have another European language as their mother tongue, while 10.2% have a non-European language as their mother tongue. 81.6% do not speak English at home; 2% speak English at home half of the time; 4.1% speak English at home about a quarter of the time, and 12.2% answer that they speak English at home less than a quarter of the time. The respondents who speak English at home give the following additional comments: “I don’t usually speak English at home, but we have American relatives. When they visit us, we only speak English”. “We are a regular Norwegian family but we think it is fun to sometimes only speak English in order to practice and maintain our English”. “To the question *Do you speak English at home?* I answered ‘yes’ in the context of games, chatting etc.”. “I occasionally speak English at home if I play games on the Internet”. “I speak English at home half of the time since daddy has a girlfriend from the Philippines. Since she is learning Norwegian we must help her by translating lots of things from Norwegian to English and English to Norwegian”. Because of the ethnic diversity of my classes I would have thought that the vast majority who do not speak English at home must be Norwegian-born pupils, while the minority who speak English to varying degrees probably do so because their families use English as a lingua franca in a multi-lingual context; these comments thus surprised me a little.

To the sub-question *How many years of English tuition have you had before this school year?* 4.1% answer 1-2 years; 2% answer 3-5 years, 16.3% 6-9 years; 51% answer 10 years, and the remaining 26.5% answer more than 10 years. This means that more than three quarters of the respondents have had ten or more years of English tuition before this school year. To the question *How many hours of English per week have you had on average before this school year?* the answers are as follows: 28.6% have had an average of 2 hours a week; 38.8% have had an average of 3 hours a week, 18.4% 4 hours a week, 12.2% 5 hours a week, and 2%

more than 5 hours a week. The divergence of the answers to the last two sub-questions may be explained by the fact that some pupils were not born in Norway, have lived in other parts of the world or belong to ethnic minorities, and have therefore had varying tuition in and experience of English. Two pupils commented on their answers in the following way: “I am a bit unsure about how many hours of English I have had on average per week, but I think it is 3-4 hours”; “I started with English in the first class. I am a boy who thinks English is not boring, but not quite funny either. Quite OK if you see what I mean”.

To sum up, we see that the group of respondents is heterogeneous like society at large; we notice that no respondent says English is their mother tongue; for all of them, English is a language they are in the process of learning.

We now turn to the more specific questions in the survey, beginning with question one which aimed at identifying factors in the pupils’ home background which might have an influence on their reading habits; the first sub-question demanded that pupils choose from a drop-down menu how many books of any language there were totally in their homes. The results are the following: 2% reported that there were no books at all in their homes; 6% reported 1-10 books; 30% chose the alternative 11-50 books; 14% answered 51-100 books, 22% reported that there were 101-250 books in their homes, and 26% chose the option 251-500 books. This question was deemed difficult to answer by some pupils, as they were unsure about the number of books their home possessed, and I may not have formulated it concretely enough. Roughly, one can estimate that 50 books are sufficient to cover one single bookshelf of one meter’s length, and I could have included this information in the question. I was a bit surprised though at the results: as many as 30% of the respondents chose the alternative 11-50 books. The number of answers to be found among the first three alternatives suggests that a significant number of the respondents (38%) live in a home environment where there are few books (less than 50, one full bookshelf). Still, almost half of the respondents (22% + 26%) can be said to be surrounded at home by a larger quantity of books, 101-250 (corresponding to two to five one-meter-long bookshelves) or 251-500 books (five to ten one-meter-long bookshelves) respectively.

The second sub-question concerned the number of *English* books there were in the respondents’ homes. The alternatives to choose from were the same as in the first sub-question and the answers were divided as follows: 2% reported that there was not a single English book at home; 48%, that is to say almost half of the respondents, reported 1-10

English books; 34% chose the alternative 11-50 English books as their answer; 14% answered that there were 51-100 English books in their homes (which would cover one to two one-meter-long bookshelves), and 2% answered 101-250 books (roughly equivalent to two to five one-meter-long bookshelves). No one had more than 250 English books at home. If these answers reflect reality, they suggest that few pupils are surrounded by a significant number of English books at home. On the contrary, for half of them, English books are a scarce commodity at home.

The third sub-question asked whether pupils had been read to when they were little. Their answers were as follows: 8% answered *I can't remember, I don't think so*; 66% answered *Yes, sometimes* and 26% answered *Yes, every day*. As mentioned in 3.1, several studies show a connection between being read to and the development of one's own interest in reading (Day and Bamford 21-31; Thomson 34; 79). Elaine Pascoe discovered among other things that "the heavy readers had family members who read to them often, while those who read least were rarely read to by others" (qtd. in Thomson 34). The answers given by the pupils suggest that the great majority has experienced the joy of being read to, but only a quarter of the respondents, more precisely 26%, testified to having been read to daily in their childhood. It will be interesting to connect the facts revealed by the pupils' answers in question one to the rest of the survey findings and to trace any link between the amount of reading done by the pupils and their reading environment and background.

Question two asked, *What does it take for you to say that you like a novel or a short story?* Some of the results may be interesting to look at from a gender perspective, and comments on this aspect will be included where relevant; otherwise, the results concern the totality of the respondents regardless of their gender. The following answers were given: more than two-thirds of the respondents, precisely 67.3% (35 pupils) gave as one of their possible answers that *the book must be full of suspense and action*; filtering the answers according to gender reveals minor differences in the tastes of boys and girls as there are fewer girls (64.7%) than boys (71.9%) who appreciate books that are full of suspense and action. 46.2% of the respondents (almost equally divided between boys and girls) answered that *the story must be interesting and I must be able to find myself in it*; 38.5% answered *the book must be easy to read, without too many difficult words*, and this was more important for girls (47.1%) than for boys (34.4%); 32.7% altogether considered that *the book should deal with a favourite topic (hobby like horse-riding, history, sport...)*; 30.8% of the respondents ticked equally the alternatives *When I read this kind of book I forget time and place* and *The book takes up*

important issues (war, love, racism, bullying...); however, for both these alternatives girls (41.2%) are more represented than boys (25%); finally, only 11.5% of the respondents chose the alternative *I must be able to identify with one or several characters* and this figure is lower for boys (6.3%) than for girls (23.5%).

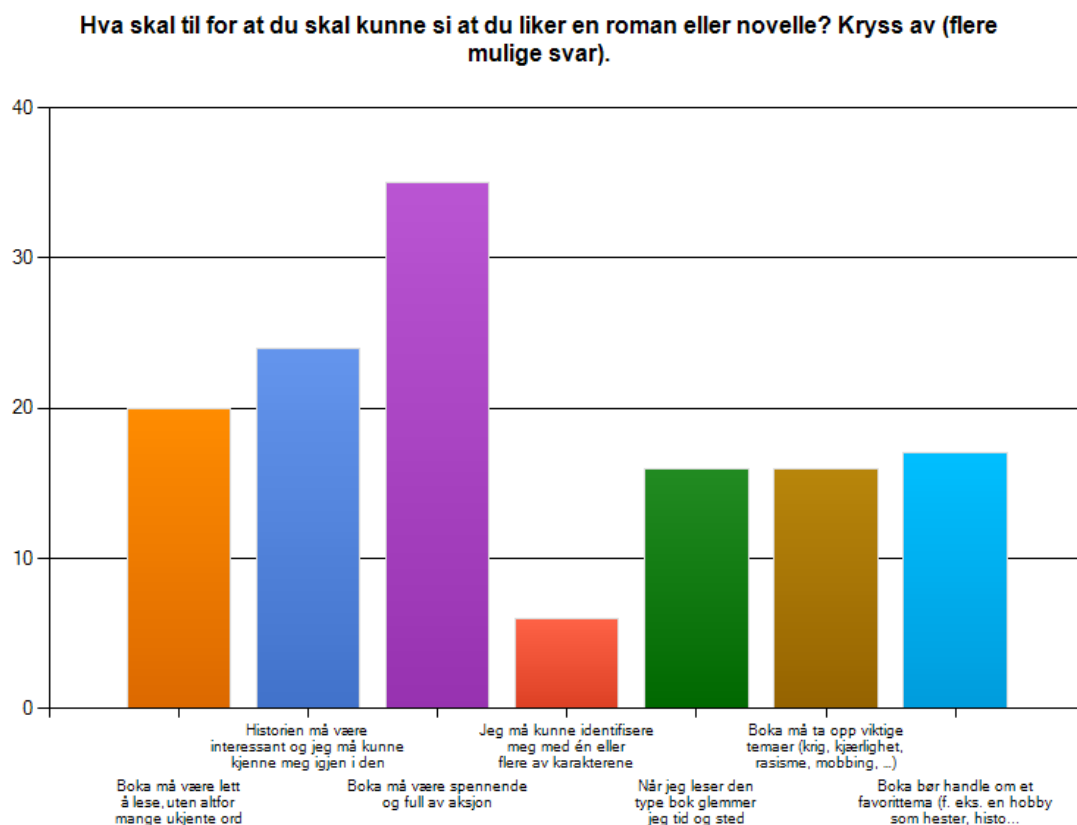


Fig. 1. Response count for question two, *What does it take for pupils to say that they like a novel or short story*. Source: SurveyMonkey.

A few comments on these choices may be necessary: first, the overwhelming majority, both girls and boys, consider it essential for a book to be full of suspense and action. Under 2.4 we saw that *unreflective interest in action* characterizes stage one in Thomson’s developmental model of response to literature; it is too early to draw any conclusion, but could it be that many pupils in upper secondary school mostly operate at stage one of reading? Further, as already mentioned in 3.1, one main condition to get pupils interested in a book is that they may identify with one or several characters and “find themselves in the book” (Molloy 155-156). This condition is confirmed by the 46.2% who answered that *the story must be interesting and I must be able to find myself in it*, and by the 32.7% who appreciate that *the book should deal with a favourite topic (hobby like horse-riding, history, sport...)*; on the

other hand, it seems to be contradicted by the small number (11.5%) of those who ticked *I must be able to identify with one or several characters*. The fact that 38.5% answered that *the book must be easy to read, without too many difficult words* confirms how important it is to give pupils books to read that are not too far above their linguistic level (Duff and Maley 6). In addition, 30.8% of the respondents are familiar with the experience of “being lost in a book” (Benton and Fox 4-6). However, this experience is more often recognized by girls (41.2%) than by boys (25%). Considering the time these pupils have spent at school and thus in contact with books, this low figure gives the literature teacher no reason to rejoice. What can be done to help pupils experience the joy of “being lost in a book”? Finally, an equal number of respondents, 30.8% prefer that *the book takes up important issues (war, love, racism, bullying...)*. The youngsters are interested in social and political issues; hopefully, only a few may know firsthand the reality of war, but issues like love, bullying and racism are everyday experiences for many; somehow, these issues are more important for girls (41.2%) than for boys (25%). To sum up, it seems that the boys and girls who answered this survey experience reading differently, probably also because they approach reading with different interests and different expectations.

An additional comment field asked the respondents to specify the best book they had read so far. In case they had forgotten its title, they were asked to specify its topic. They were also asked to specify why this particular book made an impression on them. 48 wrote comments in the comment field, among whom four commented that they never read books and one “did not remember”. The preferences of the other respondents are varied: among the most popular books are the *Harry Potter* books (six respondents), *Twilight* (three respondents), *Death Games* (three), *The Digital Fortress* by Dan Brown (two), *Narnia* (one); the success of the *Harry Potter*, *Narnia* or *Twilight* books which belong to fantasy literature is not a surprise; besides, other respondents say they like mystery/or crime novels, for example by Anne Holt (two), and one prefers to read comics (*Pondus*). Other titles mentioned are *The Human Mind* (psychology), *Silent Cries*, *A Walk to Remember*, *The Game*, *The Last Magician*, the *Percy Jackson* series, *Hunger Lies*, *Eragon*, *The Kite Runner*, *Sara’s Key*, *The Head Hunter*, *PS: I Love You*, *Dragonball Z*, *The Heavenly Man*, etc. The topics covered are also very varied; there are books about history (*The Hundred-Year Old who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared*; Svein Hazzel’s books about the Second World War; *Cosa Nostra* about the Sicilian Mafia); some deal with hobbies (*How to write a website*; books about cycling by Thor Hushovd and Dag Otto Lauritsen). This selection of books seems to support the trend shown

by the checklist answers to questions two: the young readers describe their favourite books as “exciting and full of action”, “interesting”, books that make them forget time and place, books about hobbies and about important issues like love, war, bullying, etc. Here are some comment extracts:

- about *Firestarter* by Stephen King: “... a really fantastic novel... The whole story is great. I think it made an impression on me especially because of the way it is written, because the author has an enormous talent to draw a detailed mental picture for me. You are drawn into the book and it feels like you are experiencing it all yourself, you get completely carried away”.
- about the *Harry Potter* books: “The first books were read to me as good-night stories and I have grown up with the main characters. It is about magic, friendship, love, mysteries, problems, war, taking responsibility and caring. Each book gets darker and more frightening and is adapted to older readers. It suited me fine since I grew up with the main characters... These books are books I am going to read through my whole life and I am going to read them to my children. Harry Potter has made my experience magical. I cannot imagine my life without Harry Potter”.
- about *The Suck Mark* (*Sugemerket* in Norwegian): “It is about a girl my age who lost her mother, she is bullied and is not very happy at home. She goes to the psychologist and likes to test limits. It impressed me because the girl looks so weak and helpless. But gradually she brings her life to the right path and then you realize that she is stronger than she thought herself”.
- about *The Kite Runner* and *Sara’s Key* (mentioned by the same respondent): “...very good books in difficult surroundings. I got a good overview about the wars in Afghanistan and how people reacted. .. I got a more comprehensive picture of how it was to be a Jew during the Second World War. It was exciting until the last page and impossible to give up reading”.
- about *The Digital Fortress*: “It was exciting, but hard stuff to read if you have to stop reading in the middle of a chapter. It was also difficult to stop reading because you got carried away by getting into the action from the first chapter. Another reason why I liked this book is that it was written by my favourite author Dan Brown”.

Question three was divided into two sub-questions. The first one asked, *How interested are you in English as a subject?* 46% of the respondents answered with the alternative *Interested*,

while 10% said they were *Very interested*, 28% chose the answer alternative *Neutral*, and 16% answered *Not interested*. Fortunately no one answered *I hate this subject*. More than half the respondents, more precisely 56%, thus claim that they are either interested or very interested in English as a school subject. The second drop-down sub-question asked, *How many English books have you read approximately, both at home and at school?* There were seven possible options: *None, 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-50, More than 50*. The highest percentage of pupils, 57.1% answered that they had read approximately 1-5 English books; 14.3% had read no English books at all, 10.2% had read 6-10 English books; 12.2% had read 11-15 English books, and 6.1% estimated that they had read 16-20 English books. No one chose the alternatives 21-50 or more than 50. These figures concerning an upper secondary school in Østfold County reflect the same tendencies as those revealed by Hellekjær's surveys (*Acid 228*). The results show that although more than half of the pupils consider themselves interested or very interested in English, approximately the same number had only read one to five English books, and this figure covers books read both at school and at home. Considering that 51% of them (question 10) have had ten years of English tuition, it must mean that the average Norwegian pupil at this upper secondary school in Østfold County has read from one to five English books within these ten years, which amounts to an average of one book per two years in the best of cases, or even fewer. Clearly, English teachers face a major challenge here: Norwegian pupils must be motivated to read many more English books.

In question four the pupils had to rate the frequency (*Never, From time to time, Each month, Each week, Several times per week, Every day, Several hours each day*) of their reading of different types of English reading material (*books/novels, magazines and newspapers, material on the internet, including computer game instructions, lyrics, chatting, etc.*). 46.2% of the respondents admitted never reading English books or novels, and another 46.2% read English books or novels from time to time. The remaining respondents divided their answers between *Each month* (5.8%) and *Several times per week* (1.9%). For boys only, the results were respectively 43.8% (*Never*) and 56.3% (*From time to time*), which means that there was not a single boy who read English novels more often than *from time to time*; for girls only the results were respectively 47.1% who *never* read English novels and 29.4% who read English novels *from time to time*; a small minority of girls read English novels *each month* (17.3%) and *several times each week* (5.9%). This tendency confirms the assumption that boys read less than girls (Molloy 111, Clark and Rumbold 12).

23.5% of the respondents never read English magazines and newspapers; 39.2% do so from time to time, 15.7% each month, 11.8% each week, 5.9% several times per week, and 3.9% every day. There are few significant differences between boys and girls, except for those who read newspapers and magazines each week (15.6% for boys, 6.3% for girls) or several times a week (3.1% for boys, 12.5% for girls).

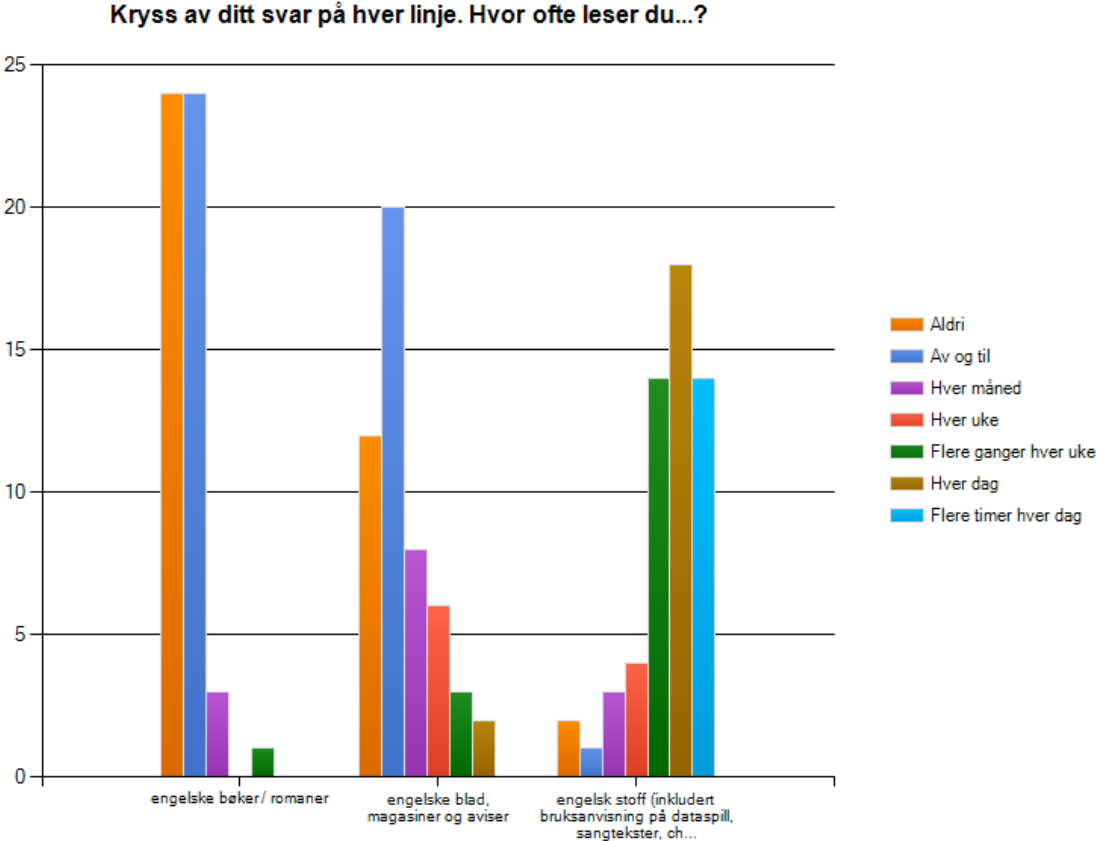


Fig. 2. Response count for question four, *How often do pupils read various reading material?* Source: SurveyMonkey.

The most positive figures concern English material read on the internet, including computer game instructions, lyrics, chatting, etc. Here 34.6% (with no significant differences between boys and girls) read this kind of material *every day*, and 26.9% (31.3% for boys and 17.6% for girls) do so *several hours each day*; 26.9% do so *several times per week*. These three categories together amount to 88.4% of the respondents; 3.8% *never* read English material on the internet; 1.95 do so *from time to time*, 5.8% *each month*, and 7.7% *each week*. As a conclusion, there is no doubt that a massive majority of the pupils who answered the survey spend quite a lot of time reading English material on the internet, while those who read more traditional material, like entire books or novels, magazines and newspapers, are a tiny

minority. In 1987 Thomson incriminated television as one of the main factors responsible for poor reading among children (19; 36); films, videos and the internet are now all competing to get our youngsters' attention and the figures collected above clearly show that the new media have brought about an undeniable change in the reading patterns of young people, and that online activities which involve reading are far more popular than "traditional" reading activities.

The intention of question five was to find out what pupils do when they come across unknown words while reading English novels, school textbooks, magazines and newspapers, or when they read English on the internet. Their reactions when facing unknown words are the following: 25% *never* look up the unknown words in a dictionary, 50% do so *from time to time*, 19.2% do so *often*, and 5.8% *very often*; 49% of the respondents *often* guess the meaning of words from their knowledge of the topic, while 9.8% do so *very often*, 39.2% *from time to time*, and 2% *never* do so; 48.1% *often* guess the meaning of words from the reading context, while 25% do so *very often*, 21.2% *from time to time*, and 5.8% *never* do so; the majority of the respondents (63.5%) ask a teacher *from time to time*, 9.6% do so *often* but 26.9% *never* ask a teacher; 27.5% *never* ask other pupils about unknown words, 51% ask a classmate *from time to time*, 31.4% do so *often*, and 17.6% *very often*.

The last two alternatives require some comments: asking how often the respondents *Continue to read* and *Give up reading* is actually the same question in different forms; these two alternatives could have been helpful to check the consistency of the responses and achieve reliability (McKay 41). However, analyzing the results made me aware that I should have included the frequency rate *Always* which is the opposite of *Never*. In their present form these last two alternatives may have been somewhat confusing, as the responses obtained show some discrepancy: there is only a small percentage, 7.8% who say that they *never continue reading*, which actually means that they give up, because of unknown words, while 43.1% continue reading *from time to time*, 31.4% continue reading *often*, and 17.6% continue reading *very often*, that is to say a total of 92.1% *continue reading*, either *from time to time*, *often* or *very often*. On the last check-list line 80.8% answered that they *never give up reading* when facing unknown words, while 15.4% do so *from time to time*, 5.85% *often*, and 1.9% *very often*, which combined represent a total of 23.1% who *give up reading* at least from time to time. An encouraging conclusion seems to be, anyway, that unknown words do not interrupt the reading of most pupils. This attitude is recommended by advocates of extensive reading who consider that checking unknown words in a dictionary hinders fluent reading; they

recommend that readers guess the approximate meaning of unknown words (Day and Bamford 93; Hellekjær, *Lesing* 6). Additional comments confirm this attitude: a respondent writes that he/she “usually understands the meaning through the context”, another “tries to continue reading in order to see if he/she understands”, and still another “often manages to understand the word without using any dictionary”. Two respondents boast that “I no longer find words I do not understand in English novels” and “I never had any problems with English words and expressions”, while the last one refers to Google Translate as a dictionary

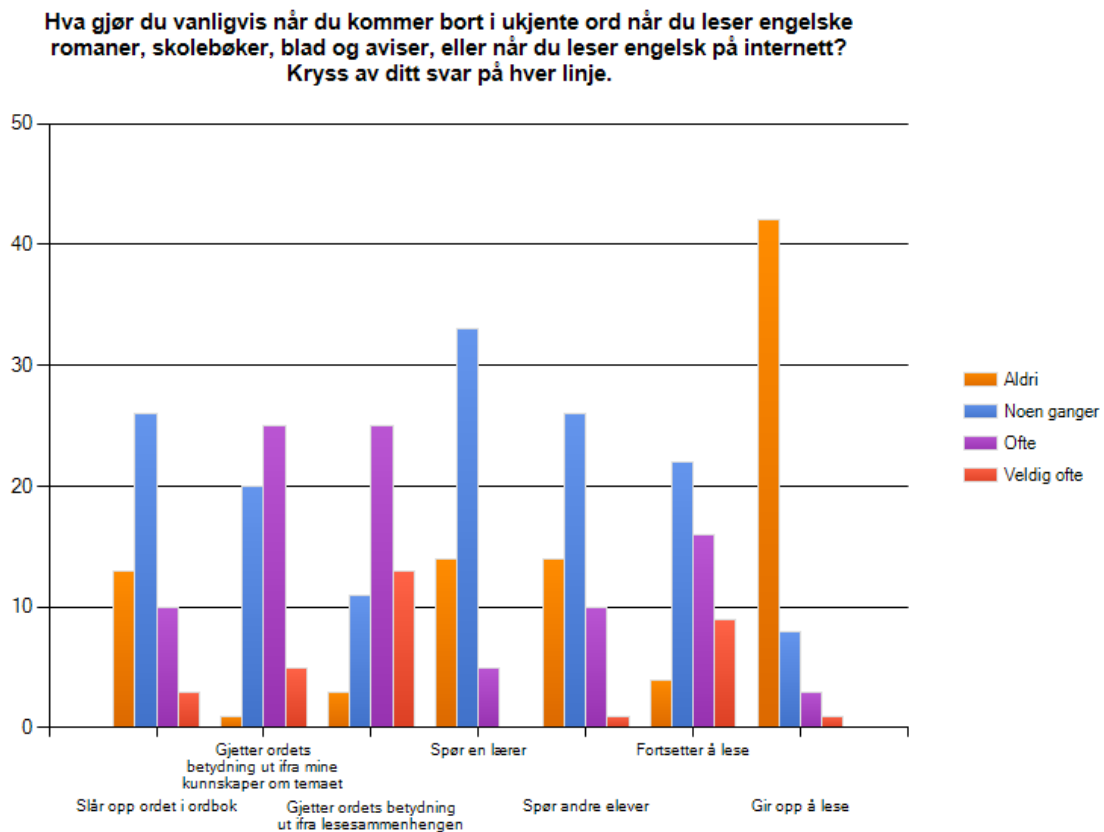


Fig. 3. Response count for question five, *What do pupils do when they come across unknown words?* Source: SurveyMonkey.

Questions six, seven, eight and nine enquire about the pupils’ response to the use of literary texts in the English classroom and were not answered by all the respondents. This was expected as questions seven, eight and nine are open-ended questions demanding somewhat lengthy comments. In question six the pupils were asked how nine different statements match their reading experience of literary texts (poems, short stories, novel excerpts from the textbooks or from the textbooks websites) in the English classroom and they answered by

choosing among four answering options (*I fully agree, I partly agree, I partly disagree, I completely disagree*). 48 answers were collected for this question.

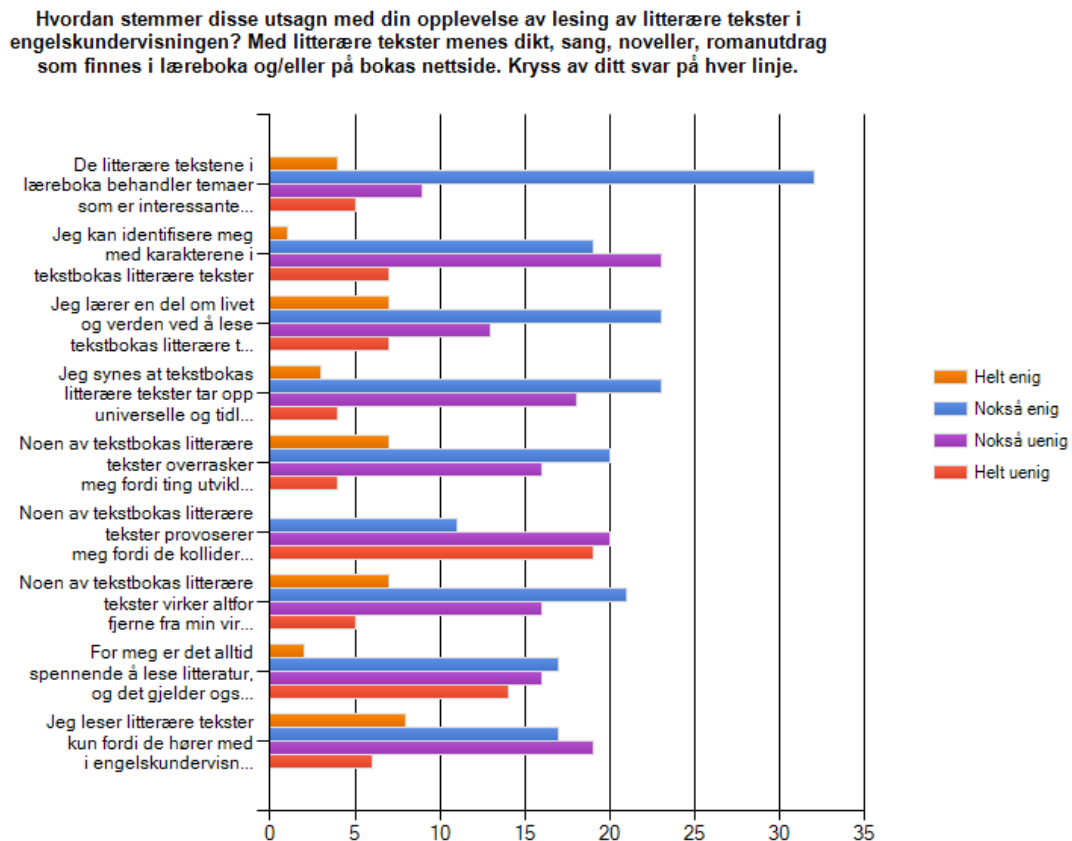


Fig. 4. Response count for question six, *How do these statements match the pupils' experience of reading literary texts in the English classroom?* Source: SurveyMonkey.

The first statement they were asked to express their opinion on was: *The literary texts in the textbook treat topics that are interesting for teenagers, such as love, friendship, prejudices, loneliness, etc.* 66.7% said they partly agree with this, 8.3% fully agree, 18.8% partly disagree and 10.4% completely disagree. With statement two *I can identify with the characters in the textbook's literary texts* only 2.1% fully agree, 39.6% partly agree, 47.9% partly disagree and 14.6% completely disagree. The third statement *I learn about life and the world in reading the textbook's literary texts* brought the following responses: 14.6% fully agree, 47.9% partly agree, 27.1% partly disagree and 14.6% completely disagree. Statement four *I think that the textbook's literary texts take up universal and timeless questions* was answered this way: 6.4% fully agree, 48.9% partly agree, 38.3% partly disagree, and 8.5% completely disagree. The fifth statement read, *Some of the textbook's literary texts surprise*

me because things develop differently from what I had expected at the beginning; here are the answers: 14.9% fully agree, 42.6% partly agree, 34% partly disagree, and 8.5% completely disagree.

Statement six *Some of the textbook's literary texts provoke me because they collide with my values* was answered in the following way: 22.9% partly agree, 41.7% partly disagree, and 39.6% completely disagree; no one chose the first alternative option *I fully agree*. Statement seven, *Some of the textbook's literary texts seem too remote from my reality* elicited the following answers: 14.6% fully agree, 43.8% partly agree, 33.3% partly disagree and 10.4% completely disagree. 4.2% fully agree, 35.4% partly agree, 33.3% partly disagree and 29.2% completely disagree with statement eight *I always find it exciting to read literature, and this also applies to the textbook's literary texts*. The final statement *I only read literary texts because they are a part of the English course* was answered in the following way: 16.7% fully agree, 35.4% partly agree, 39.6% partly disagree and 12.5% completely disagree. When filtering the answers per gender we get the following results: for girls only: 12.5% fully agree, 31.3% partly agree with this statement, while 56.3% partly disagree and 6.3% completely disagree; for boys only: 37.5% partly agree, 21.9% partly disagree and 40.6% completely disagree. Thus, there are fewer boys than girls who *always find it exciting to read literature*.

The final statement *I only read literary texts because they are a part of the English course* was answered in the following way: 16.7% fully agree, 35.4% partly agree, 39.6% partly disagree and 12.5% completely disagree. As far as girls only are concerned, 31.3% partly agree (compared to 37.5% of boys), 37.5% partly disagree (40.6% of boys), and 31.3% completely disagree (3.1% of boys). The number of boys who *fully agree* with this statement is 25% (no girl). These results seem to imply that female readers in this age category are more likely to *find literature exciting* while a larger proportion of male readers *only read literary texts because they are a part of the English course*.

To sum up, most of the respondents *partly agree* with six of the nine statements, but there is a majority of respondents who *partly disagree* with statements two, seven and nine. Some conclusions can be drawn: two-thirds of the pupils find the topics in the literary texts in the textbook interesting for teenagers but almost as many do not identify with the characters in the textbook's literary texts. This shows that the respondents are divided in their opinions about the literary texts they read in their English textbooks. Particularly, it is disturbing that more than half of them find the literary texts too remote from their own reality, and that

almost 40% of the respondents admit that they read literary texts only because they are a part of the English course. The comment field revealed some additional comments: one respondent wrote that the literary texts were not always interesting, but that he/she liked to expand his/her vocabulary through reading; one commented that “the texts in the textbook are boring and old”, and another stated that many of the texts had the “wrong content”, and that he/she found love, prejudice, etc. uninteresting and boring; he/she would prefer crime stories. Still, some comments were positive: “If we go through the meaning of the text and its deeper message, I think I understand it better” or “I think it is good that we read of lot of English texts, and especially that we get the task of reading novels”.

Question seven: *If you ever read a novel excerpt at school that made you want to read the whole novel please specify its title or topic in the comment field. Please also explain what it was that made you want to read more* was only answered by 20 pupils. Some answers were negative including that “it had not happened” or that the texts in the textbook were boring, and that he/she would rather read about crime, war or the world’s problems. Some could not remember any title. Among the texts mentioned were *Holes* (3 answers), an excerpt from *The Temple Knight* by Jan Guillou, *The Hunger Games*, *The Death Games*, *The Lion Woman* by Erik Fosnes Hansen and *Pride and Prejudice*. As we may remember, both *The Hunger Games* and *The Death Games* were also named as favourite books under question two. Here are some reasons given by the pupils for wanting to read more:

- “We once read an excerpt from *The Temple Knight* by Jan Guillou. It was a coincidence since my father had already proposed the first book in the trilogy to me. The excerpt somehow gave me a kick so that I started reading the book before I had planned to do so”.
- “The book we have started to read, *Holes*, seems a very interesting book”.
- “*Holes* because it is exciting”.
- “*The Lion Woman* because I think the story looked nicely written and I was fascinated by the girl’s life”.
- “*The Hunger Games* is full of suspense”.
- “The excerpt stopped with something exciting”. (no title mentioned)
- “I read the excerpt from *Pride and Prejudice* myself, I saw the film and think it is very good, so I also want to read the whole book”.

As a conclusion, there do not seem to be many novel excerpts read at school that made the pupils want to read more. Once again, it is notable that they consider suspense and excitement important motives for reading. Maybe teachers do not do enough to put pupils into contact with literature that they feel is relevant?

Question eight asked pupils, *If you ever felt like reading more novels by a writer you “became acquainted with” at school please specify the title of the school text or topic in the comment field. Please also explain what attracted you in this writer’s work.* This question was answered by 18 pupils and nine of them only mentioned that they could not remember any title, or that “it had not happened”, as many of the school texts were boring. However, two pupils referred to a short story from *New Experience*, “How Did I Get Away with Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers in the State? It Was Easy” by Alice Walker, and stated that the author wrote from reality, and that something happened all the time (Heian 153-158). One pupil wrote “I have an author I like; she thinks and writes realistically, so that everyone can relate to what she writes”, but did not mention any name. Another one wrote that he/she had no favourite author, as it was the text content which was important. Others liked Roald Dahl “because he was humorous for both young and older ones”, the *Hardy boys* series “because the books were easy to read and inventive” and *The Pudding Man*, “because it sounded funny”. Here again, teachers have a part to play in presenting to pupils authors who are varied, interesting and fun to read.

Finally, question nine asked, *Among the literary texts (poem or song, short story or novel excerpt) we have worked with so far in the English lessons, which did you like best? Please explain briefly why in the comment field.* 33 pupils answered this question and the lack of response by the 19 others may be interpreted as a negative answer, meaning there was no school text they liked, but it can also be an indication that they got tired of answering the survey, as this question also required a comment. Some answers to this question are negative too; more precisely, seven respondents answered “I don’t know”, “I don’t remember” or “I never liked the texts we have worked with at school, because they are unrealistic, boring and the only reason why I worked with them is because they are a part of the course”. On the other end of the scale one pupil wrote: “I think it has been fun working with most texts because the texts are so varied”.

Here are the favourites according to the remaining 25 responses:

- *Holes* (six responses): “The action was very exciting and good!” “I liked the excerpt from *Holes*. It seemed exciting and woke my interest. I liked the setting and the fact that it was about someone my age. I could find myself a little in some of the characters and it made me more interested in the novel”. “The novel excerpt *Holes* is the text I liked best, because I have seen the film several times”. “The film *Holes* is what I liked best. It is because I think it makes me interested in what will happen next”.
- “Somewhere Warm and Comfortable”, by Michael Faber (Heian 68-75) (five responses): “I felt sorry for the girl and could picture myself in her shoes and trying to find out what I would have done and (wondering) if I would have had such a problem by acting differently and as I wished”. “I liked it because it was exciting”. “This short story was interesting because I think girls’ issues are interesting”. “I liked it best because it dealt with things that can happen to ordinary youths”. “I liked this story because it is such topics I like to read about. It is exciting and about a young girl just like me. I get to know how she faced her situation”.
- “A Great Day”, by Frank Sargeson (Heian 112-120) (three responses): “This was a text which was a bit different from the other texts we read. It was exciting and a bit disturbing (thinking that a murder is involved), which I think is good since we often read neutral and boring texts about love and friendship”. “It was interesting”. “The sudden end was interesting. It gave the reader something to wonder about”.
- “How Did I Get Away with Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers in the State? It Was Easy” by Alice Walker (Heian 153-158) (two responses): “it is really interesting to see how it was in the old days”.
- “Like the Sun”, by R.K. Narayan (Langseth VG2 33-36) (two responses): “I liked it because of the way it took up how much lying can influence everyday life and how truth whether negative or positive can have both positive and negative consequences”. “It was a little interesting but I don’t think I would like to read it myself. I don’t have any specific to answer, but I just like the plot in it”.
- “That’s Right”, by David Compton (Heian 28-32) (one response): “It was funny”.
- “They Are Made out of Meat”, by Terry Bisson (Heian 56-59) (one response): “It made me see things from a different perspective”.
- “Tears in Heaven”, by Eric Clapton (Heian 86) (two responses): “It is a song I like very well, and it always make my mind travel when I listen to it”. “I don’t quite remember, but it must be a song, because I don’t really like texts without melody”.

- “You Gain Strength”, a poem by Eleanor Roosevelt (Heian 124): “It’s because she encouraged me through the words she used in the poem”.

In conclusion, we see that half of the pupils (26 out of 52) involved in the survey could name a favourite text they had worked with during this school year. Several of the texts mentioned (the excerpt from *Holes*, the short story “Somewhere Warm and Comfortable”, the song “Tears in Heaven”) were approached from a reader-response point of view. Could this have been a decisive element in these pupils’ perceptions? The scope of this survey and the number of respondents are far too limited to draw any significant and definitive conclusions. In any case, the results are far from satisfactory, but the school year was only half way through when the survey was carried out. These responses will be compared and weighed against the pupils’ opinions after the completion of the reading project about *Holes*.

In this chapter I have presented the survey I had designed with the purpose of finding out about my pupils’ reading habits and interests. This survey was made up of three parts: two questions focused on the respondents’ general reading habits and interests, three questions dealt with the respondents’ interest in English and their reading habits in English, four questions enquired about the pupils’ response to the use of literary texts in the English classroom; finally, the last question aimed at collecting demographics about the respondents.

After analyzing the results of the survey a few conclusions come to mind: judging from the number of books available at home only a minority of pupils have a reading environment that can foster their reading development; the role of the school is therefore to make up for this by offering them easy access to a large collection of books through the library and through appropriate reading programmes. Further, it seems that a large proportion of the pupils who answered the survey prioritize books that are exciting and full of action, and to quote Sarland, do not always “find themselves” in the schoolbooks texts (91-101); in addition, reading English in connection with interactive activities is far more popular with the pupils than ‘traditional’ reading of English novels or magazines. Every cloud has a silver lining though and half of the respondents could name a favourite text from their schoolbooks. Instead of giving up and following the easiest way under the pressure of modern media teachers must propose literary texts that are varied and appealing to pupils. In the following chapters I will examine whether the use of a reader-response approach in connection with literary texts may have a positive impact on the pupils’ attitude to reading.

4. Reader Response Theories

Literature and literary texts can be approached from numerous perspectives. Richard Beach distinguishes five theoretical perspectives on response, the “textual”, “experiential”, “psychological”, “social” and “cultural”, which “rest on different assumptions about meaning” but “ultimately intersect and overlap”; these different perspectives can all be used to analyze a text (7-10). In the literature classroom the focus for a long time has been on the text as the sole source of meaning, implying that there was one correct interpretation to which the teacher possessed the key and which the pupils or students had to strive to discover. This strictly textual approach still dominates in many classrooms. Typical tasks connected to this approach are among others plot summary and comprehension questions. Another perspective is the experiential theory of response. The present chapter will attempt to provide an overview of reader response theories, explain the pedagogical interest of these theories and outline the pedagogical tasks most likely to implement a reader response approach in the classroom.

4.1 What is Reader Response?

At the center of reader response theories is Louise Rosenblatt’s work. In 1938 she published *Literature as Exploration* in which she expressed her belief that the meaning of a text emerges in the transaction between the reader and the text. Rosenblatt sees the reader not as a passive recipient but as an active creator of his or her own meaning:

The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, presents needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition. These and many other elements in a never-to-be-duplicated combination determine his response to the peculiar contribution of the text... The same text will have a very different meaning and value to us at different times or under different circumstances. (*Literature as Exploration* 30-35)

From this perspective, it is thus the *reader’s experience* with the text which is essential. A particular reader will respond to a particular text in a particular psychological mood and in a particular social and cultural context. In addition, the reader must look for details in the text itself or use his or her own general knowledge of the world in order to ‘fill the gaps’ in the text: according to Iser, these ‘gaps’ or ‘blanks’ are “indeterminacies” in the text that the

reader fills in by using his or her “repertoire” of social and historical norms and conventional rules in order to participate in the creation of meaning (qtd. in Thomson 123). “But as the unsaid comes to life in the reader’s imagination, so the said expands to take on greater significance than might have been supposed: even trivial scenes can seem surprisingly profound” (Iser 168). There are multiple valid interpretations corresponding to the feelings, beliefs, and experiences of the individual readers and realizing this will give the readers a sense of empowerment: “When the student feels the validity of his own experience, he will cease to think of literature as something that only a few gifted spirits can enjoy and understand in an original way” (ibid. 64). Seen this way, each reading experience is “unique to an individual within a specific context and in each successive act of reading” (Leer 130).

Rosenblatt’s skeptical attitude to literature instruction as the search for “correct answers” led her to publish *The Reader - The Text - The Poem* in 1978, in which she addressed pedagogical challenges in the classroom more specifically. Her theories do not simply involve expressing feelings but include the continuum of involvement with a text (Beach 50). Central to Rosenblatt’s transaction theory is the distinction between efferent and aesthetic reading. Efferent reading consists in reading a text in order to retrieve information from it, to understand what it says, while aesthetic reading is concerned with the unique engagement with the text (Rosenblatt, *The Reader* 25). In an efferent reading the reader is looking for information or tries to find the right answers to questions; he is concerned about giving the teacher the answers he thinks the teacher expects. The aesthetic experience of reading is completely different: the reading process itself is the reward! Here the aim is to “help human beings ... to discover the pleasures and satisfactions of literature” (Rosenblatt, *Literature* 34). Rosenblatt places the reading of a literary text “somewhere between the aesthetic and the efferent poles” of a continuum, but unfortunately too many classroom activities presuppose “correct answers” based only on efferent reading (Beach 50-51).

In the context of the reader-text interaction it might be useful to comment briefly on Alan Hirvela’s distinction between reader response and personal response, which most teachers will be familiar with as it has been widely used in the classroom for decades: in the personal approach literary texts, in the words of Maley and Duff, are used as a “resource...for stimulating language activities” (qtd. in ibid. 128). These tasks may be stylistic (for example, “discuss the author’s choice of language in certain portions of the *text*”) or interpretative (“present personal reactions to various elements *in the text*”) (ibid. 128; my emphasis); the responses produced are personal and serve communication. However, the responses are

“heavily text-based” and “give the text a position of authority within the learner-text interaction” (ibid. 128). Hirvela thus argues that although both approaches are communication-oriented and include tasks involving the active participation of learners, the personal approach focuses on the alleged authors’ intentions and the reader is expected to decode what the text says, adopting a more “passive role... since meaning is assumed to reside only in the text” (ibid. 131). From this perspective, the literary text is primarily used to serve linguistic purposes. On the other hand, the reader response approach emphasizes the reader’s productive role as he participates in the creation of meaning during the transaction with the original text (ibid. 128). Joan Carson considers that “The text itself... is incomplete; it needs a reader’s experience to make it understood” (qtd. in ibid. 129). Both approaches may look similar on the surface, but the reader-response approach in the classroom is in my opinion the most likely to create and sustain a genuine interest in literature in the learners.

4.2 Why this Approach?

As mentioned in my introduction to this thesis, during the spring term of 2011 I wrote a term paper focusing on the use of literary texts in the English classroom in an upper secondary school in Østfold County (Wauthier 2011). For this purpose I carried out a survey of the textbooks used at that school. The textbooks I presented in my survey were the following:

For the programmes for general studies: *New Experience. Engelsk for studieforbredende utdanningsprogram*, by Bente Heian, Gro Lokøy, Brynjulf Ankerheim and Ion Drew, Oslo: Gyldendal, 2009. This book covers the aims of English as a core subject at vg1 level, the first year in the programmes for general studies, which is obligatory and deemed to provide a sufficient basis for higher education.

For vocational classes: *Workshop. Engelsk VG1 /Engelsk VG2. Engelsk for det yrkesfaglige utdanningsprogrammet*, by Janniche Langseth, Hege Lundgren and Jeanne Lindsay Skanke, Oslo: Gyldendal, 2006. The *Workshop* series consists of nine different books (one for each vocational programme) aimed at pupils in *Health and Social Studies*, *Electronics*, or *Mechanics*, etc. for each year of studies (vg1 and vg2). Vg1 and vg2 combined cover the aims of English as a core subject equivalent to vg1 for general studies and are deemed to provide a sufficient basis for higher education as well. For the sake of simplification I only looked at the

literary texts presented in the *Workshop* series used in the *Health and Social Studies* vocational line, vg1 and vg2.

My textbook survey revealed that many of the tasks proposed in connection with literary texts are still very traditional, prioritizing an efferent mode of reading: comprehension questions, plot summaries, ordering or completing sentences, picking wrong words in sentences, etc. (Wauthier 2011). Such tasks convey the idea that literary texts are to be treated like instruction books or newspaper articles: their comprehension is important and there is only one way to understand them. Likewise, as mentioned in the introductory chapter of the present thesis, the survey carried out among my teacher colleagues revealed that the majority of them rely a lot on the textbooks and therefore also use a lot of the same traditional tasks while few teachers focus consciously on an esthetic mode of reading (ibid.).

Several studies indicate that when growing up many young readers indeed lose interest in reading and develop a sense of boredom when writing about literature. Christina Clark and Kate Rumbold refer to research that shows that “primary pupils tended to enjoy reading more and to read outside school more frequently than secondary ones” (12). Although stating that existing evidence is inconclusive they mention among possible causes “national tests” and the introduction of national literacy strategies where reading enjoyment is not a priority; other factors such as advances in technology may explain the change in reading attitudes (ibid. 13-14). Even though this applies to British schools, not Norwegian ones, the same pattern of decline in reading enjoyment with age can be observed by teachers.

In chapter three I presented the survey I carried out on my own pupils’ reading habits and attitudes; this was followed by an analysis of the survey results which revealed, among other things, that an impressive majority of the respondents spend quite a lot of time reading English material on the internet, while those who read more traditional material, like entire books or novels, magazines and newspapers, are a tiny minority. The survey also revealed that a great number of pupils judged the literary texts read in class as ‘boring’ or ‘too remote from their own reality’: almost 40% of the respondents admitted that they only read literary texts because they were a part of the English curriculum. What is it with school that seems to put pupils off literature? Does it have to be like this? As explained in chapter two Thomson places much of the blame for the “trouble” with the teaching of literature in school on the “ignorance of the perceived sequence of literary response” (180). If Thomson’s developmental model is to be taken seriously the teaching of literature has to start where the pupils are, and not two or

three levels higher than their present development stage (230). Still, the developmental model implies a progression upwards and one way to help pupils progress beyond their present developmental level is to help them to reflect on their reading and ‘question the text’ in the right way (262-263).

Could the reader response approach contribute to a positive change? As mentioned under 4.1, readers who are encouraged to express their own literary interpretations will feel empowered when their responses are validated. Lois Tucker claims that a reader response approach in the literature class “helps maintain the student interest and involvement necessary for a good course” (199). She argues that the benefits reaped from a reader-response approach are numerous: “experience of relevance in the reading task, ... active encounter with the literature, ... critical readers capable of determining meaning in texts”, and “opportunity to express themselves freely” (ibid. 199). She goes so far as to call reader-response pedagogy “liberating”. This experience echoes the views expressed by Signe Mari Wiland who is convinced that the reader-response approach “liberates” the young readers from the constraints of literary techniques and gives them “greater self-confidence and fewer inhibitions” (“From Text to Language” 2).

Several teachers report positive outcomes when focusing on the reader’s experience and a predominantly aesthetic stance in the literature classroom: improvement of reading and writing skills, the pleasure of expressing their own ideas, and clearer understanding of the ideas in the novels (Carlisle 18). After his teaching experiment with the reader-response approach Sanchez registered that several of his students had come to regard reading fiction as more important in their lives, they were pleased with their reading and were able to reflect on what they had learnt. The experience seemed to have helped the students move from an efferent reading to the adoption of an aesthetic stance when reading fiction (ibid. 7-8). Although the quoted articles refer to results obtained with readers of lower and higher ages than my upper secondary school pupils, using a reader response approach and an aesthetic stance in connection with literary texts seemed promising. I therefore used a reader response approach in the classroom for the first time during the spring of 2011 (Wauthier 2011). All in all, the pupils’ evaluation of the literary project *Holes* was positive. I therefore decided to use the same teaching scheme again, slightly modified in length, with different pupils the following year. I give more details of my experience with that literary project and of the pupils’ feedback in chapter seven.

4.3. Methodology

Reader-response tasks are fewer than in textual or personal approaches but they are designed to extract more from the reader's involvement with the text (Hirvela 131). Typical reader-response tasks may be discussions about the reading, retelling the story from a character's point of view, guessing what comes next, imagining another ending, creative writing, letters to/from one of the characters, and especially keeping reading logs or diaries where the readers note their immediate reactions to the text (Lundahl 333-338). In all these tasks the emphasis is not on correct language but on helping the reader to reflect on, express and share his or her own reading experience.

In responding to literary texts the readers will no doubt express some, if not all, of the stages identified by Thomson in his developmental model (360-361). Thomson's stages are recognizable in Beach's five response processes:

engaging, in which the reader becomes "emotionally involved, empathizes or identifies with the text";

constructing, where the readers enter into an imagined, secondary world which they create;

imaging, creating visual mental pictures;

connecting their own life experiences to the text;

evaluating/reflecting, that is to say "judging the quality of their experience with the text". This may involve judging a text by "aesthetic criteria" (Beach 52-66). As mentioned in 2.4, Thomson's stages five and six, which Beach united under *evaluating/reflecting*, are the most difficult to reach for the adolescent readers.

I return to these processes in my report on the pupils' responses to texts (chapters five, six and seven). For the purpose of this thesis I have chosen to include only written expressions of reader-responses, because they are more easily accessible for analysis. The order of the chapters reflects the progression adopted in the classroom when working with the reader-response methodology. To begin with, our focus was on shorter and easily accessible texts: song lyrics; then the pupils responded to a short story (general line of study) or novel excerpt (vocational classes); finally, one class in a general study programme read and responded to an entire novel. Chapter five will deal with reader responses to songs. In chapter six, I will examine reader responses to somewhat longer texts, a short story and a novel excerpt

respectively. Chapter seven will study pupils' responses to a whole novel, and will essentially examine reading diaries and reader response essays.

5. Reader Responses in the Classroom: Songs

Many young people's lives are accompanied by music from the moment they wake up until they go to bed at night. Even while doing homework their headphones are on and they listen to music, not just to melodies but also to lyrics, which after all are a kind of modern poetry they easily relate to and enjoy. With this in mind I decided to use song lyrics to introduce my pupils to their first 'official' encounter with the reader response approach.

5.1 Reader Responses to the Song "Tears in Heaven"

The song "Tears in Heaven" was first chosen in order to familiarize the pupils with the reader-response approach. This song is to be found in the textbook for the general studies programmes *New Experience* (86). Guitarist and singer Eric Clapton wrote "Tears in Heaven" to come to terms with the tragic death of his four-year old son Conor who fell accidentally from the 53rd floor of a New York flat.

The pupils were asked to write down their immediate response to the song. The following questions were suggested as a starting point:

What is in your opinion the most striking word or expression / image or feature in this song?

What were your feelings after listening to this song? Does this song make you cry? Laugh? Cringe? Smile? Cheer?

What specifically in the song makes you react this way?

What connections are there between the song and your life? What does the song say to you in your life situation right now? Explain.

(What is in your opinion the deeper meaning of this song?)

Among all the pupils' responses I chose the following examples, uncorrected for the sake of authenticity. All the pupils' names are fictitious in order to protect their anonymity. The examples illustrate the five response processes listed by Beach:

engaging, constructing, imaging, connecting and evaluating/reflecting (52-66).

The five processes are to be found among all the responses, but they are not necessarily all present simultaneously in each response.

Examples of emotional engagement:

Cecilie: “I can feel the sorrow of the person singing and it makes me sad. Knowing the story behind the song makes it even worse. I want to cry every time I hear this song. I want to cry because I am deeply touched by its lyrics.”

Terje: “The song made me feel a little sad. The “time can bring you down...” part specifically made me feel sad. But it is the backstory to this song that makes me sad and depressed.”

Helge: “I know I don’t belong here in heaven” is the most striking sentence in this song after my opinion. It makes you think about what he means, how he feels and the sorrow.”

Siv: “The song makes me want to cry, because I start to think about how he has it. I imagine how it is to lose a son in a tragic accident like that.”

Camilla: “I’m a person who start cry when other do, and I become sad when I see other person who’s sad. Therefore, the song really caught me. I start thinking like:”What if I was Eric Clapton and lost my son?” I feel very sorry for him and his family, even though I’ve never lost someone close to me. But I know it’s going to happen someday.”

Sverre: “It makes me cry a little, or at least makes me really sad. I shouldn’t imagine how it is for him to lose his own child. Or what feelings he has after the tragic accident about his son. And I believe that he think of his son every single day. That he thinks of the tragedy every day, and that makes him depressed.”

These responses testify to a profound emotional engagement, where the pupils express sorrow and empathy with the author of the song.

Examples of construction of an imagined world, which also implies for example empathizing with the perspectives or situations of characters, imagining their thoughts or extending the story (Sanchez 13):

Cecilie: “This song contains special messages and I guess this is the reason why I feel like crying. The song tells us the hope of a father. The father is hoping that someday he will see his son. At the same time he is not sure if that time comes or if it happens would his son recognize him? This song gives me inspiration and it gives me hope. There is no assurance that we will reunite with our love ones after we die, but we must not lost hope and we must move on if ever things went wrong or if ever one of our love ones die. I really like the part where the person itself in the song is encouraging himself to be strong and carry on with his or her life.”

Karianne: “And I feel like she is right next to me. Of course my reaction to the song depends on if I have a good or a bad day.”

Jesper: “The deeper meaning is that he will meet all the people he has lost, when he come to heaven. And therefore he asks, questions like, will you be in heaven? Etc. “

Espen: “The thing that I was thinking off, was that he said that I did not belong in heaven, and I wondered why I said that? What is he trying to say? And I liked that the text is build up with questions, like would you say my name, if you saw my in heaven. Maybe he is trying to say that maybe we will not remember persons all the time, and maybe we will forget some persons. But this is also giving us questions like, what is heaven? Is there heaven? Etc.”

Siv: “I think the word “heaven” is the most important word in the text. That is because his son is in heaven.”

These pupils’ responses illustrate how they empathize with the father who has lost his son; they imagine his feelings of sadness and hope that there is a heaven, where they will be reunited.

Examples of imaging:

Espen: “It made me thinking off how fast our lives can change. Particular I am thinking off that a person a have met, can be gone the next day.”

Sandra: “... I know that she would help me, and I know that she would hold my hand. That immediately makes me think back at all our memories. I have a picture of us, a late summer night at Koster in Sweden when she stands over me and we’re holding hands. So that part of the text makes me think of that day.”

Siv: “I can start to imagine the feelings if I lose my parents, or someone I love. The song can reminds me about when I fight with my parents, my boyfriend or my siblings.”

Monika: “ You get the picture of a devastated person who thinks maybe suicide is a smart choice, but still, he knows he don’t belong in the other world.”

These excerpts show the visual mental pictures which are created in the pupils’ minds when hearing the song. These pictures extend to memories of a lost loved one, or expectations of what it would be like to lose someone close.

Examples of connecting their own life experiences to the text:

Many pupils connected the song to their own experience of loss of a loved one:

Cecilie: “The connection between the song and my life is I experienced the same way as Eric Clapton. My grandfather died while I am here in Norway. I know how it feels losing an important person in life. I was not able to attend his burial because it is so far and I have been staying her for just a month. In my heart I keep the memories alive in this way I know wherever my grandfather is he is happy and safe. The song encourage people not to lose hope.”

Olav: “Actually the song and some episode of my life does connect, before a while like 2 or 3 years I lost my grandmother, and I didn’t know what to do or anything like that, I felt lonely and that I was kind of useless in that situation.”

Monika: “I think of my own family and my 5-year-old brother, and I feel blessed that no one in my family has any serious problem and that we’re all happy.”

This pupil connects the loss described in the song with his own longing for seeing his family reunited in Norway:

Stig: “In some way it have connection with my life for example. Im waiting for my family to come here and beyond the door is peace I refer this to Norway and there will be no tears in heaven I refer this to the situation that we are suffering for them so there will be no sadness after we meet each other.”

Several other pupils referred to the 22 July massacre in Norway in which many young people’s lives were cut short by the bullets of a fanatic murderer. One of the victims was a young girl from this town the same age as my pupils and a personal friend of some of them:

Helge: “After the immense mass murder at Utøya and in Oslo, this was the first song I heard when I turned on the radio. This was also one of my great grandmother’s favorite songs, and I heard it the first time in her presence, and they played it at her funeral.

Sandra: “This song was played in the funeral of Elisabeth Trønnes Lie. She was a very good friend of mine, who died the 22th of July. Every time I hear that song I think of her, and all I feel like doing is to cry. But at the same time the song makes me think about all the good memories we made together (...) I lost someone wonderful way too soon, and so did Eric Clapton when he lost his son.”

Elsa: “This song reminds me about Elisabeth Trønnes Lie who died in the terror attacks July the 22. We were in the same German-class on the secondary school. *Tears in Heaven* was her favorite song.”

Since no one goes through life without grief, it is likely that this song will continue to bring forth many emotional connections in the hearts of its listeners.

Examples of evaluating/reflecting on their experience with the text: here the pupils react to the choice of words and the lyrics themselves.

Espen: “This is was very slow, and had I meaningful text, and I think that this is a good song to dedicate to his son, because this song I slow, and the song is like it giving you time to think while you are listening to this song.”

Cecilie: “I am strike by this line “if I saw you in heaven”. This line is repeated over and over again in the text and it catches my attention. This makes me think deeply and makes me curious and I even question myself what this line means (...) I want to cry because I am deeply touched by its lyrics (...) The song has a meaning that convinces the listeners in a special way. The song has a special message for all of us if we just listen attentively and if we ponder it in our hearts. It makes us reflect the meaning of life and it makes us realize that in this journey of life we can both experience sadness and happiness.”

Emil: “Eric Clapton wrote this song because this terrible thing happened to him, still there are many others that can connect to this song. And that is what I think is a good song writer. We all have expreinced that someone close has died. But we need to be strong and carry on, as Eric Clapton sings. Because we don’t belong in heaven, not yet.”

Heidi: “The song is so simple and doesn’t have metaphors and complex sentences, but it still manages to express the feelings of a father who has lost his son.”

Olav: “Cause I know I don’t belong in heaven” is the most striking word in the song.”

Monika: “This song is a very emotional song and you understand that its personal and the lyrics are important for the songwriter. Although the lyrics are short and simple, there are meanings in every word, and the listener can feel the grief and the sorrow that lies behind the song.”

Kristine: “One of the sentences has a special meaning in this text, and it’s repeated several times: “If I saw you in heaven?” I think he wants to die, but would it be the same to meet his son in heaven? Would he meet him in heaven? He’s not sure.”

These examples illustrate the quality of the listeners’ experience with the lyrics. Many of them notice the use of particular words which convey a powerful feeling of sadness but also hope.

To sum up, it seems like the song “Tears in Heaven” inspired a deep emotional engagement among many pupils, and many responded to the song by connecting it with their own lives. However, and surprisingly enough, there are also examples of pupils who wrote that they did not feel any connection between the song and their own life:

Rasmus: “I don’t feel connected to the song in any way, it doesn’t move me emotionally at all. Therefore it’s difficult to write any more about the song.”

Lukas: “The song doesn’t have any connections to my life at all, and I am not able to tie the song to my life situation today.”

Terje: “To be honest, there is no connection between this song and my life. I have not experienced anything depressing in my life. Nobody that I have known has died.”

Jens: “(The song makes me) mad. I don’t like this kind of music.”

It is significant that these four last comments all come from boys. According to Gunilla Molloy, the attitude of pupils to literature may stem from “gender practice in the classroom”: some boys may interpret literature and emotional involvement as “feminine” and therefore feel the need to distance themselves from these (155-156). As Beach points out, traditional gender practice makes boys more apt to write stories full of action, adventure and physical performance while girls will focus on the development of interpersonal relationships in the stories they write (Beach 139-144). The same probably applies to *reading* literature and *responding* to it, and the song “Tears in Heaven”, which in its way challenges traditional patriarchal values, may be too hard to swallow for some insecure teenage boys.

5.2 Reader Responses to Songs of Choice

A few days after working with “Tears in Heaven” the pupils were given the task of choosing a song of their own preference and of responding to it in the same way, with the same questions as a starting point (see 5.1 above). The pupils had to present both the lyrics and the music and this of course affects their responses. However, since I am a language teacher and no musician I will in my presentation concentrate on the *lyrics* of the songs they chose. As one could expect the selection was very varied. All the choices were interesting and revealing with regard to the personalities of the pupils. It is not possible in the frame of this thesis to analyze and comment on all the responses, but I have chosen a few among those which I found the

most interesting and the most revealing. These have been retained because of the insight and quality of the responses provided. The responses come from pupils both in general study and in vocational classes.

Independently and unbeknownst to each other three boys happened to choose the same song, “When I’m Gone”, by Eminem. I find it therefore interesting to compare their responses to the song. **Johannes** wrote the longest text, which speaks for itself:

This song is about the rapper Eminem and his relationship to his daughter and wife, while being famous and having tons fans. He expresses what he feels about the situations he’s in. He has been way too obsessed by his fans, and been in touch with very bad people and drugs. Eminem and his wife have broken up and his daughter is very sad (*constructing an imagined world and conceptualizing characters*). You can clearly hear how he gets caught up in the life as being a famous person and leaves his family that he loves for the fame and fans. He regrets the way he’s been acting and tries to apologize mainly to his daughter, but also his wife through this song (*imaging*).

I think it’s a very sad song, and it makes you remember that your family is the most important thing in life. I think he made this song for his family, to show how much he appreciates them and how much he misses the old times (*emotional engagement*). He had some problems with drugs and the environment he was being dragged into. And now he’s feeling that he is breaking the family down by the way he is acting. You can hear how he states what his daughter, Hailie, says about the way he always leaves them for the fans, and how she thinks that the fans is more important to him, than her and his wife is (*emotional engagement, construction of imagined world*).

I remember the first time I hear this song when I was a little younger. I didn’t really know what the song was about, but I’ve always liked it (*connecting life experience to the text*). Now that I’ve learnt more English and am able to understand the lyrics I like the song even better. I think it really shows how important family is to everyone. Eminem is really telling a story through this song (*evaluating/reflecting on experience with the text*). The fact that he has experienced this himself makes it even better, because he knows so much about this situation.

Every time I hear this song I get sad, but at the same time kind of happy (*emotional engagement*). I’ve heard this song so many times, and over the years I’ve felt that I’ve

understood more and more of what he means when he wrote this song (*evaluating/reflecting on experience with the text*). It's one of the songs that I never get tired of, and enjoy listening to every time I hear it.

As we see, Johannes' response illustrates all the stages of Beach's categorization, he enters the *imagined world* described in the song and expresses *emotional engagement* and *empathy* with Eminem's family as presented in the song; however, his *evaluating/reflecting on his experience with the text* might lack complexity. This is not surprising with a task of this size. **Oddvar's** answer is shorter and illustrates several of the response stages but there is no *reflection on his own experience with the text*:

Eminem (Marshall Bruce Mathers III) is my favorite singer and many of his songs mean something to me, but "When I'm Gone" is the song nearest to my heart.

This song is about his life and his relationship between him and his daughter. Eminem is like any other singing stars, he is around the world and have concerts for his fans, and make some money. His daughter Hailie, who is mentioned in many of his songs, asks him several times to quit singing and stay home with her and her mama. She tries to do everything to make him stay home, and he says every time that this is the last time, but it never is (*imaging, constructing an imagined world*).

This song reminds me of my relationship between me and my dad. He have a disease called MS, and I feel I should be home and help him, even I can't. I feel I'm do much gone, like Eminem in this song (*connecting life experience to the text*). This is why this song means so much for me (*emotional engagement*).

The last response about Eminem's song "When I'm Gone" was handed in by **Rolf**; here it is:

The most striking sentence in this song that I think is this.

[But baby we're in Sweden, how did you get to Sweden?
"I followed you Daddy, you told me that you weren't leavin'
"You lied to me Dad, and now you make Mommy sad
"And I bought you this coin, it says 'Number One Dad'].

This song is making me cringe because you have a family in America and you are in a different country, since you are so far away your children can't talk with you and your wife doesn't have any husband on her side when she sleeps and she is so afraid

that she starts hurting herself (*emotional engagement, imaging, constructing an imagined world*).

I don't have any connections with this song in my life, I just think about everyone who have this problem in their family and they don't know how to fix it and after some months it's much more serious and they can't save her/him (*emotional engagement*).

Rolf admits he does not see any *connections* between the song and his life, and he does not *reflect on his experience with the text*; although he cites a 'most striking sentence', he does not explain what makes this sentence particularly striking and why.

Jostein chose to respond to the song "In the Ghetto" by Elvis Presley; his response expresses a high level of *imaging, emotional engagement and connection* between the lyrics and his own life, and a certain degree of *evaluation* of the lyrics:

The song is about a poor mother who gives births to a baby. She lives in the ghetto, and she has difficult to give the child a good childhood because she has no money.

Many people see that she need help, but they don't help her, they only look another way.

When the child get older he starts to steal and fight in the street to get money. But one day he got shot in the street and dies, and his mother cries (*imaging*).

One man dies, and one new baby get born in the ghetto....

I think this is a very fine song of Elvis. Usually I don't like the songs of Elvis, but "in the ghetto" is different. It has a very deep meaning (*evaluating/reflecting on his experience with the text*).

It is so much wrong thing in this word. Some people are poor and some is rich. Rich people are not always willing to help poor people. We are living in a word were people are most occupied of themselves, and not willing to see that other people struggle (*emotional engagement*).

I have a brain-injured little sister. She will all her life be depended of people helping her. What will happen to her if no one cares for her? (*connecting life experience to the text*) "In the ghetto" is about rich and poor people, but I think the meaning in the song is not only about rich and poor, but how we don't care for each other anymore.

If the world shall be a better place for all people to live in, we must start caring for each other. We must help each other when we see that someone needs help.

If we start caring, I am sure it will be less killing, stealing and violence in the world, and the world will be a better place to live in for all people (*emotional engagement*).

Kristine wrote the following in her response to the song “Firework”, by Katy Perry:

I really love this song. When I listen to it I get really confident (*emotional engagement*). The lyrics are about being you. Every human is worth the same, even if somebody tells you differently. I especially love the sentence; “You're original, cannot be replaced.” (*evaluating/reflecting on experience with text*)

I often used to hide myself. I wanted to be somebody else, because I felt that I couldn't be the real me. I have never been popular with a lot of friends, and I wasn't accepting that. Now, I do. I don't have many friends, but the friends I've got are good friends. I can rely on them and trust them. I really don't want to be anybody else, but I felt that I had to be invisible. I no longer do, and it's not just because of this song, but it helped (*connecting life experience to text*).

I also get really happy when I hear this song. I'm happy that someone is stepping out, using time to help (*emotional engagement*). This time, they threw music. It's actually pretty smart to make a song out of your feelings, and if you're an artist you can get people to listen to it. As in this case, Katy Perry wrote a song that might have helped a lot of people being themselves (*evaluating/reflecting on experience with text*).

Kristine's response expresses a strong *emotional engagement* and *connection of her life experience* to the lyrics, but she also reflects on what the lyrics may mean to other people.

Another girl, **Cecilie**, responded to Celine Dion's “A New Day Has Come”:

I really like this song because it is about life and its meaning. It is about how to handle stress, problems, hardships and challenges in life. In this journey of life we experience many things both good and bad and sometimes we think that we can't make it (*connecting life experience to text*). I think it is a song about a new phase in one's life when you've conquered whatever was getting you down. I also think this song is about a person who has been through a lot of tragedies in life and was about to give up. But an enlightened thought came one day and gave this person the courage

to keep carrying on and live a better life like it's a brand new day (*constructing an imagined world*)

This song gives me strength and encouragement. Its lyrics itself is wonderful and if we ponder it in our hearts we can feel the comfort and love (*emotional engagement*). When it comes to motherhood, it is not applicable for me because I didn't experience it yet. Base on my observations about motherhood I know how the babies make their mothers happy. Even though it is very tiring but as they look at the babies faces it is like magic. The tiredness is gone. Babies are like angels, they have abilities to brighten the day and make it prosperous (*imaging*)”.

I experience many difficulties in life and it is our duties and obligations how to handle them. It is not as easy as always but we must hold on and be strong. The song makes me sad because in the beginning it contains sad texts but later on I am brighten by its positive and encouraging texts (*emotional engagement, evaluating/reflecting on experience with text*).

Finally, I include **Geir**'s response to the rap song, “The art of being Indian”, by the Norwegian band Karpe Diem, in spite of the fact that its lyrics are not in English, but in Norwegian, Geir expresses a powerful *emotional engagement and connection of life experience to the lyrics*:

I used to listen to this song as a kid, but I didn't really understand the meaning of it back then. The reason I chose this song was because of I could basically relate to what he was rapping about. I know how it feels to look different, and because of that be treated differently. In the song he mentions that predictions say that he won't get a better job than a janitor. This is also something I can relate to; people may look at me and think the same, just because of my skin colour some people think that I don't have high ambitions and dreams. This song also motivates me to work harder at school, so I can prove them wrong (*emotional engagement, connecting life experience to text*).

I like this song because it is so strong, so honest and so true (*evaluating/reflecting on experience with the text*).

Today's music is almost only about sex, money and drugs. It's almost rare to find people who make this type of song nowadays.

When I listen to this song I feel proud of my heritage, my culture and my appearance. I think the reason I get these feelings is because it's nice to know that other people have had the same thoughts, felt the same way and rapping so openly about it (*emotional engagement, connecting life experience with text*).

Where I used to live before I moved [here](#) was a small town called Sandnessjoen. I was born and raised there. The town was in northern Norway, this was a small town with a minimal number of immigrants. Since I was born there, approximately no one had a problem with me being black, but people still were prejudiced. So I could not help to feel different. This is mainly why I like this song (*connecting life experience to text*).

My interpretation of this song is that it is normal to be different, and it doesn't have to be a bad thing (*evaluating/reflecting on experience with the text*).

What can be said to sum up this reader-response experiment with song lyrics? First, as expected, it was easy to get my pupils involved in this activity. They are familiar with thousands of songs and when given the opportunity to choose any song they liked they easily found something to write about. Using song lyrics as a first encounter with the reader-response approach thus seems a good idea. The responses all illustrate to a certain degree Beach's five response processes, *emotional engagement, construction of an imagined world, imaging, connecting life experiences to the text, and evaluating/reflecting on their experience with the text*. These processes originate from Rosenblatt's reader-response theories and are also recognizable in Thomson's developmental model, as outlined in chapter two. As Thomson points out, even though adolescents have no problem responding on the basic levels of involvement with a text, they have difficulties reflecting on their connection to the text beyond these levels, and need to be taught how to move on to the next developmental level before they can be expected to engage in more complex literary criticism (180; 223). This assumption seems to be somewhat confirmed by the responses to the songs, where the pupils' evaluation and reflection on their experience with the text usually consisted of short statements. Still, due to the very limited scope of the task, little more could reasonably be expected. Chapters six and seven, which analyze pupils' responses to longer texts, may shed more light on this.

6. Reader Responses in the Classroom: a Short Story and a Novel Excerpt

As I mentioned under 4.3 I followed a progression in having the pupils work with the reader-response approach. After they had gotten familiar with the approach by working with song lyrics they were asked to respond in the same way to somewhat longer literary texts. The pupils I am teaching in the general line of study were presented with the short story “Somewhere Warm and Comfortable”, by Michael Faber and the pupils in my two vocational classes worked with an excerpt from the novel *Holes*, by Louis Sachar. Those texts are to be found in their textbooks, *New Experience* (Heian 68-75) and *Workshop* (Langseth 53-55).

6.1 Reader Responses to the Short Story “Somewhere Warm and Comfortable”

This short story tells about Christine, a young teenage girl who is pregnant and goes to an abortion clinic to have an abortion. She seems quite desperate, lonely and helpless and takes her little brother Scott, who is around 12 or 13 years old, with her. He does not understand what it is all about and believes that his sister is going to remove a tumor. We are indirectly told that cancer has taken several lives in the family, and Christine asks her little brother not to tell their mother about this ‘tumor’ so that she will not have to worry. The truth is that Christine has a very tense relationship with her mother who seems quite strict. The mother knows nothing about her daughter’s love affair and she must of course know nothing about the abortion either. The story is told in the third person through Scott’s impressions.

I chose to let my pupils work with this short story because I thought it was likely to appeal to them as it touches issues like growing up and being a teenager, questions about love and sex, ethical choices, abortion, loneliness, communication or lack of communication within the family etc. I let the pupils listen to the recorded version of the story while following along in their textbooks and I asked them to write down their responses to it immediately. In order to guide them in the direction I wished I suggested that they ask themselves the following questions:

What struck you particularly in this story? Are there any words / expressions / details which made an impression on you?

*Which feelings does the story raise in you? Which character do you feel closest to?
Why?*

What does this story tell you? (What is the main idea / message in this story?)

The first thing that struck me and also amazed me when reading their responses was the fact that many of them did not go beyond a strictly ‘instrumental’ reading and did not seem to get the information that Christine was pregnant and was actually going to have an abortion: the words ‘pregnant’ and ‘abortion’ are indeed not mentioned at all in the story, but the situation can easily be deduced by reading ‘between the lines’. On the other hand, it must be emphasized that the pupils were asked for a spontaneous, immediate response ‘on the spot’, leaving them no time to go back to the text and revise their opinions.

There are 29 pupils in the class, of whom 14 explicitly referred to an abortion or a future baby, whereas the other 14 either missed the point or did not dare to trust their own understanding of the facts (one pupil was absent on the day we worked with this short story). Here is what some pupils wrote:

Sverre: “But we don’t really know why she went to the doctor (...). I thought we should get to know it in the end of the text. The part about they were lying to their mother, didn’t struck me because that’s what all the teen agers does. (...) Actually I didn’t catch what the main idea or what the text meant to tell me. I didn’t quite get the point of the text. But the first thing that comes to my mind was that she had a baby. And didn’t want to tell her mother.”

Sverre’s interpretation is a bit ambivalent, or rather he does not trust his own interpretation. He seems a bit uncomfortable dropping a primarily efferent approach, which might be more familiar to him from his school experience. His attitude may imply that he has so far not been required to formulate his own opinions about texts and he is afraid of coming up with the ‘wrong’ answer.

Lukas: “... the text didn’t raise any particular feelings, except maybe confusion. The character I feel closest to is probably Scott, obviously because he’s one of the main characters, and he is a person I in some way can relate myself to, he is a late developer as far as height went, and people take him for being eleven even though he is thirteen or fourteen, and that has happened to me as well. (...) This story didn’t tell me

anything actually, it was just a story. And I couldn't catch any particular meaning in it.”

Lukas omits any comment on Christine's situation and refers to his feeling of 'confusion' in connection with the text. Could it be that he did not understand at all what Christine's problem was? On the other hand we notice how Lukas *connects* his own situation as a 'late developer' to Scott's.

Emil: “I got rather confused of this story. I didn't quite get the point. (...) The thing that struck me was the cancer and that almost everybody in their family had cancer. Then there was this thing, were Christine had an operation that she did not tell her mom about. I was a bit shocked by that. Normally you would go to something so important like that with your parents. The feeling I get is rather confusing. I don't know exactly what to believe.”

Emil also is used to a simple efferent reading of texts and since he sticks to the 'official' cancer diagnosis he cannot quite make sense of the story.

There are several other examples of pupils who did not read between the lines that Christine was actually going to have an abortion, or who seem not to trust their own interpretations. Also some girls prefer to maintain the 'safe' interpretation of an 'operation' whatever it may be, or they do not mention it at all:

Hilde: “... she was really relying on Scott's help after her operation. I was very excited to her hear how they would get away with what Scott's sister Christine had done and I was hoping to hear more about the operation she had.”

Rebekka: “The first thing that struck me in this story was: what does Christine hide. (...) I also think this have something to do with her boyfriend, probably in a bad way, since she won't talk about him. The story made me feel sad for Christine for whatever it is that she suffers for. “

This incapacity or unwillingness to read what is implicit in the text may be connected to many pupils' difficulties in “suspending disbelief”; several studies by Russel Hunt and Douglas Vipond point out that many pupils adopt a so-called “information-driven” stance when approaching a text, that is to say they read primarily for information (qtd. in Beach 27). Another possible explanation is that in order to create a meaning from a text the reader must

somehow recognize himself or herself in the text: the reader “needs to share a knowledge of the world, a cultural repertoire with the text in order to take that text on board” (Sarland 94); consequently, if the world represented in the text is too far away from the reader’s world representation, the message will somehow not reach the reader’s consciousness. Issues like abortion and hiding a pregnancy might be very remote from some pupils’ life situations, and remained therefore unnoticed at first reading.

On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, half of the pupils in the class had no doubts at all about the main issue:

Heidi: “(...) It very quickly became clear to me that the operation Christine had was an abortion (...)”.

Monika: “I understood very quickly that Christine was pregnant”.

Olav: “The story is about a girl that gets pregnant and uses her little brother to cover up the surgery she is going to have”.

Karianne: “What struck me particularly in this text was that she was so secretive about her operation. My first thought was that I don’t think Christine had cancer at all. There are strong indications on that she got an abortion. Considering that she said it was a growth inside her. And when she walked out from the operation room she did it with tiny steps, and refused to sit down on her bum. She also wouldn’t go to her boyfriend’s house. Witch for me indicates that she got an abortion”.

Kristine: “I don’t think Christine had cancer, I believe she actually was going to have a baby. She refused to go to her boyfriend and wouldn’t tell her mum about the operation. The operation lasted for 30 minutes, and that’s not usual if you have cancer”.

Bjørn: “I think the story is about a girl who probably has had sex with her boyfriend and became pregnant. She hasn’t told her boyfriend or her mom. She wants to take an abortion but she is afraid of going to the doctor on her own so she brings her brother (...)”.

Terje: “I think the story tells about early pregnancy and the problems with it. I think like that because she doesn’t want to tell her mom anything about the doctor visit, she also tells Scott that they can’t go to her boyfriend’s house and started to cry when she

said it. Christine said that “it’s a kind of ... growth”. This makes me think of a baby. Later when Scott described Christine’s smile when she was going to the operation “...really they’ve got an alien creature hiding inside of them” which might be a symbol for a baby”.

These last examples show how the young readers look for details in the text itself or in their own general knowledge of the world to support their reflections; in other words, they ‘fill the gaps’ in the text: “readers of literature use their experience of the world and their knowledge of the conventions of literature to fill in what the words of the text do not tell them” (Thomson 123). Iser states that “what is missing (...), the gaps arising (...) – this is what stimulates the reader into filling the blanks with projections. He is drawn into the events and made to supply what is meant from what is not said” (168).

We also find traces of Beach’s five response processes, *emotional engagement, construction of an imagined world, imaging, connecting life experiences to the text, and evaluating/reflecting on their experience with the text* in the pupils’ immediate responses to the short story:

Examples of emotional engagement:

Monika: “And I felt sorry for her, maybe she never had someone who could tell her about the consequences. I felt bad for her when she was done with the little operation and hadn’t anyone to talk to”.

Rebekka: “The story made me feel sad for Christine for whatever it is that she suffers for”.

Kristine: “When I read this text I actually become pretty sad. I feel sorry for Scott and Christine. It doesn’t seem like anyone is taking good care of them. Children need parents who care about them. It seems like their mother just cares about herself and her own health”.

Olav: “The kids having secrets make me kind of feel angry, because the parents know what’s right and wrong and therefore they try to do anything to help you out”.

Karianne: “I can see myself in the situation to don’t have anybody to talk to. And feel alone and scared”.

The young readers feel sorry for Christine but also for her brother; they can identify with the children’s feeling of loneliness and also feel angry at their attitude and that of their mother.

Examples of construction of an imagined world:

Camilla: “The thing that struck me in this text is the relationships in the family. Almost all of them are hiding something secretly, it isn’t an open family at all. The other thing that struck me is when Scott is stealing, and when he says he have done it before”.

Cecilie: “This story tells me about how dishonesty lead us to trouble, because in the first place if we are just honest in that particular moment that we have this problem we can solve it immediately. We cannot solve problem by saying another lie. All I can say about the mother is she needs to change strategy in raising her children. It is hard to raise children but if there is a good communication between mother and daughter, I know it will work out just fine”.

Sandra: “Another think that made me anxious was when Scott thought to himself, “Don’t hit her, mom” that made it sound like it was a normal thing in their home, because he could even think that his mom would do such a thing”.

Construction of an imagined world includes imagining the characters’ thoughts and extending the story, which the above examples testify to (Sanchez 13).

Examples of imaging:

Monika: “I saw myself in Christine’s situation and tried to find out how I would react and do about it”.

Cecilie: “This made an impression to me because it might happen in real life and it is really difficult to handle this kind of situation”.

Terje: “I got the impression that the doctor’s waiting room was a little dirty and broken down. The receptionist was a little unprofessional, calling friends at the work place instead of focusing at her work”.

Here we see the pupils creating visual mental pictures of the characters and of the setting of the story.

Examples of connecting life experiences to the text:

Camilla: “I’m feeling closest to Christine. I think we are at the same age, we both have a little brother, we are girls and we both have a boyfriend”.

Heidi: “As a teenager I felt that I could relate to this story, especially the part about them not telling their parents about what happened. I myself could almost feel the hopelessness Christine was feeling in this situation, and the confusion Scott was dealing with”.

Rune: ”I were getting close to Scott because he is a boy and because he didn’t know anything about the situation like I do many times”.

Espen: “I feel closest to the boy/kid. Because when I was younger, people could think that I was just a little kid, even dough I was 14 years old”.

Bjørn: “I feel closest to the boy. He made me think about myself. Sometimes if my sisters want to do something wrong, they try to “cover” it by using me”.

The pupils easily identify with the characters Christine and Scott as they are or have been in similar situations.

Examples of evaluating/reflecting on their experience with the text: Many readers extracted some “meaning” or “message” from the short story, mostly connected to family relationships, protection against teenage pregnancy, or moral attitudes:

Siv: “I think that the message in the text is that you have to tell your parents everything, and that you don’t need to be embarrassed over something. Your parents have also been teenagers”.

Monika: "I guess the message in this story is that brothers and sisters are there for you no matter what. And maybe people should know the consequences for not using protection".

Frank: "The story tells me is that you always need someone by your side regardless of who they are if something bad is happening in your life".

Jesper: "The message in this story is maybe; don't lie, it will get you in trouble".

Camilla: "The story tells me that it's important with protection if you are having sex and you don't want to be pregnant. It also tells me that if you become pregnant, especially in a young age, the family will hopefully be there for you and support you. And also give you advices and help you to make a decision about what you are going to do with the baby".

Heidi: "I think the writer expressed their (Christine and Scott's) feelings very well (...) All in all I thought it was a great story about a little brother being there and supporting his sister through a hard time. I think this story's message was that no matter what happens, and even if you sometimes fight, your siblings are always there for you".

The above examples illustrate the different messages that the young readers received from the text. However, as we saw at the beginning of this analysis, some responses also reflected confusion:

Espen: "It was maybe one thing, the title did not say much about what we were going to read, so I did not know what the story was about, I thought we were going to read about someone on a vacation, or something like that".

Espen tried to use his knowledge of literary conventions concerning the title of the story, but this time his literary repertoire did not provide any help, but rather contributed to his confusion.

Lukas: "Nothing in particular struck me in this text. No words or expression (...) This story didn't tell me anything actually, it was just a story. And I couldn't catch any particular meaning in it".

Lukas's response has already been commented on at the beginning of 6.1. It seems to embody the 'boredom' which Thomson redefines as an "inability or unwillingness to participate in the creation of textual meaning, a failure to comprehend texts by filling in their gaps"; if a reader does not ask questions in his head as he reads he ends up being "confused" (187). This seems to be a typical feature among readers who are stuck at Thomson's developmental stage one, *unreflective interest in action* (ibid. 187).

To sum up, the pupils' responses to the short story "Somewhere Warm and Comfortable" testify to a huge variation. Some readers only understood the words and consequently struggled with the meaning behind the words, some used their understanding of the world and of text conventions to create meaning, well on their way to becoming mature interpreters and, I think, enjoying their reading. All could relate, to different extents, with the characters and their situations. A lot of work remains to be done to help them all move ahead and progress towards a better understanding and a greater creation of meaning in their encounter with literary texts.

6.2 Reader Responses to an Excerpt from the Novel *Holes*

Even though I would have liked my vocational classes to read the novel *Holes* in its entirety as well, I soon understood that this would prove very difficult to achieve due to a lack of time and of motivation. The vocational classes at vg2 level have only 90 minutes of English classes a week, and since many of these pupils do not do homework, it seemed utopian to expect them to read an English novel as homework. Reading the entire novel in class did not seem to me a valid alternative as it would take ages and would necessarily lead to dropping parts of the syllabus which are required by the curriculum. I therefore opted for 'the easier way out': reading the excerpt from *Holes* which is in the textbook and watching the film. The pupils were asked to respond both to the textbook excerpt and to the film.

The novel excerpt presents the episode where Stanley agrees to teach Zero how to read and write. Zero has gotten his nickname because everybody thinks he is stupid. However, he proves to be a very smart and quick learner. This excerpt is ideal for taking up issues like prejudices, group pressure, bullying, learning, friendships, etc. It is a good introduction to viewing the film.

After reading the excerpt the pupils were asked to write down their response to it and the following questions were proposed as a starting point:

What struck you particularly in this novel excerpt? Are there any words / expressions / details which made an impression on you?

Which feelings does the story raise in you? Which character do you feel closest to? Why?

What does this story tell you? (What is in your opinion the main idea / message in this story?)

Does the excerpt make you want to read the whole novel / see the film?

As I did in chapter five when analyzing the pupils' responses to songs, I use Beach's categorization here with the five response processes: *emotional engagement, construction of an imagined world, imaging, connecting life experiences to the text, and evaluating/reflecting on their experience with the text*. Is there any indication that the pupils show greater complexity in their responses to a novel excerpt? In order to answer this question I turn to some response examples illustrating the five processes:

Examples of emotional engagement:

Bastian: "I feel sorry for the boys that needs to spend time in teen jail, and that the boy can't read and write".

Jostein: "I feel good when I read this excerpt from this novel. Zero can't read, but he isn't stupid, he had just not had the opportunity to learn. It is good to read that Stanly doesn't judge Zero, but instead he offers him help to learn. Even if Zero can't read his is good at other things, for example digging and math".

Geir: "In this novel I feel sorry for the boys who are basically working for other people's benefit. And I feel angry at the people who are letting it go on".

Åse: "I feel much bad things about Zero, It feels like he doesn't have too many friends and he maybe not been taking good against in the class and that can be the reason for he not have learn the alphabet".

The pupils feel empathy with the characters and express feelings of sorrow and anger at the way Zero is treated.

Examples of construction of an imagined world: according to Sanchez, this also implies for example empathizing with the perspectives or situations of characters, imagining their thoughts or extending the story (13); I could not find explicit examples of this process in the short responses produced by the pupils, but this stage in a way prolongs the *emotional engagement* which is necessary for the reader to enter the secondary world created in contact with the text; it seems that some of the pupils were reluctant to enter this secondary world, as implied in the following response extract:

Arild: “I don’t think the story has very much believability, and therefore I do not get any specific emotion watching it. I’ve seen the movie before and I did not enjoy it at all. I don’t relate to any of the character in the movie in my opinion”.

If a reader does not agree to the indispensable ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ no creation of meaning is possible in his or her encounter with the text; according to Benton and Fox, response to story-telling is sustained by “the willingness to believe in an acknowledged illusion and the need to know the end” (4). Obviously, this pupil refused to take the role of implied reader, “the kind of reader that the real reader is invited by the implied author to become so as to participate in the production of the text’s meaning” (Thomson 113).

Examples of imaging:

Jostein: “There is one sentence in the novel I specially notice me: “Well, I’ve heard it before, somewhere, Zero said, trying to act like it was nothing, but his big smile gave him away”. Everyone needs to hear that they are good at something, Zero tried to act like he didn’t care when Stanly said he was good at reciting, but his big smile revealed him”.

In this example Jostein pictures in his mind how a proud Zero smiles at his own achievement.

Examples of connecting life experiences to the text:

Bastian: “I remember that I couldn’t read or write before either. And it’s not funny, but I did learn right before I started school. But before that, it was terrible that I couldn’t read. I can’t image how it would be, if I couldn’t read or write”.

Jostein: “In some way I can feel close to Zero. I was not the best pupil in the class, I was not so good learning to read. When I started at this upper secondary school and learned about electricity and got very good grades, I realized that I am perhaps not so good at reading, but I am good at electricity!”

These pupils can identify with Zero because they have experienced similar situations and feelings of not being good at something, and they see these mirrored in the text.

Examples of evaluating/reflecting on their experience with the text: The pupils responses vary: some looked forward to knowing more after reading the extract and were excited at the idea of watching the film, while others found the extract uninteresting – it did not tempt them to see the film; some pupils had already seen the film and found it boring, but others liked it:

Bastian: “I think I would like to read the book, because it seems exciting, so I maybe want to loan it in the library. And yes! I would like to see the film, because I would like to see if it’s like the texts”.

Geir: “This novel struck me as something that I wouldn’t read. I didn’t really like to read this; however, I have seen this film and I liked it (...) I think this excerpt isn’t doing Holes any justice, the excerpt is boring compared to the film. When I read this excerpt I don’t want to watch or read the film”.

Arild: “Nothing struck me in any particular way in this text, and therefore I thought it was boring (...) As I said, I have already seen this film, and did not enjoy it at all. I do not want to read the whole novel either, because of the disappointing movie”.

Ragnar: “I didn’t think too much of this short story from the novel Holes. The reason is: I didn’t really get any information from this short story, everything I learned from this was the fact that a boy wasn’t able to read or write (...) The fact that they are in the middle of a dried out lake and digging holes, that could make a good movie,

therefore I guess I would see the movie, but not read the book. Usually I would read the book, but I didn't find the text that interesting. So reading the book is just a waste of time, since it takes longer time than watching the movie”.

Daniel: “This excerpt doesn't make me want to read the whole novel. I have seen the film and after reading this excerpt I think that the book isn't so good as the film”.

Jostein: “After reading this excerpt from the novel *Holes* I want to know how it ends. Does Zero learn to read? I think I have to see the film!”

I found it strange that so many of my pupils reacted negatively to this novel excerpt, which is to be found in their textbook, because it was precisely reading that excerpt in the textbook that made me curious to read the whole novel *Holes*. This proves once more that different readers respond differently to the same text (Rosenblatt, *The Reader* 14). Obviously, “because of the difference in age, social roles, life experience teachers do not read like adolescents do”, and a text appreciated by a teacher may not produce the same enthusiasm with the pupils (Leer 141).

Besides, the fact that several pupils expressed a desire to watch the film rather than read the novel, or judged the book more boring than the film, reflects an attitude already commented upon by several researchers and confirmed by various studies: youngsters spend much more time watching television, for example, than reading books and the new media with their ready-made entertainment for the consumers represent a threat to the culture of reading and imagination as ‘getting lost in a book’ requires a greater active involvement from the reader (Thomson 36; Steffensen 243-263). Thomson believes that watching a film before or while reading the book may “prevent the readers from forming their own mental images of characters, places and events” (...) due to the “powerful” and “explicit visual images” (39). The results of the pupils’ survey presented in chapter three also showed that pupils at this upper secondary school in Østfold County generally spent much more time in front of their computers than holding books in their hands.

As a conclusion to the reader-response experiment with the novel extract, we see that many pupils had no difficulty in reacting emotionally to the characters and connecting their situation to their own life experience, but many responses also lacked depth and complexity, and testified to a somewhat superficial reaction.

Following their responses to the excerpt, all the pupils watched the film and were given a writing assignment on *Holes*. The assignment consisted of a choice of three essays focusing on the following topics: Your favourite character in *Holes*; Friendship in *Holes*; Persistence in *Holes* (see Appendix 8 for the complete assignment text). In their reader response essays I will particularly look for traces of the six stages in Thomson's developmental model of response to literature: "unreflective interest in action, empathizing, analogizing, reflecting on the significance of events (theme) and behavior (distanced evaluation of characters), reviewing the whole work as the author's creation, and consciously considered relationship with the author", including "recognition of textual ideology, understanding of self (identity theme) and of one's own reading processes" (360-361). I am aware that while most pupils have no difficulty responding in the first three stages, responses at stages four, five and six are increasingly demanding and therefore much less common, as Jean Blunt also discovered with her students (qtd. in Thomson 153). Taking into consideration the very limited time given to group discussion and reflection following the viewing of the film I did not expect very "mature" responses.

Geir's essay (Appendix 9) consists of a detailed summary of the plot of *Holes*, but it does not actually answer the assignment as required. This account testifies to Thomson's stage one, *unreflective interest in action*, which focuses on action and what is going to happen next (ibid. 360-361). Several other essays contain examples of different stages of the developmental model:

Stage two: *empathizing*, which shows the reader's emotional engagement with the characters:

Gunnar: "The character Hector Zeroni is the character I like the best. He seems like a kid that really is kind but he has problems showing this to other people. By a glance it might seem like he does not care for others, but I think in the end he seem to be glad to see the other kids.

Being an, or to feel like being an orphan, like the way Hector feels can't be easy. I kind of feel sorry for the way Hector lost his mother. Losing your own parents when you are a child cannot be easy. Because of this, I think Hector has become the way he is (...)

Seeing the way Hector reacts when Stanley is bullied is some of the reasons why I like Hector good. He is not only smart, but he is also seems like kind of a guardian”.

In these sentences Gunnar expresses strong empathy for Zero and his situation as an orphan and a victim of bullying.

Stage three: *analogizing*, where the reader is making connections between the characters and his or her life, and **stage four: *reflecting on the significance of events and behavior***:

Selma: “What makes this character special is that many people can recognize themselves in his personality. Many people pre-judge people that don’t talk as much as they do, and then they tend to judge others wrong, as they did with Zero in this movie.

I don’t recognize Zero in myself, but I do with other people I know. They have the same problem that Zero had and they have problems to get people to listen to them and understand”.

Here Selma shows an ability to “distance herself from her character” and “generalize about the portrayal of human values in fiction” (Thomson 200).

Stage five: *reviewing the whole work as a construct*; this involves “drawing on literary and cultural repertoire, interrogating the text to match the author’s representation with one’s own, and recognition of implied author” (ibid. 361). Adolescent readers often have difficulties reaching this stage, although most of the literature teaching in schools operates at this level (ibid. 223).

Gunnar: “After seeing the movie I feel that Hector is compared to the pig we can see at the retrospective glance. Not only because he is carried up the mountain, I think they are kind of connected because it feels like he is growing, or develops through the movie, just like the pig did”.

Gunnar reflects on the story by drawing on his literary repertoire, which is defined by Kathleen McCormick as “the reader’s knowledge and expectations of what literature is or should be; these are generated by his or her earlier reading experiences and the literary conventions which arise from the literary and general ideologies in his or her culture” (qtd. in

Molloy 55). Gunnar's literary repertoire enables him to see a comparison between Hector and the pig, who are indeed connected in the story, even though this point of view had escaped the teacher. According to Thomson, with a little help Gunnar could easily reach stage six of the developmental model: "consciously considered relationship with the author, recognition of textual ideology, and understanding of self (identity theme) and of one's own reading processes" (223). In order to develop his ability to reflect Gunnar could for example be encouraged to write a diary entry about what happens in his mind while reading.

To sum up, the readers' responses to *Holes* - novel extract and film- reflect the different stages of Thomson's developmental model in varying ways. However, evidence of responses at stages five and six is the exception, not the rule, and many pupils only operate at stages one to three of *unreflective interest in action, empathizing* or *analogizing*, and some at an even more rudimentary level. This mirrors Thomson's assumptions and various teachers' findings in their work with reader response (153; 209-224). In chapter seven I will analyze pupils' responses to a complete novel and compare these responses to those I have just examined in the present chapter. It is my hope that the responses to be analyzed in chapter seven will show a deeper reflection among the pupils and a greater understanding of themselves and others.

7. Reader Responses in the Classroom: the Novel *Holes*

During the 2010 autumn term I devised a teaching scheme around the novel *Holes*, by Louis Sachar, for the Literature in Language Course 2 (Wauthier 2010). This teaching scheme was basically inspired by reader response theories and focused on the pupils' experiences while reading. For a complete outline of the teaching scheme I refer to my term paper (ibid). The teaching scheme was implemented in the following term, spring 2011. The pupils reflected upon and discussed their reading in groups, the emphasis being on sharing the reading experience, not on perfectly correct language. They were also asked to write a reading diary and were finally given essay assignments focusing on their impressions of the novel. In this chapter I will look at pupils' reading diaries written during the 2011 spring term and analyze some of their entries. I will also comment on some reader response essays. Then I will evaluate the literary project based on the pupils' answers to a short evaluation survey. I will explain what changes I decided to make before carrying out the project a second time with pupils during the spring of 2012 and I will proceed to analyze these pupils' reading diaries and reader response essays. Both classes were first-year classes in the programme for general studies. The names of the pupils are all fictitious in order to conceal their identities.

In the abundant material provided I will concentrate on only a few pupils' diaries and essays from 2011 and from 2012. The particular diaries come from pupils with varying linguistic levels; some have good English proficiency, while others are struggling. In this project however, the emphasis was on the readers' responses, not on their linguistic skills, and it was particularly touching and encouraging for me as a teacher to discover traces of mature personal responses and a budding interest in literature among some of the weaker pupils. Meanwhile, I must admit that I felt a bit unsure as to how to use reading logs the first time I carried out my literary project using *Holes* in the English classroom.

7.1 Reading Diaries 2011

For this analysis I mainly drew inspiration from Beach (52-70), Benton and Fox (12-18), Carlisle (13-18), Sanchez (3-13) and Thomson (167-234). Carlisle defines the reading log as "a simple and direct tool to encourage and tap into learners' individual responses to a novel" (12). It is important that this task is performed while the pupils are reading so that they can

enter the *secondary world* created by the writer, and hopefully move beyond literal understanding towards aesthetic appreciation of the text (ibid. 12-13). Writing a reading journal or log has two purposes: first, it shows the teacher that the pupil actually has read the book; second, it gives the pupils the “opportunity to respond personally and honestly in order to write their way to a deeper understanding of the books” (Thomson 251). For the sake of simplification I will use Benton and Fox’s classification but I will also look for evidence of Thomson’s developmental levels in the pupils’ responses.

Benton and Fox list four elements of response to literature which the reader inside a secondary world uses in his encounter with the text: *anticipating/retrospecting*, *picturing*, *interacting*, and *evaluating*. In *anticipating/retrospecting* the reader guesses what is going to happen next, or what led to the current situation, and tries to imagine how the book is going to end. In *picturing* the reader gets images in his mind, for example of a character’s face or a scene description. In *interacting* the reader expresses opinions or feelings about a character’s personality or actions, events and situations, while *evaluating* has to do with comments on the skill of the writer (ibid. 12-18).

In Benton and Fox’s four response processes I can recognize some of the “*process strategies*” which Thomson elaborated on to build up his six-stage-developmental model as described in chapter two of this thesis:

1. unreflective interest in action (characterized by process strategies such as *rudimentary mental images and predicting what might happen next in the short term*);
2. empathizing (*mental images of affect and expectations about characters*);
3. analogizing (*drawing on the repertoire of personal experiences, making connections between characters and one’s own life*);
4. reflecting on the significance of events (theme) and behavior (distanced evaluation of characters) (*generating expectations about alternative possible long-term outcomes, interrogating the text, filling in gaps, formulating puzzles, enigmas, accepting hermeneutic challenges*);
5. reviewing the whole work as the author’s creation (*drawing on literary and cultural repertoire, interrogating the text to match the author’s representation with one’s own, and recognition of implied author*);
6. consciously considered relationship with the author, recognition of textual ideology, understanding of self (identity theme) and of one’s own reading processes (*recognition of*

implied reader in the text, and the relationship between implied author and implied reader; reflexivity, leading to understanding of textual ideology, personal identity and one's own reading processes) (360-361).

I see a strong parallel between Benton and Fox's *interacting* and Thomson's *analogizing*; likewise, what Benton and Fox refer to as *evaluating* resembles Thomson's stages five and six, *reviewing the whole work as the author's creation and consciously considered relationship with the author*.

I will now use uncorrected extracts from pupils' reading diaries to illustrate Benton and Fox's four reading processes. The extracts are from Harald's, Henriette's and Marita's diaries and originate from the first time the reading scheme about *Holes* was carried out in the classroom (2011 spring term). The unabridged diaries are to be found in the appendices (12-14).

Examples of anticipating/retrospecting:

Harald: "However, as the story continued I began to get curious. Why are they digging holes? Who's the warden? What are the purposes of the camp? What kind of crimes did the boys commit?"(diary entry 1).

Henriette: "When Stanley is digging he finds a strange gold tube with initials on it. The letters is K and B, but he can't figure out what they stand for. (...) They can't decide what the object can be, but they think it could be a part of a pen, or something from a gun. But I think they are wrong. If it was something like that it wouldn't have initials on it. I think it is something more important"(diary entry 3).

"I wonder how it was for Caveman and Zero the moment right before they died. They had gone days without any water or something to drink. I don't think they could go long before they passed out or something. I really hope they are still alive, but the chances are really low. Maybe they have been saved by the police or some other people. Wonder if I should go looking for them?" (diary entry 8, writing X-Ray's diary).

These diary extracts illustrate how the readers try to figure out what is going to happen or reflect on possible causes of the present situation. Furthermore, in writing a diary entry from a character's viewpoint Henriette produces not only a creative answer but also an interpretative

and evaluative one (Thomson 308). Her position as onlooker or spectator allows her to combine “emotional involvement” with “cool detachment”; while writing her own text she has to ensure that her own literature production is psychologically consistent with the character relationships and descriptions she has read in the literary text (ibid. 309).

Examples of picturing:

Harald: “I kept reading, and suddenly the Warden appeared, and he was actually a she! I was so shocked, I always pictured the Warden to be a war veteran or some kind. But no, she is actually a woman with long red hair and red fingernails. Creepy...” (diary entry 3).

“Anyway, I feel sorry for the boys, and I can even picture the whole place in my head. A dry, desolated wasteland. Full of holes and the presence of hopelessness. Just thinking about it gives me the chills...” (diary entry 4).

Here the responses show the pictures the readers form in their minds of a particular character, or of a place.

Examples of interacting:

Henriette: “Stanley dug his first hole this day. (...) He was very proud after doing this, because this was something he had finished and struggled for all by himself. It reminds me of the first time I did big things as well. For example the first time I could swim all by myself, or the first time I rode my bike” (diary entry 2).

“Stanley’s heart has hardened in the time he has spent at Camp Green Lake. Now he is thinking more about what is best for him and not all the others, for example when he and Zero makes a deal. He thinks it is the best for him to have an hour rest during the day. I think it’s a little selfish, because it is a much harder job for Zero who has to dig both his hole, and parts of Stanley’s. In addition to this he has to learn new things. In my opinion Stanley could help Zero without getting anything back, since it is not so hard to explain things and learn other things to someone. It also shows that Zero is a smart kid, even though he can’t read and write” (diary entry 4).

“Stanley has blamed his no-good-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather every time something bad has happened to him. This time he couldn’t do this, because now it was his own choice. After the boys fought at Camp Green Lake, Stanley stole the watertruck from Mr.Sir and tried to drive away. This wasn’t very clever of him, because he had never driven a truck before so he didn’t know how to start driving it” (diary entry 6).

Harald: “I would probably have done the same, and I like the way Stanley thinks, he’s still an easy-minded child like me (...) Frankly, something in me tells me that Zero is dead, but I certainly hope not. To be honest, I don’t exactly know what I would have done in a situation like that. I would probably just have gone back to the camp, due to me not having the guts enough to stand up for myself, but still I guess we don’t know how we would have reacted before experiencing the whole situation”(diary entry 6).

“Anyway, when both Zero and Stanley climbed up the mountain; I was pretty shocked. They haven’t eaten for so long, and the heat was scorching. Very astonishing, and when I read those chapters; it also encouraged me to never give up on things that may seem difficult at the beginning... Their accomplishments must have been survival instincts mixed up with some adrenalin. Frankly I love the feeling of adrenalin. I would probably have run all the way back to the camp. The feeling of that hunger and the thirst is too unbearable. Now I’m too curious to know WHAT they’re going to find at the summit!...” (diary entry 7).

In these diary extracts we see how the readers express opinions about the characters’ personalities and acts, and connect the characters’ situations to their own personal experiences. The examples show both emotional involvement and distance, a “paradoxical” but necessary combination that “characterizes the reflective and evaluative processes of the reader in the role of the spectator” (Thomson 81-82).

Examples of evaluating:

Henriette: “I think it is pretty similar, the only thing that is different is that Stanley is fat in the book, but in the film he has a pretty normal body. The author said that this was because they couldn’t find a young boy who could loose that much weight in a short period. This wouldn’t be healthy” (film review of *Holes*).

Henriette compares a character's appearance in the book and in the film and expresses a judgment on why there had to be a difference in the film.

Harald: "I just had to fill in the "holes", and when that thought came up in my mind, I understood one of the purposes of many in this book's title. As I found more about their names; my thoughts were that they are pretty creative and hilarious" (diary entry 1).

Harald reflects on the title of the novel and on the nicknames of the characters, which he finds "pretty creative and hilarious", thus paying tribute to the author's skills.

"So we got to know about the curse as well, and frankly I have to admit that it was very uncreative and common. The writer should have avoided the clichés. Typical fairytales, but anyway now we know why the family is cursed..." (diary entry 2).

"You know, because the story would have been more intense if Zero had died. Then Stanley would have tried to survive solostyle, and that would have built the suspense. Then again the puzzles in the story wouldn't fit together in the end" (diary entry 7).

Harald judges the ending of the book as "very uncreative and common" and he thinks that the writer should have avoided "the clichés" but he admits that this is typical for "fairytales", thus drawing on his literary repertoire and his knowledge of genre conventions. Further, there would have been more suspense "if Zero had died". In *Becoming a Reader: The Experience of Fiction from Childhood to Adulthood* Joseph A. Appleyard argues that while young children's worlds center on the reader as player and as hero or heroine, in adolescence the focus is on "the reader as thinker" (94-120). He presents three types of responses to reading which are typical for adolescents: "involvement with the book and identification with the character", "realism of the story", and finally, a good story "makes them think" (ibid. 100). In realistic stories, readers expect to find reflections of the tragedies and heartaches of life and for Harald this includes the possibility that one of the main characters will die. At the same time, his reflections lead him to conclude that the consistency of the story depends on it being as it is: "Then again the puzzles in the story wouldn't fit together in the end". Beach wrote that "readers apply rules of coherence to understand how the elements serve to create an overall whole" (29). Harald demonstrates an awareness that the novel is a construct whose elements must fit together to give meaning (stage five in Thomson's developmental model 360-361).

“There is one more thing, and this may sound very odd, but when it was mentioned that Stanley sang a song for Zero up in the mountains. I noticed that it surprisingly resembled Eljah’s deal with the notorious foreseer, madame Zeroni. AHA, Zero MUST be her descendant, and therefore ZERO must be an abbreviation for ZERONI. In addition, the deal was that Elja was supposed to carry madame Zeroni up a giant mountain and sing a song. It has to be, and then Stanley just performed that task, or deal and perhaps the curse is lit? I’ll have to continue reading” (diary entry 8).

Here we notice how the reader Harald is filling in the ‘holes’ in the story, those “gaps” which are an essential part of reader response theories: “Whenever the reader bridges the gaps, communication begins (...) Hence the structured blanks of the text stimulate the process of ideation to be performed by the reader on terms set by the text (...) in other words, they induce the reader to perform basic operations *within* the text” (Iser 169). Iser considered the gaps or “indeterminacies” which exist in any literary text as the “stimuli to the reader’s creative participation” (qtd. in Thomson 123). By looking for details in the text itself or using his own general knowledge of the world and of textual conventions Harald does what every reader is invited to do in order to “become collaborator or co-author in the creation of meaning” (ibid. 123).

Both Harald’s and Henriette’s responses exhibit evidence of reflection well beyond Thomson’s first stage of *unreflective interest in action*. They show *empathy* with the characters’ fate and draw strong connections between the characters and their own lives (*analogizing*). What is interesting is that their responses, especially Harald’s, also show that they are capable of reflection at the upper stages of Thomson’s developmental model: they “generate expectations about alternative possible long-term outcomes, fill in gaps, draw on their literary and cultural repertoires” and reflect on their “relationship with the author” (360-361).

I will close this series of examples from the 2011 diaries by citing an extract from Marita’s diary which was a pleasant and encouraging surprise for me. As her texts show, Marita is struggling with the English language. However, Marita seems to have enjoyed working with the novel *Holes* and in the following extract she shows unexpected reflection about the content of a song which is mentioned several times in the story:

Diary 7-11

If only, if only, the woodpecker sighs,

The bark on the tree was as soft as the skies

While the wolf waits below, hungry and lonely,

Crying to the moo – oo – oon,

If only, if only.

When Sara ask what it mean. Elya tried his best to translate it from Latvian into English, but it wasn't the same. I think the song means that the woodpecker wants the tree to be soft so the woodpecker can hide from the wolf, and the wolf is hungry and wants the woodpecker so fall from down from the tree. Maybe that's song is the curse. That Stanley is the woodpecker and the world is the wolf, because Stanley's fathers sing it to him, and they have done it to all the Stanley's in the family. As I said before, the woodpecker wants the tree to be soft, maybe the woodpecker don't make it, and the woodpecker cant make the hole, as Stanley, the books name is holes so I think Stanley try to make holes but the wolf, the word or the people in his live, dos so I don't make it. (Appendix 14)

In her interpretation Marita uses her literary repertoire and her knowledge of the meaning of symbols to compare the characters in the song with the characters in the story. As I see it, these activities belong to stage five in Thomson's developmental model, which according to studies is rarely attained by adolescents (Thomson 153). It is my hope that this literary experiment may have contributed to giving Marita and other strugglers a positive encounter with literature where their responses are validated as "honourably reportable" (Chambers 38-40).

7.2 Reader Response Essays 2011

Although it might seem far-fetched to call the kind of essay assignments given to the pupils after reading *Holes* "reader response essays", the intention was to make them reflect about their reading experiment and provide topics that would be likely to generate responses involving their empathy, connections with the characters, as well as creative writing about

what might happen in the future, etc. The pupils were given an essay assignment about *Holes* with five different topics to choose from (Appendix 15).

The essays were written in school to ensure that the pupils actually wrote the essays themselves. All the essays quoted in this text are to be found in the appendices (16-20). The pupils' texts bore many examples of the first four stages in Thomson's developmental model (360-361):

Jessica: "I really liked the book since I think that everyone can recognize themselves in one of the character in the book (stage two, *emphatizing, or expressing expectations about the characters*) (...) Zero is smart and also honest. In chapter 22 he turns around to Stanley and says: 'you didn't steal the sneakers,' he said. Stanley said nothing. (p.96). it's then everyone who reads the book realise that Stanley is innocent (stage four, *reflecting on the significance of events and behaviour, filling in gaps*) (...) I personally identify really with Zero. Sometimes I can be really quiet when people talk to me or ask me questions. It seems like everything is just blowing through my mind like Zeros, but in fact everything is captured. (...) personally I also like to learn new things myself and I'm really open to learn. In return Zero digs in Stanleys hole one hour per day, so Stanley wouldn't be too tired when he was about to teach Zero later the same day. I'm also that type of person who gives something in return for those who help me with things I want. (...) Zero soon runs away, and no one wants to go after him. Sometimes I'm also a person who also wants to run away from everything in my daily life, but that isn't so easy at the author writes in his book. Zero and I are equal each other at many points, but I consider that Zero is more clever than me". (stage three, *analogising, or making connections between characters and one's own life*).

In Jessica's essay we thus recognize traces of Thomson's developmental model at stages two to four: she draws connections between the characters and her own personality and experience and constructs her own text by filling in what is not directly said, as she fills in the gaps (Thomson 207).

Some pupils demonstrated an ability to *review the whole work as the author's creation* (stage five), and even to reflect on the *consciously considered relationship with the author* (stage six), an ability which according to Thomson is difficult to reach for many adolescents (210). 'Difficult' does not mean 'impossible' and the readers who have "a wider literary repertoire

to draw on, are more able than others to entertain the idea of texts as constructs of authors who have individual attitudes, interests and styles” (ibid. 212). Both Lars and Johnny chose assignment 3 where they reflect upon the question: What, in your opinion, is it that makes *Holes* so popular?

Lars: “The author writes in a way, so the reader gets sympathy with the main characters, and this shows that Louis Sachar is a great author. The title “Holes”, may also mean other things than just digging holes. (...) Another thing that makes the story so good is that the story is very open for thinking. Even in the end, the reader may have a lot of questions that is not answered. This makes the reader think, and the reader may think out the answers of some of the questions that are not answered. As the author says “You will have to fill in the holes yourself” (...) I think that the author chose Stanley, to show that you do not need to be very strong or have a nice body to achieve something. Stanley is a normal boy and he is able to dig a hole that is five feet deep and five feet wide every day and save a boy who is close to death. So the author is in a way comparing the reader with Stanley to find similarities, and if you feel very much like the main character, you get more excited and want to read more. (...)When the reader sees that Stanley is so brave, the reader also wants to be brave. Maybe the reader would not hesitate next time someone can be saved. Stanleys attitude is very nice, and many people can learn from him, even though the story is not true”.

By writing that “the story is not true” Lars draws on his literary repertoire and his knowledge of literary conventions for fiction (stage five). In a somewhat awkward way Lars also acknowledges the role of the *implied reader* who gets caught in the story and wants to resemble the main character thanks to the skills of the *implied author*. This ability to recognize the implied reader and the relationship between implied reader and implied author in the text is characteristic of stage six (Thomson 360-361). Interestingly, Lars’ essay with its emphasis on ‘thinking’ is typical of the adolescent reading experience described by Appleyard in *Becoming a Reader*; teenagers tend to give three kinds of responses in their reactions to stories: “involvement with the book and identification with the character”, “realism of the story”, and finally, they say that a good story “makes them think” (100). In the turmoil of their emotions and inner conflicts adolescents discover a world which is much more complex than they thought when they were children. In trying to make sense out of this turbulent world, the adolescent becomes “an observer and evaluator of self and others, so it is an easy

step from involvement in the story to reflecting about it” (ibid 100-101). We find these three kinds of responses: *involvement and identification*, *realism* and the need for *thinking* and answering questions in Johnny’s essay as well:

The book has won several awards (according to the assignment), and it is sold worldwide. Because of this, it is easy to say that Louis Sachar knows how to write. Although it is a popular book, what is it that makes it so? In my opinion, it is because of the way he has planned the book: Mysterious secrets that makes it impossible to stop reading, the creative concept of the book, emotions and feelings, the variation of personality between the characters, and all of his describing... First of all, as said, Louis Sachar knows how to build up a book.(...) The story is brilliant. It is creative, exciting, mysterious etc. What makes this book so well-planned is that he includes the past of Green Lake into the present story, and in that way, he creates these holes, these question that is to be answered. (...) During the novel, the reader also gets in touch with these feelings and emotions. Louis Sachar has written in such a solid way, that he makes the story realistic and real. We get to feel Stanley’s dry mouth because of his dehydration in the excruciating warmth, his sore hands as a result of digging, his comfortable feeling around Mr. Pendanski, the hopeless feeling of being trapped because of the vast, enormous wasteland, and the constant fear of being bitten by the deadly yellow-spotted lizards and other dangerous animals. (Appendix 18)

Johnny states that the author “knows how to build a book”, which implies his awareness that the book is a construct (stage five); further, in referring to the story as “realistic and real”, Johnny describes his vision of the secondary world where the implied reader is invited to enter by the implied author (Thomson 113). Like Lars, Johnny also demonstrates ability to reflect on his *consciously considered relationship with the author* (stage six) (Thomson 360-361).

As mentioned in chapter four creative writing is also a typical reader-response task: in creative writing pupils “interpret and explore texts by recreating all or parts of them in different forms or media and through different character viewpoints or narrative modes” (Thomson 308). Examples of creative tasks might be to “present a radio version of a short story or event from a novel, write a newspaper report about an event in a novel or play, write a letter from a fictional character to another, write a monologue about a character’s intimate

thoughts”, etc (ibid. 308). Several pupils wrote diary entries from, for example, a character’s point of view, but the first essay assignment (Appendix 15) I gave to my pupils also opened up for creative writing: imagine a reunion between the characters from *Holes* twenty years after the end of the novel (assignment one) and write a newspaper article about a climactic event in the novel (assignment five). Creative writing favours the role of the onlooker (or spectator) and helps the pupils to view literature as a construct (Thomson 309). Being a spectator or onlooker allows detached evaluation of the events, which is of the “utmost importance in building up, confirming and modifying all but the very simplest of our values” (Harding 252). When encouraged to tell his or her own stories the storyteller is able to “stand back from his or her personal feelings and make conscious decisions about the ordering of events, and about such matters as tone and style” (Thomson 320). By writing their own literary texts pupils “learn more about the way professional writers work, and thus become better readers, as well as writers of literature” (ibid. 321). They understand the constructedness of literature better and can more easily access the higher stages of the developmental model, which in turn prepares them for the demands of literature study in school.

One example of creative writing is Nina’s essay which she starts with the following words: “*I choose to right this assignment because I thought it would be funny to play with how their future could have been. This is how I could have imagined their future*”. Nina admits that she wanted to play, which testifies to her enjoyment of this task. The following extract from her essay shows how she used elements from Louis Sachar’s story *Holes* to shape her own view of the characters’ future:

Stanley and Zero were working together in their *family company*. Zero had his own drugstore, where he sold different types of *drugs made by onion* and you could buy the *famous product sploosh*. Stanley continued working with different *commercials for Zeros drugs*. He had a lot of celebrities working for him. With all that they didn’t have time to find someone to share their lives with. But Stanley did have a girlfriend, her name was Anna. Her name was also a *palindrome*” (...) The houses were big and yellow, and there were a lot of flowers and fruit trees. Especially peach trees. The whole place was changed. A girl with a pink dress came out one of the houses, she went towards one of the fruit trees and climbed up. (my emphasis) (Appendix 19).

From the novel we recognize Zero and Stanley's strong friendship bonds, the healing properties of the onion and Stanley's father's invention, sploosh. We also 'see' in our mind the commercial created to launch sploosh, and smile at the girlfriend's name which is a palindrome just like Stanley Yelnats. Further, for this reunion twenty years after the events Nina has recreated the place as it was before "the curse".

Another very successful example of a creative essay was produced by Nils who wrote a newspaper report entitled "The first rain in hundred years!" (Appendix 20). Nils has adopted a neutral, journalistic tone in his text and he has succeeded in mixing 'scientific' meteorological data with details from the novel about Camp Green Lake during the different periods of its history; we 'recognize' the place as it was before "the curse", a flourishing community, then as a desert, which is the setting for Stanley Yelnats's digging of holes, and finally the hope of a new beginning brought by the first drops of rain in hundred years:

The first rain in hundred years!

In Camp Green Lake, Texas Wednesday the 4th of June the first rain came in over a hundred years. The local weather station says the last rainfall was reported the 7th September 1905. The local meteorologist Joe Gardener says the weather in Camp Green Lake is a phenomenon.

The weather station started its measurements in the 1850s. The old files from the weather station are very surprising. The files tell us about a climate with lots of rain and even a big lake situated central in the area. At the time 1850 to 1905 was Camp green lake an area full of life. Approximately 500 people lived in the small community and it was possible to harvest grain and different kinds of fruit. But today Camp Green Lake is completely different, a wasteland with just small amounts of water and no life except of some poisonous lizards. It's hard to imagine that it's even the same place, says Joe Gardener.

Joe Gardener who has lived his whole life in Camp Green Lake started a few years ago to investigate what really happened in Camp Green Lake in the year 1905. He started to search through the old samples of The Camp Green Lake journal, and he found out something dramatically. In 1905 the infamous Kate Barlow had an illegal affair with a coloured man. In 1905 Texas was a conservative state and the coloured man was

sentenced to the death penalty. He was killed and as we know Kate Barlow left Camp Green Lake and became an outlaw. This is no logical explanation that will result in weather changes but the dates match perfectly, says Joe Gardener. After this event no rainfall is reported in Camp Green Lake until Wednesday this week.

With the first rain in over a hundred years the few inhabitants of Camp Green Lake have gained some hope. Maybe it will continue raining in the future, says Joe Gardener. He is the only inhabitant in the area except of the staff and inmates of the Camp Green Lake work camp. Joe is dreaming of reestablishing the society that once was in the area. If the rain keep coming maybe others than inmates will move to Camp Green Lake, says Joe Gardener with a smile.

Written by Nils Smith in the Texas post 18.02.2011

For Thomson, reading and writing are both active, creative processes and “you can become a much more perceptive reader of literature if you are regularly creating something like literature of your own, and you can become a much more successful writer of poetry and stories from personal and imagined experience if you have done enough enjoyable reading of literature for it to produce internalized after-effects” (318-319). Whether the pupils have had ‘enough enjoyable reading of literature’ in the context of the present reading scheme is a difficult question to answer but the following evaluation carried out at the end of the reading project may shed some light on the matter.

7.3 Evaluation 2011

At the end of the reading project about *Holes* the pupils were asked to evaluate it to help me revise and adapt the project. With this first classroom experience in mind and taking into account the pupils’ evaluations I decided to use *Holes* again with pupils the following year, but I modified the project a little bit. First, six weeks devoted to the novel and related activities exclusively was a long time and according to several pupils’ evaluations some of the discussion questions and other tasks proposed were unnecessary or uninteresting. I thus shortened the scheme and took out some of the questions and tasks. In carrying out the project the second time I decided to reserve one double teaching unit (90 minutes) per week to working with *Holes*, while the remaining three weekly units would be spent on other independent tasks (reading of other texts and various connected tasks, online exercises,

writing, etc.). Further, the initial *Holes* project also included viewing the film *Holes* as well as another film with similar themes, *The Shawshank Redemption*. I decided to keep the film *Holes* but dropped *The Shawshank Redemption* in this setting. Even though the latter is a rich and wonderful story well worth spending time on, *Holes* can stand perfectly well on its own, and there is no need to prolong the project after its natural closure. However, since several pupils expressed their enthusiasm for *The Shawshank Redemption* I might show it to them some other time and have them draw comparisons with the themes in *Holes*.

Here is a summary of the pupils' anonymous answers when evaluating the project. For the purposes of this thesis I chose to only retain the questions dealing with the pupils' reactions to the novel. Questions 1 and 3 were prompted by Molloy's assumption that "literature helps pupils to understand the world and themselves" (301).

1. What did the author tell you about life and living through this book?

What the pupils found expressed in this book is that life is not fair, but that one should not give up, and that friendship is important:

- *He told about injustice and other moral issues*
- *A lot of misunderstanding, friendship, and the strength to hold on and not give up!*
- *The author told us some things worth knowing. You should stay positive no matter what situation you're in, and never give up.*
- *I think the author teaches us a lot of important things in life like friendship, hope, justice, injustice.*
- *That life can be unfair, but one day it will be fair to you again.*
- *Life is unfair, and only you can make the best of it.*

2. What is in your opinion the most important message of the book?

The pupils' opinions confirm and support what was already expressed in the answers to question one: reading *Holes* conveys a message about hope, and the importance of friendship and taking care of each other.

- *Do not give up.*
- *The good always wins.*
- *Hope and friendship is the most important message of the book.*

- *The most important message of the book is friendship. Don't think of your own misery, be good, don't lose hope. Life isn't always fair.*
- *The most important message is maybe to never give up your hope and to be open to other persons.*
- *I think the most important message of the book was that friendship is very important, and that it is important to take care of your friends.*

3. What did you learn about society and human experience?

Here we notice that some pupils are a bit unsure about what they may have learned or think they have learned “nothing special”. However, the majority express that they think they have learned that life is not fair, and that people can be very different, good or bad. Some express optimism that if you never give up, things will turn out to the better eventually:

- *I learned that our society is built by injustice, poverty and lies. They want us to believe in their false beliefs and to be manipulated by their tricks, because the truth is that this world is depending on poverty and injustice. But I also learned that having faith in hope and a will of iron will give you anything you want, such as your freedom and justice.*
- *Nothing special.*
- *I have learned that you can have much bad luck in life, but it will always get better sooner in life.*
- *That you have to be aware of who you can trust. There are as much good people as there are bad people. You'll never know if someone wants to abuse you and your skills. Be aware!*
- *I learned that the society can treat humans wrong and unfair sometimes.*

4. Was the book difficult to read/understand? Why?

This is an important question to ask. In selecting reading texts teachers are advised to choose works that are not too much above their pupils' linguistic proficiency as too many language difficulties may demotivate the readers (Collie and Slater 6, Lazar 34). All the pupils found the book easy to read, except one who wrote “*the book was sometimes difficult to read and understand, but it was not so difficult*”. One wrote that the short chapters “*made it easier to*

read, because you didn't get bored". Five pupils mentioned a few difficult words. One referred to the author jumping back to another story as "*sometimes confusing*". The multi-layered structure of the book, a characteristic of postmodern literature, may indeed seem confusing to some readers. *Holes* has been called a "postmodern version of a fairy tale" in which "Sachar's treatment of narrative time and story is ultimately linear – insofar as the book ends at a future point from where it starts – but the narrative is essentially multidirectional, multispatial and multitemporal" (Nicosia 24-25). Indeed, "*Holes* propels the reader from the present, to the past, and back again (...) Discovering how the three stories are intertwined is part of filling the gaps in the book" (Wauthier 2010). Postmodern literature "questions all that we take for granted about language, tradition, and experience" (McNulty 35). Postmodern texts "lack consistency and continuity as established by traditional conventions" and since they "violate or parody realist conventions" they often leave readers "in a state of engrossed perplexity" (Beach 42). In *Holes* we see how the postmodern "challenges our thinking about time, challenges us to see the present in the past, the future in the present, the present in a kind of no-time" (Bennett and Royle 279). If this seems confusing to some readers it may appeal to others who appreciate this independence from "externally dictated text conventions" and savour the freedom to create their own "text" (Beach 43).

5. Did you run into any problems when reading /working with this novel? How could this have been avoided?

The vast majority of the pupils, 22 of them, had no problems reading this book. One answers "sometimes, maybe. Because the sometimes er had to say or write down our own thoughts". Another one says "No or maybe because it was very many people to the end". These last two comments reflect the general language level of their authors, which is rather weak.

6. Would you recommend this book to other students? Why (not)?

20 pupils answered this question positively, while one answered negatively (*No, I don't find it special interesting and the plot is predictable*). These opinions confirm that the reading experience has been a very personal experience for each one of the pupils: some found the book "good" (seven pupils), "exciting" (seven pupils), "fun to read" (seven pupils); others found the book interesting and likely to promote learning about life or improve

language skills. This confirms the reader response theories according to which the reading experience is always a unique encounter between a text and the reader (Leer 130):

- *it is an interesting book, and it makes you think about different things in life;*
- *it is a very good book, and I think that everyone will learn something from this book;*
- *I think you learn a lot on life in this book, and that can be usefully for you sooner in life when you grew up;*
- *I would recommend it especially to those who don't read regularly because this gives them training in reading and learning new vocabularies. Plus, the book is actually quite exciting which will most likely stimulate their curiosity.*
- *it is not a book that I would choose to read at home. For me, some of it was not logical at all. But it's still a fine book, and absolutely very good to read at school. Because it doesn't take that long to come through it, and because of that, I think it is a very good essay material;*
- *I had fun reading it and it made me want to read more English books. It's a fun way to improve English skills;*
- *It's a good book and it's fun to do other things in the English lessons than just read in the school book*
- *To be honest I didn't have that many expectations towards the book when we first got it, but after reading a couple of pages I started to get more excited about reading it;*
- *maybe as a first English book to read it would be nice, while it's not so hard to understand".*

7. What did you learn from writing a reading diary?

To begin with, it must be said that my first-year pupils were not familiar with this type of task at all. I was a bit unsure myself: how could I encourage personal response while at the same time avoiding putting the pupils off? In order to get them started I made some suggestions as to what they could write about but I also made it very clear that writing a reading diary was an essential part of their work with this novel (Wauthier 2010).

Quite a number of pupils expressed uncertainty as to how much they had learned from writing their diaries, and wrote that they had learned “nothing” or “not much”. This uncertainty may come from their own expectations but may also reflect unclear information from the teacher:

did I give them enough information beforehand on the role of a diary in the reading process? In any case I should be aware of this next time I give them this task.

Some opinions reflect the idea that writing a diary strengthens the vocabulary and writing skills, or helps them remember the plot. This ‘instrumental’ aspect is of course true, but the primary purpose in writing a diary seems to have escaped these readers:

- *It was great I think, because it really strengthened my writing skills, it showed quick progress.*
- *I learn much more words, and new expressions.*
- *I learned how to express my personal opinions in English.*
- *I didn't learn so much, but it made me remember the many details in the book.*
- *I remembered a lot more of the book by writing diary.*
- *I summed up the read chapters for myself, by writing diaries. By doing that, I had a great overview of the book's story. The reading diaries turned out to be really helpful at the tests.*
- *I learn to write in a faster tempo, to not use the dictionary as much as I did before. It was easier to get the main content when we wrote diary. It was also useful when we wrote the essay at school.*

As we see, many pupils interpreted this question and answered it from a very efferent point of view. Their answers seem to imply that they expected that writing a diary would teach them something ‘measurable’. This should not be surprising since literature in school is still too often approached from an efferent point of view: the literary texts are read in order to retrieve information at the expense of the aesthetic experience (Rosenblatt, *The Reader* 24-25; Willand, “Literary Competence” 3). Why should the pupils believe that writing a diary would be different?

A minority of pupils, however, expressed views that reflect a deeper understanding of the purpose of writing a reading diary, which is to express and reflect upon one’s own feelings when reading:

- *I learn to reflect on what I have read, and also of course to write a diary.*
- *To reflect more about what I've read and also to make words out of my thoughts.*

To sum up, many answers to the question “*What did you learn from writing a reading diary?*” seem to be in line with a traditional view of literature: one reads a book to remember the details of the plot, and it is probably what these youngsters have been used to when reading literature at school. A significant number of young readers express “instrumental” views that reflect this expectation of “utility”. However, those who mention skill improvement among the benefits of writing a reading diary are not completely wrong. Maybe the question was asked in an awkward way and I should have put it differently in order to encourage different answers. These pupils’ self-evaluations reflect those of Carlisle’s students who had the feeling that the reading diary experiment was positive and encouraging: “writing reading logs helped them get more out of the book”, they gained “a clearer understanding of the ideas of the novel” and said that “their reading and writing skills had improved” (18). In Thomson’s experiment, more than 80% of the readers had found writing logs “helpful and worthwhile” and gave as reasons: “They helped you to be a more observant reader”; “I could show my thoughts about a book”; “It helped me gain a greater depth of enjoyment and understanding” (252). It remains to be seen whether the 2012 evaluation of the literary project (to be analyzed in 7.6) will yield similar or different answers.

7.4 Reading Diaries 2012

As in 2011 the pupils who read *Holes* at the beginning of the 2012 spring term were asked to write a diary of their thoughts and experiences during the reading process. The diaries varied in length and in content. This illustrates once again that the reading experience is highly individual and unique (Rosenblatt, *The Reader* 14). However, there is no doubt that this writing task was taken more or less seriously by different readers as the length of the diaries often has a connection with the depth or degree of sophistication of their responses. Just as there is varying intensity in readers’ interests in literature there is varying sophistication of response at each developmental stage (Thomson 174). The complete diary of each pupil cited in this section, Rasmus, Kristine and Camilla, is included in the appendices (21-23). During the course of the reading experiment I wrote a comment on each diary entry basing my response to the pupil on the belief that for the journal to “operate as an instrument of learning for its writer, its other audience – the teacher – needs to be a trusted adult who reads and replies but does not evaluate” (Thomson 253). My comments to the diary entries are not

included in this thesis. Some diary entries reflect the reader's *unreflective interest in action* which is, as we know, stage one in Thomson's developmental model of response to literature (360-361).

Rasmus: "I don't tend to find hidden messages in books, I just read them to have fun. But I do like that the author have connected two stories into one, it gives the text more fluency. It were a good book that I can recommend to anyone. I don't have anything else to say about the book".

"I was not surprised when Stanley crashed the car. Something had to happen, otherwise the story would have turned boring".

"I think the ending of the book was a little too happy. There wasn't anything that went bad, and the story ended as a cliché. It would have spiced the story if the reader were left with a bitter taste from the story".

Rasmus' opinions are in line with what he expressed earlier in his response to the song "Tears in Heaven" (chapter five) and to the short story "Somewhere Warm and Comfortable" (chapter six): those texts did not move him and he had little to say about them. It would be no surprise if Rasmus were to be found among the 67.3% of respondents who acquiesce in the survey finding that a good book is first of all full of suspense and action (chapter three). In his second entry Rasmus confirms that if nothing had happened in the story it "would have turned boring". He also thinks the story ended as "a cliché", but does not elaborate on what would have been necessary to make the story more "spicy". Thomson connects this sense of 'boredom' to a "lack of experience and satisfaction in the reading of fiction (...) with little understanding of literary conventions" (188). On the other hand, as mentioned in 7.1 adolescents look for realism in stories, and that includes the possibility that a story ends in tragedy: "it seems plausible to think that the preference of developing readers for the realism of stories about suffering and death has something to do with the discovery that romance is not an adequate image of life's possibilities" (Appleyard 109). Further, Sarland specifies that "when young readers reject a text, one of the things they have done is to make predictions that have been radically disappointed: they have attempted to construct an underlying story that is at odds with what they are offered" (98). These arguments may explain the sense of boredom or "cliché" referred to by some of my young readers.

It might be tempting to draw a comparison between my pupils and Sanchez' categories of readers based on their reading habits: "apathetic literary readers, average literary readers and avid literary readers" (4). Sanchez does not specify what he means by these categories or according to which criteria he classified the readers. However, it seems plausible to assume from his article that apathetic readers are those who are indifferent to reading fictional literature and therefore read very little fiction for pleasure at all, if any; the average reader would be the one who reads for pleasure occasionally, while the avid reader would be someone who has a passion for fiction and reads a lot for pleasure. On the scale of reading enjoyment **Kristine** would have to be recognized as an "avid reader" since she probably read the novel *Holes* in one sitting and wrote her diary afterwards (Appendix 22). One feature that strikes me when reading Kristine's diary is that she feels she really is "in the story", a typical feature for the reader who "gets lost in a book" (Benton and Fox 12), as illustrated in the two following diary entries:

"I think the book is very good and I like that the writer makes it very personally. When I read, it feels like I am in the story. I can feel the tension, the heat, the beating sun, the ground and hear the shovel digging in to it".

"Dear Louis Sachar,

I think your book *Holes* was really amazing. You write incredibly well, and you make me feel like I'm really in the story. I can feel the beating sun, the hard ground and the shovels digging in to it. I like the way you describe the environment and Stanley's feelings about the other guys. I think you're a good writer and I have high expectations to the movie".

Below, Kristine also questions the author, which testifies to response to literature at levels five or six in Thomson's developmental level: she "recognizes the implied author" and "interrogates the text to match the author's representation with her own" (360-361):

If I could meet the author of *Holes* Louis Sachar I would ask him a lot of questions about Stanley. I would have asked him why Stanley behaves like he does, and if he feels like he is standing close to Stanley. Did he ever get bullied at school or work, and has he been accused for something he hasn't done?

I think the author chose to entitle his book *Holes* because there is a lot of “holes” in the story. By holes I mean that there is a lot of information that we don’t get to know before the end of the text, and we don’t get to know *all* the information in the end either. (Appendix 22)

This last entry shows how Kristine is aware of the book being the author’s creation; she also understands the necessity of “filling the gaps” to construct her own meaning.

Another “avid reader” is **Camilla** whose entire diary covers almost nine pages (Appendix 23). Her diary is a rich mixture of anything she found useful to write down, just as a diary is supposed to be: “Because you are the only person who can decide what is most relevant to you, no subject or attitude is taboo in the journal” (Thomson 258). Camilla jotted down key words, isolated sentences, personal reflections, comments and questions about the events but also several pieces of creative writing including Stanley’s letter to his mum after his first day at Camp Green Lake, a newspaper article about the burning down of Green Lake’s school, and a few lines in Kate Barlow’s diary. I found it interesting to comment on her newspaper report because another pupil, Nils, had also written a newspaper report a year previously (Appendix 20). In stepping into her spectator role Camilla used other means than Nils to make her report as realistic as possible: she added a picture of a burning house (see appendix 23) and reported a fictive interview with a local inhabitant:

School burned down in Green Lake

The school stood recently finish after a big redecorating some days ago. One of the inhabitants in Green Lake had fixed the leaky roof, the windows which would not open and the door which did not hang straight. As a protest against the teacher in Green Lake, Miss Katherine Barlow, the inhabitants burned the school down. We have asked an inhabitant who was joining the process and burned her grandchildren’s school down with her fellow countrymen:

We meet Hattie Parker outside of the burned-down school.

- Why did the inhabitants burn down Green Lake’s only school?
- The school’s teacher, Miss Katherine Barlow, and a man called Sam who fixed the school some days ago, were kissing outside on the street! Can you imagine? A Negro kissed a white woman! That is against the law!

- But what about the education in Green Lake after the happening? You don't have a place for the children to meet?

- I don't think that is the biggest problem. The biggest problem would be if my grandchildren learned to write and read by a witch!

- So Miss Katherine is no longer teaching the children?

- No, everyone in Green Lake hates her now. No one is allowed to kiss a Negro, especially not a teacher! A teacher is supposed to be a good role model and Katherine was not.

We are coming back with more information later. Stay tuned!

In the role of the 'onlooker' Camilla manages to keep the "cool detachment" which is essential to create a text consistent with what she has understood from the novel (Thomson 309). Interestingly, the tone she adopts to report the interviewee's answers is not far from gossip which Harding says serves the same purposes as fiction:

the playwright, the novelist, the song-writer and the film producing team are all doing the same thing as the gossip, however innocent they may be of witting propagandist intentions. Each invites his audience to agree that the experience he portrays is possible and interesting, and that his attitude to it, implicit in his portrayal, is fitting (...) the author invites his audience to share in an exploration (...) and, as a corollary, to refine or modify their value judgments. (257-258)

The value judgments which are challenged here concern racism and discrimination.

7.5 Reader Response Essays 2012

After finishing reading *Holes* the 2011-2012 pupils also had to write a reflective essay about the novel. They could choose between four assignments, centered on the following themes: Is life fair? Friendship, Persistence, and Redemption. The complete text of the assignment is in appendix 24. As in the previous year, the essays were written in class to make sure that the pupils actually wrote them. Here I present extracts from some essays and comment on them from the point of view of reader response theories.

Sara: “I would have liked to be friends with zero; he seems like a really nice kid. He is quiet and smart. Doesn’t like to brag and does selfless acts. He seems silly and mature at the same time, but I would have also liked to be friends with armpit, he just seem like a really funny guy , at least that’s my opinion, based on the book and the movie.(...) When Stanley ran to look for zero, you could really feel by reading the book that he cared about zero, than to carry zero up the mountain. It takes persistence to carry somebody up a mountain, and it really shows how much you care about a person, I found it inspiring, and different from anything I have ever read before”.

“I think the friendship between Stanley and Zero, was like a nice change, but you often see to underdogs becoming friends. The two characters seem so real, that when I read the book I could really recognize what they felt”.

Sara’s essay is one of several examples which show a strong involvement with the characters of the story. As mentioned earlier (7.1) identification or involvement with the characters is a typical feature of the adolescent’s attitude to reading (Appleyard 100).

Rasmus, whose diary I commented on in 7.4, wrote an original essay about “The fairness of life” (Appendix 26). First, he goes against mainstream thinking by being the only one who places the blame for Stanley’s misfortune on the character himself. Thus, Rasmus distances himself from the character and this makes it easier for him to adopt the cool detachment that characterizes the onlooker. According to Thomson this process is of the utmost importance: “In reflecting on our own experience or that of others we sort out, make sense of and come to terms with ourselves and the world” (80):

“Stanley gets hit by a pair of shoes that seems to have fallen from the sky- and later he gets turned to a camp because the judge thinks he is guilty of stealing the pair of shoes. – It’s not fair but its Stanley’s fault; he fails to explain what happened and because of that nobody believe him. He simply gets what he deserves for his stupidity; he is the *cause* of the unfairness in his life. Instead of saying “the shoes fell down from a bridge above me” He says “They fell from the sky” Further he fail to explain why he ran home, and therefore it seems like he was running away.(...)”

Later on, Rasmus concludes his essay by writing:

As asked in the first line of this text; is life fair? No, life is not and will never be completely fair for everybody- it’s not possible in the world we live in. but its kind off

nice that life isn't fair. Imagine how boring it would be if everything really was fair, and everybody were absolutely sure that they would get what they deserved. Then it would be impossible for people to be truly kind, without expecting to get something back. "You are the maker of your own life" That quote is pretty accurate, many people today have a pretty good possibility to control how they carve out their own life. There will always be exceptions though, and that spices life a little.

As commented earlier (7.4) Rasmus thinks that boredom is something to be avoided, which seems to imply that his main interest in a story is *action* but at the same time he formulates deep, interesting reflections about the long-term implications of what he observes in the world, and this ability to reflect on the significance of events belongs to stage four of Thomson's developmental model (360-361).

Camilla entitled her essay: "Fair or unfair?" (Appendix 27). She appears as the "thinking" adolescent who tries to make sense of the injustice in the world and in the novel (Appleyard 100):

"After reading a novel by Louis Sachar called "Holes", I started thinking. The book made me think, that youths in industrialized nations today are unaware and maybe a bit ignorant when it comes to questions about a fair life. Youths who come from stable families with a good economic and social position in the society, may not think about other things than school, clothes and interests in life. Who are we to blame? Whose job is it to give us information about poor countries in difficult situations?

As an example to unfair situations in life, I use something I read in "Holes", where we meet a man called Sam and a woman called Kate. Sam is dark-skinned and Kate is light-skinned. They were deeply in love, but after they kissed each other, Sam got killed. At the time this happened, it was not allowed for "blacks" to kiss "whites". That makes me extremely angry. I hate when people are treated unfair because of their look. Cannot we just come together and act like a big family with billions of family members? Try to fight racism, which is one of the most unfair things in life?"

However, she is aware that the book *Holes* is a construct (stage five of Thomson's developmental model 360-361). She does not expect that the book in itself will give her the answers to the challenges of life:

“In this case, we have to understand that “Holes” is a fictitious novel. But the theme in the book is about how we can turn something unfair into something fair. The book is maybe not the correct answer to how fair our lives are in reality, but it can be an eye-opener. It can help youths who have a good life to realize that other people at their age may not have a good life. We cannot forget that humans belong to the same species. Although we have different language, skin-colour and behavior, I think humans can help each other in difficult situations. We are not different inside, and the outside should not mean anything”.

These examples close the literary project about the novel *Holes*. Working with a complete novel was the ultimate stage in the pupils’ and my approach to reader response in the classroom, and one question which is worth considering is whether the pupils’ reactions to the novel have been different from their response to shorter texts like song lyrics (chapter five), a short story or novel extract (chapter six). Before examining reader response from this perspective, however, I would like to treat the issue of evaluating the literary project about the novel *Holes*.

7.6 Evaluation 2012

Rather than having the pupils answer questions on a paper form I chose to design an online survey to evaluate the literary project. This was due to practical considerations: data collection and analysis online would save time. The pupils who had read *Holes*, written diaries and reflective essays were asked a series of questions aimed among others at finding out how much using a reader response approach may have meant for their enjoyment of the novel. All the pupils answered the survey, which gives it an answer rate of 100%. The survey results are downloaded as part of the appendix, and here is a summary of the findings.

Let us start with the demographics revealed in the last question of the survey. The respondents are 16 boys and 13 girls and they place themselves in the following categories of readers: six (two girls and four boys) consider themselves as ‘apathetic readers’, which means *I do not read for pleasure, and reading fiction is not important in my life*; 17 (6 girls and 11 boys) are ‘average readers’, that is to say *I read a bit for pleasure, and reading fiction occupies a certain place in my life*; six pupils (four girls and two boys) consider themselves as ‘eager readers’, meaning *I love reading and I read a lot of fiction*. The class is thus divided between

the majority, almost 60%, of *average readers*, and an equal number, slightly more than 20%, of *apathetic* and *eager readers*. Though this evaluation concerns a very limited number of respondents the proportion of boys and girls in the different categories confirm the trends revealed by different studies about reading practice and already discerned in the survey about the pupils' reading habits (chapter three): girls generally read more and enjoy reading more than boys (Appleyard 99; Clark and Rumbold 12; Molloy 111).

Questions one to four deal more specifically with the pupils' reading experience of the novel *Holes*, while questions five to nine focus more on the methodology aspect. Question one asked, *How was your reading experience with Holes? Did you enjoy reading and working with Holes, or not?* I place the answers to this first question into three categories: positive, negative, or indifferent. The positive answers were in majority and by far, since 22 of the 29 respondents wrote that they enjoyed reading and working with *Holes*. Some of the reasons they gave were: "it was funny, and I learned a bit"; "it was nice"; "it was a good book"; "it was easy to read, I liked the characters"; "it was exciting"; "I like the way the book was written". Three pupils did not enjoy reading the book, one "does not like reading anyway", one preferred the film, and one did not manage to read through the book. Finally, four respondents thought it was OK to read *Holes*, although it was not the best book they had read.

Question two was a close-ended question of the Likert-scale type where the pupils had to match statements with four answering options (*I fully agree, I partly agree, I do not quite agree, I completely disagree*). The aim of this question was primarily to find out how the pupils experienced working with reader response assignments, and whether this approach had a positive impact on their attitude toward literature and motivation for reading. Statements three and four have to do with the learning benefits associated with reader response. Concerning the first statement *I enjoyed working with the reader response approach*, six pupils answered *I fully agree* and 16 answered *I partly agree*, which gives a positive outcome for 22 of the respondents, while six pupils answered *I do not quite agree* and one answered *I totally disagree*. Thus, the same number of pupils who enjoyed reading *Holes* (question one) also enjoyed working with the reader response approach. To statement two *I prefer working with more "traditional" literary analysis* the majority of the respondents, 19 out of 29, answered *I do not quite agree*; two answered *I completely disagree*, six answered *I partly agree* and two answered *I fully agree*. Thus, only two pupils are sure that they prefer working with traditional literary analysis, and six others may prefer this approach, while the vast majority does not. These figures confirm to a certain extent my expectations: in presenting

Thomson’s developmental model in chapter two I had specially mentioned that many readers have difficulties reaching the stages of literary criticism (five and six), expecting therefore that most pupils would not like ‘traditional’ literary analysis, as is indeed the case.

Statement three, *In reading and working with Holes I learned things about myself that I had not thought of*, was answered in the following way: 14 pupils *did not quite agree*, 11 *partly agreed*, one *fully agreed* and three *completely disagreed*; the answers are split about in the middle as there are about as many pupils who are inclined to think that they learned new things about themselves as there are who do not. Statement four, *Reading and working with Holes has helped me to understand other people and the world better*, gave the following answers: the majority of the respondents (14 out of 29) *partly agreed* while an almost equal number, 11, *did not quite agree*; two pupils *completely disagreed* and two *fully agreed* with the statement.

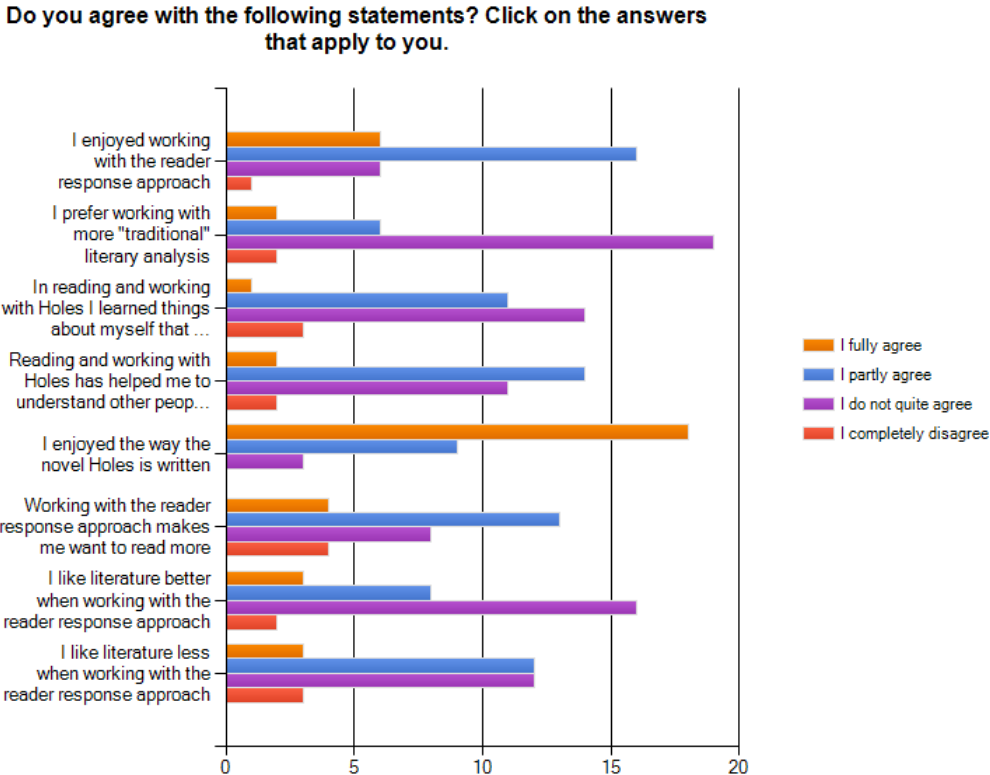


Fig. 5. Response count for question two, *How did the pupils experience working with the reader response approach?* Source: SurveyMonkey.

Statement five *I enjoyed the way the novel Holes is written* is the only one where the answering option *I fully agree* got the highest rate since 18 pupils chose it, and nine others

partly agreed, while three *did not quite agree*. Statement six aimed at finding out if *working with the reader response approach makes me want to read more*; 13 pupils *partly agreed* that this was the case, and four *fully agreed*, while eight *did not quite agree* and four *completely disagreed*. Undoubtedly, the scope of this project is too limited to produce any long-lasting impact on motivation, but it is nevertheless interesting that 17 pupils out of 29 may feel like reading more when working with the reader response approach.

The last two statements were almost identical and were deliberately included in order to check the internal consistency of responses and to ensure reliability (McKay 41): *I like literature better when working with the reader response approach* and *I like literature less when working with the reader response approach* but unfortunately the results obtained seem to indicate that the questions missed their goal. Here are the answers to statement seven, *I like literature better...*: 16 pupils *did not quite agree* with it, and two *completely disagreed*, while eight *partly agreed* and three *fully agreed*. The number of pupils, 11, who say they like literature better when working with the reader response approach is not impressively high; it is rather the opposite, there are 18 pupils who disagree or do not quite agree.

Statement eight *I like literature less...* produced the following results: 12 pupils *partly agreed*, and three *fully agreed*, whereas 12 *did not quite agree* and three *completely disagreed*. There are thus 15 pupils who say that they like literature less when working with the reader response approach and 15 pupils who have the opposite opinion, meaning that they actually *like literature better* when working with the reader response approach. The answer results to statements seven and eight somehow contradict each other: how is it possible to get different figures as answers when asking the same question in two different ways? Besides, these results also contradict the answers given to statement one where 22 of the 29 respondents rated their reading experience with *Holes* as positive. I have to remember that this is not mathematics and that human factors like distraction and boredom may play a role.

Eight pupils wrote comments to this question and their comments may throw light on what was perceived as unclear in question two: three pupils wrote that they had no comment, four wrote that they like reading, but three of them did not like to write reader responses or diaries; two enjoyed the class discussions, and one thinks that working with the book as we did helped the pupil to understand the deeper meaning of the story, while another one understands that the writing was necessary since this is school and the teacher needs feedback about the pupils' reading.

As a conclusion to this question two, I am left with the impression that I got no conclusive information about how much the pupils learned from the reader response approach applied to *Holes*; I did not manage to find out either how motivating reader response may be for future reading. Maybe questions of the Likert-scale type are not the best way of investigating this? Maybe I am just a bit disappointed because I did not manage to communicate my enthusiasm for reader response to all the pupils? Maybe also the question of motivation was asked way too soon as far as long-lasting effects are concerned? In any case, this survey was addressed to 29 pupils whose reader response experience was limited to one novel and a few shorter texts. Perhaps more conclusive results would require further research over time.

Question three asked, *What did the novel tell you about life, society and human experience? What is, in your opinion, the most important message of the novel?* Among the comments written by the respondents some messages stand out: friendship is important (five responses), people must accept each other (two responses), life is not always fair, but it does not stop if you experience something bad (four responses), do not give up (eight responses), life is what you make it (three responses). When comparing these opinions with those expressed about the themes and message in *Holes* one year previously we see that the answers given by the 2012 pupils are quite comparable to the answers given by their 2011 schoolmates.

Question four asked, *Would you recommend the novel Holes to others? Why or why not?* An overwhelming majority of the respondents (26 out of 29) would recommend the book, because “it’s a good book” (10 respondents) and because it is “easy to read” (six respondents); others expressed the views that the book was “exciting” (2), “great” (2), “interesting” (2), or “fun” (1); one respondent would recommend it “to teenagers” because it was “written for teenagers”; two would maybe recommend it “for those who like to read” and some think of the language benefits connected to reading *Holes*: “it’s an English book , easy to read and not so boring” (1), “because you work with English in a different way and you learn more words” (1); finally, some think that *Holes* “teaches how to handle during bad situations” (1), and almost every teenager “can find himself/herself in the book” (1) or “relate to some of the conflicts of the story” (1); one respondent had “no comment” and one would not recommend the book, but would recommend the film, while another one wrote: “if they are going to see the movie, then I would recommend them to also read the book”. As a whole, the 2012 respondents were even more positive about the novel *Holes* than their schoolmates from 2011.

Question five started the evaluation of the methodology used with *Holes*. Question five consisted of a series of drop-down menus aiming at evaluating how the respondents experienced the level of difficulty of the book, the reading progression of the project, the reading homework, the amount of writing (diary), and the amount of class discussion respectively. The answers were as follows: 26 pupils found the book OK to read, and three found it too easy to read; 25 pupils found the reading progression OK, but one found it too slow and three found it too fast; 20 pupils considered that the amount of reading homework for each week was OK but six pupils thought that there was too much to read each week, and three thought that they were given too little to read every week; 27 respondents found the amount of writing (diary) OK while two pupils felt that there was too much writing; finally, 21 pupils thought that the amount of class discussion was OK, while three pupils thought there was too much discussion and five thought there was too little discussion. It seems thus that the reading plan was adapted to most of the pupils, but still not to everyone.

A few respondents, more precisely 11, added comments to question five: five of them just specified that they had no comment, and one “found it quite boring”; one “didn’t have problems”; one suggested to “maybe just slow down, and maybe read the book in the class”; another wrote “it was OK to read the book, but sometimes it was almost too much, but I managed to do the reading homework every time”; another one “thought it was the right reading tempo; I could have read faster, but one should pay attention to the fact that not everyone reads as fast”, and finally one mentioned “I learned new things during class discussion that I never learned while I was reading at home. Some of the gaps were filled when I heard opinions and thoughts from my classmates”.

Question six was also a close-ended question of the Likert-scale type in which the respondents had to rate the usefulness of different tasks used while working with *Holes*. 20 pupils rated as *useful* individual written tasks they were given, such as vocabulary exercises and quizzes, while three pupils rated these tasks as *very useful* and seven rated them as *not very useful*. Writing their reader’s diary, an essential part of reader response methodology, was likewise considered as *useful* by 20 pupils, whereas five pupils found writing the reader’s diary *not very useful* and four found it *very useful*. Pair discussions were rated equally by 14 pupils as *useful* and *very useful* and only one pupil found these discussions *not very useful* or *not useful at all*. Group discussions were almost as popular, with 14 pupils rating them as *very useful* and 11 rating them as *useful*, while four pupils rated these discussions as *not very useful* and two rated them as *not useful at all*. 20 pupils found the teacher’s explanations *useful*, five

found them *very useful*, but three pupils found them *not very useful* and one found them *not useful at all*. Watching the film *Holes* was rated as *very useful* by 17 pupils and *useful* by eight additional pupils, while the remaining four pupils found it *not very useful*. The last task carried out in connection with the literary project was essay writing; four pupils found it *very useful*, 13 found it *useful*, ten *not very useful* and two *not useful at all*.

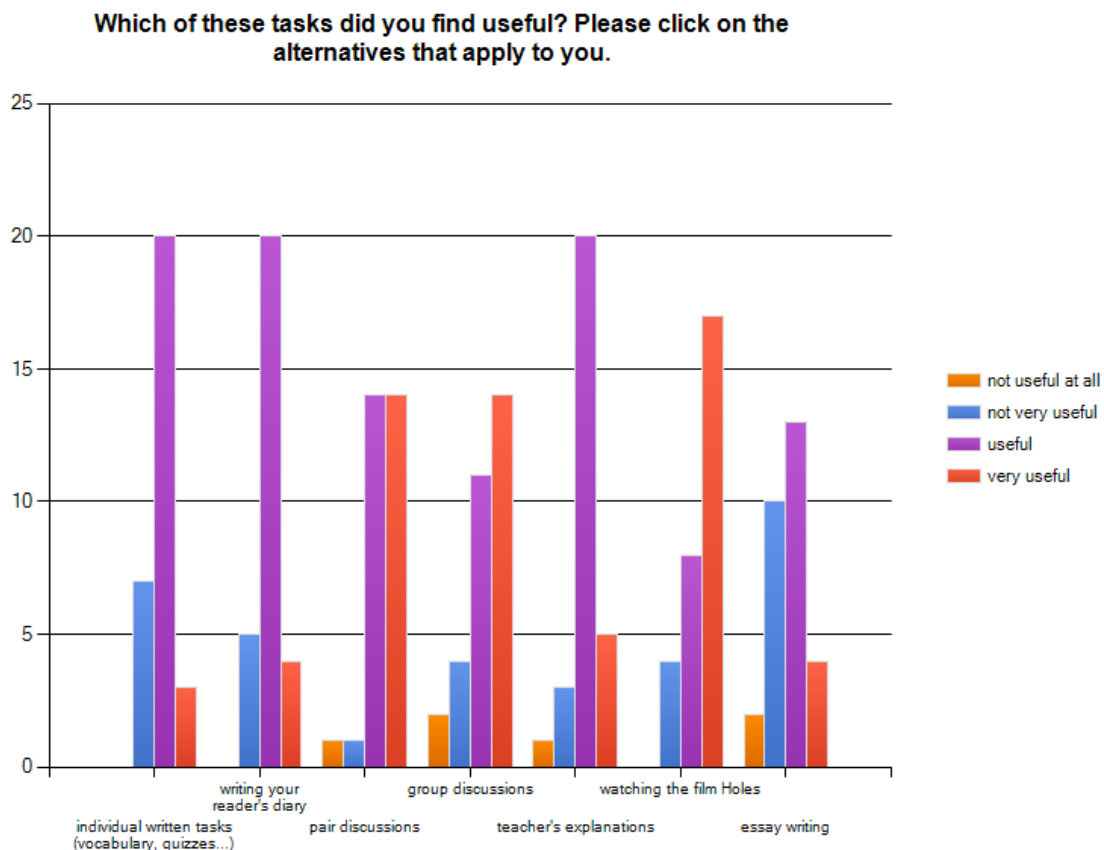


Fig. 6. Response count for question six, *Which tasks did the pupils find useful?* Source: SurveyMonkey.

To sum up, the tasks which were most popular with the most pupils were pair and group discussions and watching the film *Holes*. It may be a mere coincidence that these kinds of tasks are the least “demanding”, it is undoubtedly easier to watch a film than to write a reflective essay, and the prospect of watching a film after reading a book is often motivating for young readers (Lazar 53-54). At the same time, writing a reader’s diary, which will be more extensively commented in question eight, was rated as *useful* or *very useful* by a total of 24 participants, which is quite a positive result. Nine pupils wrote comments at the end of question six, six of them to specify that they actually had no comments, and the remaining

three to suggest that one might have devoted a bit more time to discussing the differences between film and book and comparing the two. This remark is worth remembering next time I show a film after reading a novel with a class.

Question seven asked, *What did you learn from the group discussions?* 29 pupils wrote their comments. Four comments were negative, stating that what they learned was “not much”, or “nothing that they did not know already”, and that the discussion “was not very organized, and a bit noisy” but the remaining 25 expressed in different ways that they through the discussions had heard “other persons’ view of the book and their opinion of *Holes*”, “that the story can be read in different ways”, and “they got other ideas from others that they had not thought of”. Some also wrote “we found out different things together as a group”, “I learned how the others thought of different scenes in the book, some were totally different from my views” or “I got to know more about the deeper meaning of the story-line. I got to see different views about the same events”. “Reading, which is initially a private activity, can become far more enjoyable and profitable when responses are shared so that a community of readers is established in the classroom” (Thomson 267). As one pupil put it, “I learned that many heads thinking is better than one. Hearing from others helps me a lot. I learned many things and got som new ideas”.

Question eight was a crucial one in this evaluation since it opened up for comments about *What did you learn from writing a reader’s diary?* Some comments were totally or partially negative: “nothing” (1); “I don’t know” (1); “not much” (2); “not much, but I remembered more of the book” (2); “not much, I wrote the stuff I knew from before” (1) or “I didn’t learn anything since I was the one writing and then I already know everything I wried down” (1). How I wish I could convince these last two readers that it is precisely by writing down the things I already know that I do the most useful work on myself and my thoughts, just as I remember things always became much clearer after writing them down in my diary during those troubled insecure teenage years! Eight comments expressed in varying ways that writing a diary was a way to remember the story: “I did not learn enormously, but since I was finished with the book before the end of the Christmas holidays it was a fine way to refresh my memory”; “I thought I had forgotten what I read, but because of the writing I remembered much more than from just reading”; “it was a way to remember the story better”; some (4 pupils) also saw the reader’s diary as a way to understand the book better: “understanding the book better”; “I learned more about the characters on the book and their rules”; “the meaning of the book”; “to understand the book more”.

Some (five pupils) also understood that writing a diary helped them to analyze their reading: “You can try to analyze what you’ve read and it makes you want to read more”; “thoughts”; “you got to write down your ideas and thoughts”; “to place my thoughts in a place, and later learn from them”; “writing the reader’s diary makes you reflect about what you’ve read”. Finally, a few also expressed a mere instrumental view of the diary: “it helped me in writing my essay”; “I expanded my vocabulary”; “I learned how to express myself better”.

These comments are very similar to those I had received from the pupils who wrote diaries about *Holes* a year earlier: many expect the diaries to somehow fill an instrumental function, which testifies to an efferent view of literature where one is supposed to “remember” or “understand” information, while a few pupils also understood the diary as a tool for deeper analysis: “it was a reminiscence of things and problems I was wondering about during the reading”.

The last question of the evaluation survey asked, *Should the project have been organized in a different way? If I used this novel again with another class, do you have any comments or suggestions to me as a teacher?* Here again 29 pupils wrote their comments and some were very short: “I don’t know” (1); “No” (10); this “no” was sometimes followed by further comments like “I think I can’t find a better way than this”, “it was actually very good”, “it was good”, “not at all! I think it was very good organized and well done”. Many think that the project was good as it was: “it’s fine as it is” (2); “do the same”, “you did a good job”; “I think this project was very good organized. It was good having reading as homework”.

Here are however, some suggestions which might be useful for a new future classroom reading of *Holes*: “I think it was well organized, but there were too many pages to read per week” (3); “I think we should have had fewer reading diary entries, it wasn’t easy trying to write a lot so often”; “not so much diary writing, and some different essay tasks”; “less group discussion, and more pair discussion”; “maybe get some one to read it out loud?”; “audiobook!” Finally, “I think it was very interesting to read and watch *Holes* and I think it was very instructive to discuss it with other pupils”; “I think it was a good way to go through it. Not everyone managed to read it all, but I understand that it is difficult to get someone who does not want to read to read a whole book”; “it is okay that we can choose our own groups, then we talk more. Maybe we could read our diaries to each other in the group, because then we could make a sum up of what we read, and then do the exercises”. This last reflection certainly deserves our attention: reader response researchers recommend that readers read

back their own journals and share them with others since reading literature, talking and writing about literature, telling one's own stories and writing one's own literature are all processes which contribute to the reader's development (Beach 66-67; Thomson 262; 348).

7.7 Conclusion

I started chapter seven by referring to my teaching scheme revolving around the novel *Holes* by Louis Sachar. My starting point was to let the pupils work through an entire novel using the reader response approach. I was interested in their opinions, thoughts and reflections in contact with the text, not in any "correct interpretation" of the story or detailed retelling of the plot. The project was based on classroom discussions of homework reading, writing reader's diaries and essays. As a whole and based on their own evaluation it seems that the pupils involved in the *Holes* literary project enjoyed working with the novel according to the guidelines I gave them. There are of course a few exceptions, as always, but this is inevitable. Now that this teaching scheme has been implemented and evaluated for two consecutive years it is natural to look back and ask myself: what did my pupils learn from reader response? What did I as their teacher learn from this experience? In chapter eight I return to these questions and to the project's implications for the classroom.

8. Implications and Reflections

For the purpose of writing this thesis I implemented teaching schemes based on reader response to song lyrics, a short story or novel extract, and finally a whole novel. What can be said about the use of reader response in connection with the reading of literary texts in the English classroom? First of all, reader response is easy to apply and adapted to every pupil: the weak ones realize that they too can contribute with valuable answers and those who possess better language skills and a better knowledge of literary conventions also find topics to work with and develop from. Reader response involves fun: since there is no correct answer to strive to discover, the young readers can relax and enjoy the text. This is confirmed by the 2012 evaluation survey taken after completion of the literary project *Holes*: while 17 (almost 60 %) of the pupils involved in reading *Holes* describe themselves as “average readers” who read a bit for pleasure, 22 responded positively to the book itself and to working with it from a reader response perspective; further, 17 pupils out of 29 expressed agreement with the view that working with the reader response approach made them want to read more.

The scope of the project and the limited number of readers involved does not make the results transferable on a larger scale, and more extensive research would need to be done before any conclusion can be drawn. However, the pupils’ responses (immediate reactions to texts, reading logs, essays) testify to emotional involvement, construction of an imagined world, connection of personal experiences to the texts, etc.; these are typical products of aesthetic reading as opposed to efferent reading which is only concerned with acquiring information on what the text is saying (Beach 50). For Thomson, “the initial satisfaction of reading is an emotional one” in which for example the reader empathizes with the characters. As Rosenblatt emphasized, the ultimate aim of aesthetic reading is to “help human beings... to discover the pleasures and satisfactions of literature” (*Literature* 34). Enjoyment of literature as demonstrated in the collected responses is not always dependent on the reader’s language skills; it can be a liberating experience for struggling pupils who do not quite trust their own reading competence. For some pupils *Holes* may be the first entire English novel they read, and they have all reason to be proud of their performance.

What did I as a teacher learn from this experience? At the same time as I discovered the benefits of reader response methods in teaching I also realized the limitations and weaknesses of my own contribution. First, I need to learn much more about reader response in order to guide my pupils efficiently; for example, how can I help them to reflect on their own

responses and move on to higher developmental stages, as recommended by Thomson (180)? Second, did I ask the right questions in evaluating the project? Did I evaluate what I intended to evaluate, that is to say the effect of reader response on reading enjoyment? While some pupils' responses demonstrated evidence of pleasure in reading fiction others still showed evidence of their instrumental attitude to reading fiction; this is in line with the findings of other previous studies (Carlisle 18; Sanchez 6-8). Sanchez blames "fossilized reading practices" and "the sole emphasis of teaching practices on efferent reading" (ibid. 7-8).

Furthermore, I may still have some reservations regarding reader response methods myself: writing a diary while you are 'lost in a book' seems paradoxical. It is somewhat artificial to put down an exciting book in order to jot down what comes to one's mind during the reading process. So, while the reading diary may be a very useful tool and provide wonderful feedback to the teacher, it may sometimes feel a bit 'unnatural' because it disrupts the reading process. On the other hand, if one wants to be able to study the reading process and reflect on it, one needs some written documentation. I thus told my pupils that I wanted them to write a diary about their thoughts, mental pictures and ideas while they were reading, because this was an essential part of the reader-response methodology and most of them did produce a diary, but there is a great variation in frequency, length and content in the readers' diaries. Ideally, the readers should discuss their reading process with each other and go back and reflect on their diary entries, but this deepening reflection process would require a greater motivation from the readers and more experience from the teacher with the method. What I have no doubt about, however, is that pupils developed from and enjoyed the creative writing tasks. This is something to take into consideration in future assignments. Last but not least, even reader response assignments can become predictable and boring, and one key word as always in teaching is variation (Thomson 267). It is important to remember that "methods are means to ends and not ends in themselves (...) and any method "can easily degenerate into a pointless exercise if it became a mere regular routine in the classroom" (ibid. 354). Using a reader response approach to literary texts does not exclude the use of other methods ...

The survey about the pupils' reading habits (chapter three) revealed that many pupils are surrounded by a poor reading environment at home. It is therefore the school's role and responsibility to provide the pupils with good books that can appeal to their interests. The survey also showed that books focusing on action are among the pupils' favourites and that a significant number of respondents (almost 40%) only read the literary texts in their textbooks because they are a part of their English course. Obviously, teachers have to meet the challenge

of presenting the pupils with literary texts or books which they may find relevant and interesting. Not all the results of the survey were alarming, though, and half of the respondents could name a favourite text from their English textbook. Still, there is no reason to be satisfied with the situation and one must ask the question: what could be done to make reading literature more attractive? Barbara Blair states that “to become good readers, learners need to read as much as possible, and they need to read books that interest them and are at their own level of difficulty” (1). Many scholars share her views that extensive reading is essential in developing reading competence (Day and Bamford; Faye-Schjøll; Hellkjær; Melby; Thomson; Waring). Concrete advice is available on how to build up extensive reading programmes in order to develop the habit of reading (Day and Bamford 40-49; 83-95; Thomson 243-252). Devoting one hour a week to such a programme within for example the five-hour English course in general studies (vg1) might be worth trying. During this one weekly hour the pupils would read whatever English book they chose from the library, with the right to drop those they do not like (Pennac 83-84). The aim of such a programme would be “to read more books with more satisfaction” (Thomson 247). Class discussion of books or written book reviews would be possible follow-up tasks.

Robert Probst reminds us that “the purpose of literature programmes in the elementary and secondary schools is to develop readers, not literary scholars and critics” (37). Likewise, if we want our pupils to become better readers who may experience a lifelong joy of reading we should pay heed to Harding’s words that “it is literature, not literary criticism, that is the subject” (qtd. in Appleyard 116). As Thomson points out, a lot of damage has been done because school teaching ignores the order of development and forces pupils into tasks at the highest developmental levels of response before they are ready for them (180). Another sure way to kill reading enthusiasm is to give the young readers a lot of summarizing, vocabulary work and comprehension questions, tasks which imply an efferent stance, not an aesthetic one (ibid. 228; Wiland “Literary competence” 3).

Finally, there is a need for more teacher courses on children and adolescent literature, as teachers need to get acquainted with relevant contemporary children’s and adolescents’ authors in order to be able to guide their pupils and help them find books that match their interests (Thomson 31-38).

9. Summary and Conclusion

I started this thesis with the intention of finding out how pupils at a particular upper secondary school in Østfold County respond to literary texts in the English classroom. As explained in my introduction, my purpose was twofold: first, to carry out a survey on my own pupils' reading habits and attitudes in order to find out whether they liked literature, how much they read, and how they responded to the literary texts presented in the English classroom, and second, to report on the use of the reader response methodology in my own classes: how did the pupils respond to a few selected texts and what did their responses mean from a developmental point of view? Did their responses indicate reading enjoyment, or did they illustrate a merely efferent approach to the texts?

Before turning to those practical issues I addressed in chapter two the question: why should pupils read literature? In my search for answers I first examined the reasons given by the English subject curriculum in Norwegian schools. Further I elaborated on what various studies have shown about the importance of reading, both extensive and aesthetic. An important part of chapter two described the reading process: what happens while reading? I also devoted a special subsection to Jack Thomson's developmental model which is an eye-opener in understanding the different stages a reader goes through in developing his or her literary competence. Chapter two closed after raising the question whether the reader response approach might contribute to a lifelong joy of reading.

Chapter three presented the survey about the pupils' reading habits and interests and analyzed the survey results. In chapter four I introduced the reader response theories, explained my reasons for prioritizing this approach in my teaching and presented the methodology used in reader response. Chapters five, six and seven focused on pupils' responses to songs, a short story or novel excerpt, and finally the novel *Holes* respectively. Chapter seven was the most extensive as it presented extracts from reading diaries, pupils' essays and pupils' evaluation of the reading scheme for the novel over two consecutive school years. Finally, chapter eight examined some implications: what can be learned from implementing reader response methods in the classroom? Are there any valuable lessons for the future? What is the way ahead?

As always, when a project of this kind is coming to its close, one reflects on what could have been done differently: should I have organized my survey in another way? What about the choice of texts I presented to my pupils? Did I ask them the right questions to reflect upon? I have no doubt at all that a lot could have been further improved, but at the same time I feel tremendously enriched by the experience I have gained from using the reader response approach and its methodology in my classes. My best reward is that some pupils gave me feedback saying that they enjoyed reading *Holes*. I figure that the way we approached the novel may have something to do with their enjoyment. If in some limited way this teaching scheme may have contributed to a greater interest in reading, the effort will not have been in vain.

To sum up, in this thesis I have examined how pupils at a certain upper secondary school in Østfold County relate to literature and my focus has been on the aesthetic experience. In chapter two I asked what can help pupils develop a lifelong joy of reading. The scope of my teaching schemes as described in this thesis is too limited to suppose that it could bring about decisive changes in the pupils' mentality and reading attitudes. As Sanchez puts it, it seems unlikely that an intervention lasting only a few weeks might "reverse fossilized reading practices" among pupils who have primarily been exposed to a mostly efferent and instrumental reading in school (8). In order to observe long-term development of aesthetic reading habits a much longer intervention period of intensive work with reader response methods would be necessary.

Moreover, the small number of participants involved in my research excludes the possibility of any valid generalization. If possible, it would be interesting to conduct this experiment on a much larger scale and to compare the results with those presented here. Another interesting research field would have been to question the participants in a few years' time and analyze whether exposure to a reader response stance has made any difference in their reading habits and interests.

What, then, should be our conclusion? Contrary to more 'rapidly digested' entertainment media, reading requires an effort to begin with and it is a solitary activity. These distinctive features may mean that reading fiction is an 'endangered activity' and any attempt to strengthen the position of reading is therefore valuable. As Sanchez points out, a reader response approach to fiction may be what pupils need in order to develop a connection to

texts which in turn will give them a better understanding of themselves and the world and thus better equip them to meet the challenges of life itself (9).

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Appendices

I Pupils' Texts (unabridged and uncorrected)

A Reader Responses to Songs 2012

1. Johannes' response to the song "When I'm Gone", by Eminem

Link to music video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wYNFgrXTI&ob=av2e>

Link to lyrics: <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/eminem/whenimgone.html>

This song is about the rapper Eminem and his relationship to his daughter and wife, while being famous and having tons fans. He expresses what he feels about the situations he's in. He has been way too obsessed by his fans, and been in touch with very bad people and drugs. Eminem and his wife have broken up and his daughter is very sad. You can clearly hear how he gets caught up in the life as being a famous person and leaves his family that he loves for the fame and fans. He regrets the way he's been acting and tries to apologize mainly to his daughter, but also his wife through this song.

I think it's a very sad song, and it makes you remember that your family is the most important thing in life. I think he made this song for his family, to show how much he appreciates them and how much he misses the old times. He had some problems with drugs and the environment he was being dragged into. And now he's feeling that he is breaking the family down by the way he is acting. You can hear how he states what his daughter, Hailie, says about the way he always leaves them for the fans, and how she thinks that the fans is more important to him, than her and his wife is.

I remember the first time I hear this song when I was a little younger. I didn't really know what the song was about, but I've always liked it. Now that I've learnt more English and am able to understand the lyrics I like the song even better. I think it really shows how important family is to everyone. Eminem is really telling a story through this song. The fact that he has experienced this himself makes it even better, because he knows so much about this situation.

Every time I hear this song I get sad, but at the same time kind of happy. I've heard this song so many times, and over the years I've felt that I've understood more and more of what he means when he wrote this song. It's one of the songs that I never get tired of, and enjoy listening to every time I hear it.

2. Oddvar's response to the song "When I'm Gone", by Eminem

Music video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wYNFgrXTI&ob=av2e>

Lyrics: http://www.elyrics.net/read/e/eminem-lyrics/when-i_m-gone-lyrics.html

Eminem (Marshall Bruce Mathers III) is my favorite singer and many of his songs mean something to me, but "When I'm Gone" is the song nearest to my heart.

This song is about his life and his relationship between him and his daughter. Eminem is like any other singing stars, he is around the world and have concerts for his fans, and make some money. His daughter Hailie, who is mentioned in many of his songs, asks him several times to quit singing and stay home with her and her mama. She tries to do everything to make him stay home, and he says every time that this is the last time, but it never is.

This song reminds me of my relationship between me and my dad. He have a disease called MS, and I feel I should be home and help him, even I can't. I feel I'm do much gone, like Eminem in this song. This is why this song means so much for me.

3. Rolf's response to the song "When I'm Gone", by Eminem

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wYNFgrXTI&ob=av2e>

http://www.absolutelyrics.com/lyrics/view/eminem/when_i'm_gone

The most striking sentence in this song that I think is this.

[But baby we're in Sweden, how did you get to Sweden?
"I followed you Daddy, you told me that you weren't leavin'
"You lied to me Dad, and now you make Mommy sad
"And I bought you this coin, it says 'Number One Dad'].

This song is making me cringe because you have a family in America and you are in a different country, since you are so far away your children can't talk with you and your wife doesn't have any husband on her side when she sleeps and she is so afraid that she starts hurting herself.

I don't have any connections with this song in my life, I just think about everyone who have this problem in their family and they don't know how to fix it and after some months it's much more serious and they can't save her/him.

4. Jostein's response to the song "In the Ghetto", by Elvis Presley

1. My choice of song:

As the snow flies
On a cold and gray Chicago mornin'
A poor little baby child is born
In the ghetto
And his mama cries
'cause if there's one thing that she don't need
it's another hungry mouth to feed
In the ghetto

People, don't you understand
the child needs a helping hand
or he'll grow to be an angry young man some day
Take a look at you and me,
are we too blind to see,
do we simply turn our heads
and look the other way

Well the world turns
and a hungry little boy with a runny nose
plays in the street as the cold wind blows
In the ghetto

And his hunger burns
so he starts to roam the streets at night
and he learns how to steal
and he learns how to fight
In the ghetto

Then one night in desperation
a young man breaks away
He buys a gun, steals a car,
tries to run, but he don't get far
And his mama cries

As a crowd gathers 'round an angry young man
face down on the street with a gun in his hand
In the ghetto

As her young man dies,
on a cold and gray Chicago mornin',
another little baby child is born
In the ghetto

Link to the song.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Ox1Tore9nw>

2.

The song is about a poor mother who gives births to a baby. She lives in the ghetto, and she has difficult to give the child a good childhood because she has no money.

Many people see that she need help, but they don't help her, they only look another way.

When the child get older he starts to steal and fight in the street to get money . But one day he got shot in the street and dies, and his mother cries.

One man dies, and one new baby get born in the ghetto....

3.

I think this is a very fine song of Elvis. Usually I don't like the songs of Elvis, but "in the ghetto" is different. It has a very deep meaning.

It is so much wrong thing in this word. Some people are poor and some is rich. Rich people are not always willing to help poor people. We are living in a word were people are most occupied of themselves, and not willing to see that other people struggle.

I have a brain-injured little sister. She will all her life be depended of people helping her. What will happen to her if no one cares for her? "In the ghetto" is about rich and poor people, but I think the meaning in the song is not only about rich and poor, but how we don't care for each other anymore.

If the world shall be a better place for all people to live in, we must start caring for each other. We must help each other when we see that someone needs help.

If we start caring, I am shore it will be less killing, stealing and violence in the world, and the world will be a better place to live in for all people.

5. Kristine's response to the song "Firework", by Katy Perry

Firework

By: Katy Perry

LYRICS:

Do you ever feel like a plastic bag
Drifting through the wind, wanting to start again?
Do you ever feel, feel so paper thin
Like a house of cards, one blow from caving in?

Do you ever feel already buried deep?
Six feet under screams but no one seems to hear a thing
Do you know that there's still a chance for you
'Cause there's a spark in you?

You just gotta ignite the light and let it shine
Just own the night like the 4th of July

'Cause baby, you're a firework
Come on, show 'em what you're worth
Make 'em go, oh
As you shoot across the sky

Baby, you're a firework
Come on, let your colors burst
Make 'em go, oh
You're gonna leave 'em falling down

You don't have to feel like a waste of space
You're original, cannot be replaced
If you only knew what the future holds
After a hurricane comes a rainbow

Maybe you're reason why all the doors are closed
So you could open one that leads you to the perfect road
Like a lightning bolt, your heart will blow
And when it's time, you'll know

You just gotta ignite the light and let it shine
Just own the night like the 4th of July

'Cause baby you're a firework
Come on, show 'em what you're worth
Make 'em go, oh
As you shoot across the sky

Baby, you're a firework

Come on, let your colors burst
Make 'em go, oh
You're gonna leave 'em falling down

Boom, boom, boom
Even brighter than the moon, moon, moon
It's always been inside of you, you, you
And now it's time to let it through

'Cause baby you're a firework
Come on, show 'em what you're worth
Make 'em go, oh
As you shoot across the sky

Baby, you're a firework
Come on, let your colors burst
Make 'em go, oh
You're gonna leave 'em falling down

Boom, boom, boom
Even brighter than the moon, moon, moon
Boom, boom, boom
Even brighter than the moon, moon, moon

I really love this song. When I listen to I get really confident. The lyrics are about being you. Every human is worth the same, even if somebody tells you differently. I especially love the sentence; “You're original, cannot be replaced.”

I often used to hide myself. I wanted to be somebody else, because I felt that I couldn't be the real me. I have never been popular with a lot of friends, and I wasn't accepting that. Now, I do. I don't have many friends, but the friends I've got are good friends. I can rely on them and trust them. I really don't want to be anybody else, but I felt that I had to be invisible. I no longer do, and it's not just because of this song, but it helped.

I also get really happy when I hear this song. I'm happy that someone are stepping out, using time to help. This time, threw music. It's actually pretty smart to make a song out of your feelings, and if you're an artist you can get people to listen to it. As in this case, Katy Perry wrote a song that might have helped a lot of people being themselves.

Link to the song: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGJuMBdaqIw>

6. Cecilie's response to the song "A New Day Has Come" by Celine Dion

A New Day Has Come is Celine Dion's 's 18 studio album which marked her return after two-year hiatus to have a child. It was released on March 22, 2002. A New Day Has Come is Dion's 9th English album and 28th in total. The limited edition, containing bonus DVD with two audio and two video tracks, was released in November 2002.

"A New Day has come"

A new day has...come

I was waiting for so long

For a miracle to come

Everyone told me to be strong

Hold on and don't shed a tear

Through the darkness and good times

I knew I'd make it through

And the world thought I had it all

But I was waiting for you

Hush, love

I see a light in the sky

Oh, it's almost blinding me

I can't believe

I've been touched by an angel with love

Let the rain come down and wash away my tears

Let it fill my soul and drown my fears

Let it shatter the walls for a new, new sun

A new day has...come

Where it was dark now there's light

Where there was pain now there's joy

Where there was weakness, I found my strength
All in the eyes of a boy

Hush, love
I see a light in the sky
Oh, it's almost blinding me
I can't believe
I've been touched by an angel with love
Let the rain come down and wash away my tears
Let it fill my soul and drown my fears
Let it shatter the walls for a new, new sun
A new day has...come
A new day has...come
Ohhh, a light... OOh

I really like this song because it is about life and its meaning. It is about how to handle stress, problems, hardships and challenges in life. In this journey of life we experience many things both good and bad and sometimes we think that we can't make it. I think it is a song about a new phase in one's life when you've conquered whatever was getting you down. I also think this song is about a person who has been through a lot of tragedies in life and was about to give up. But an enlightened thought came one day and gave this person the courage to keep carrying on and live a better life like it's a brand new day.

This song gives me strength and encouragement. Its lyrics itself is wonderful and if we ponder it in our hearts we can feel the comfort and love. When it comes to motherhood, it is not applicable for me because I didn't experience it yet. Base on my observations about motherhood I know how the babies make their mothers happy. Even though it is very tiring but as they look at the babies faces it is like magic. The tiredness is gone. Babies are like angels, they have abilities to brighten the day and make it prosperous.

I experience many difficulties in life and it is our duties and obligations how to handle them. It is not as easy as always but we must hold on and be strong. The song makes me sad because in the beginning it contains sad texts but later on I am brighten by its positive and encouraging texts.

7. Geir' response to the song "The Art of Being Indian" by Karpe Diem

Karpe Diem (cease the day). The art of being Indian

This is a song by Chirag Patel.

I used to listen to this song as a kid, but I didn't really understand the meaning of it back then. The reason I chose this song was because I could basically relate to what he was rapping about. I know how it feels to look different, and because of that be treated differently. In the song he mentions that predictions say that he won't get a better job than a janitor. This is also something I can relate to; people may look at me and think the same, just because of my skin colour some people think that I don't have high ambitions and dreams. This song also motivates me to work harder at school, so I can prove them wrong.

I like this song because it is so strong, so honest and so true.

Today's music is almost only about sex, money and drugs. It's almost rare to find people who make this type of song nowadays.

When I listen to this song I feel proud of my heritage, my culture and my appearance. I think the reason I get these feelings is because it's nice to know that other people have had the same thoughts, felt the same way and rapping so openly about it.

Where I used to live before I moved here was a small town called Sandnessjoen. I was born and raised there. The town was in northern Norway, this was a small town with a minimal number of immigrants. Since I was born there, approximately no one had a problem with me being black, but people still were prejudiced. So I could not help to feel different. This is mainly why I like this song.

My interpretation of this song is that it is normal to be different, and it doesn't have to be a bad thing.

Lyrics: <http://www.lyricspedia.com/karpe-diem/kunsten-og-vare-inder-lyrics/>

B Reader Responses to Novel Extract from *Holes* 2012

8. Reader response essay about Holes

Now that you have read/heard some excerpts from *Holes* and seen the film, please write a short **essay based on your reactions**. Remember to **structure your text** (introduction, several paragraphs with one main idea each, conclusion). **It is more important to write personal reactions than to remember all details from the story!** Choose **one** of the following topics:

1. Who is your favourite character in *Holes*? What, in your opinion, makes this character special? Write a characterization of that person and tell in what ways he/she is like you or different from you. **Title: *My favourite character in Holes.***
2. Friendship: There are several acts of friendship carried out by different characters in *Holes*. Who would you have liked to have as a friend: Stanley, Zero, or another one of the characters in *Holes*? Why? Start with giving examples of their acts of friendship and comment them, then explain why you would like to have a certain character as your friend. **Title: *Friendship in Holes.***
3. In *Holes* there are several examples of truly persistent individuals, like Stanley Yelnats, his father, Hector Zeroni, Kate Barlow, etc. What does it mean to be persistent? Choose one character and show examples of how he/she refused to give up until their goal had been met. What were their goals and what did it take for them to reach them? Finally, what does this teach you? **Title: *Don't give up!***

9. Geir's reader response essay

Holes

There are many people who have seen or read Holes. Holes is a film about Stanley Yelnats IV, a boy who always is at the wrong place, at the wrong time. All the men in Stanley's family have bad luck, and they always blame it on their no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great grandfather, who is cursed by a gypsy because he forgot to take her to the mountain. In the film Stanley is wrongly accused of stealing a pair of shoes who belongs to a very famous basketball player. Because of this he gets a choice if he would rather go to prison or the juvenile detention facility Camp Green Lake. Stanley's family was poor, so he has never been to camp, and since Camp Green Lake sounds much more tempting than a prison, he made the obvious choice.

When Stanley arrived at the facility he is met by Mr. Sir, he warned him told him to stay away from the warden and look out for yellow lizards. He is shocked over how wrong Camp Green Lake describes the place. This wasn't a green lake; this was a desert that stretched out for many miles with a dry lakebed full of holes and nothing was green at all.

At the camp he lives at D-dent with Zero, Armpit, X-Ray, Zigzag, Squid and Magnet.

He finds out that the warden has all the inmates digging in a dry lakebed. Stanley was put to work very fast, but he wasn't any good at digging, he was always the last to finish. His hands were full of blisters, but he is told that the first hole is the hardest.

Zero is a very quiet boy who becomes friends with Stanley. He is also the fastest digger.

Almost everyone at the camp thinks that Zero is stupid, when he really is a brilliant boy, he just doesn't like to answer stupid questions.

Stanley and Zero make a deal that if Zero digs Stanley's hole, Stanley will in return teach how to read and write. When the other teenagers find out about their deal they badly criticize it, calling Zero a slave.

One day while Stanley was digging he found something, but if he ever found anything he'd have to give to X-ray. If anyone ever found anything special, they would have one day off. So X-ray got one whole day off, something Stanley would have given anything for. After a

while, Stanley realizes that what he found that day digging, was ‘‘Kissin’’ Kate Barlow’s lipstick. Kate Barlow was the thief that stole his great-grandfather’s fortune.

In the film we see how the nice teacher Kate Barlow who sold peaches, turned into a murderer and a thief. She was in love with Sam, the onion man. He sold onions claiming it would keep the yellow lizards away. Sam was a handy man who could almost fix anything. He almost fixed everything that was wrong at Kate’s school. One of the town’s citizens who fancy’s Kate, sees Sam kissing Kate. And since Sam was colored, it was forbidden for him to kiss her, so they killed Sam.

Mr. Pendanski or ‘‘Mom’’ finds out that Stanley has been teaching Zero to read, and says; it is a total waste of time and that he is only good for one thing, digging. This makes Zero so angry that he hits Mom with his shovel and runs away.

Stanley is very worried about Zero since there is no water out there. One day Stanley tries to steal Mr. Sir’s car to find Zero and give him water, but instead he drives into a hole. Realizing that he cannot go back, he runs away too. Amazingly he finds Zero in a hole under a little boat named ‘‘Mary Lou’’. When he asks Zero how he survived without water for so long, Zero shows him what he calls ‘‘Spoolsh’’, it was peaches that was in cans for a very long time, the same ones that Kate Barlow sold.

When they went outside the boat Stanley remembered the stories of his great-grandfather when Kate Barlow left him alone without no supplies in the desert, he looked for refuge at ‘‘Gods Thumb’’. In front of them there is a mountain shaped like a thumb, he realizes that this might be where his grandfather found refuge, Stanley and Zero climbs the mountain.

While they are walking to the top, Zero fall down unconscious and have to be carried they to the top. When he reaches the top he finds water and onions. When they are resting Zero confesses to Stanley that he was the one who stole the basketball shoes. Stanley thought it was destiny that brought them together.

Right before they go to sleep, Stanley sings Zero the lullaby his father always used to sing, this broke the curse that was given to Stanley’s family by Madame Zeroni because Zero her descendant. The same time Stanley’s father finds a solution to foot odor, a mixture of peaches

and onions, both the same things Stanley and Zero found, the same things Kate Barlow and Sam sold.

One night Stanley felt very lucky and asked Zero if he would come and join him to dig for the treasure just one more time in the same hole he found Kate Barlow's lipstick, and he agreed. While they were digging, they found a treasure chest. At approximately same time, the warden and Mr. Sir caught them red handed with the chest in their hands, and like if it couldn't get any worse, a dozen of yellow lizards pops out of the hole they pulled the treasure chest from. But they didn't bite them.

After a long time, Stanley's lawyer shows up with a police officer and sees Stanley and Zero in that hole with all those venomous lizards.

Suddenly Stanley and Zero rise out of the whole without getting bitten with the chest in their hands. When they were at Gods Thumb all they ate was onions, and in the film Sam tells us that onions keep the lizards away, probably because they hate the smell and taste. And since they ate so much, it probably smelled onions of them.

As soon as their up the warden tries to take the chest, but the police officers stops her. While she's shouting that the box is hers, Zero says that it has Stanley Yelnats on it.

At last Stanley and Zero leave Camp Green Lake, and goes to Stanley's apartment to open the box. They find gold and checks that is worth millions witch everything is equally shared with Zero. Zero gets reunited with his mother. And the Yelnats and Zeroni's become neighbors.

Sources

Wikipedia

Holes movie

English lesson at school

10. Selma's reader response essay

My favorite character in Holes

My favorite character in Holes is Hector Zeroni.

In the film, Hector is called Zero, because everybody thinks he is a Zero. He never talks, everybody think he is stupid, but he is

the best at digging holes. Hector has been homeless for all his life, and he has not learned how to write or read. Zero has never had the chance to prove for the rest of the group that he actually is quite smart, because when he says something, the rest of the group laugh at him or say



something evil. But the only problem for Zero is that he just hasn't learned how to read or write.

What makes this character special is that many people can recognize themselves in his personality. Many people pre-judge people that don't talk as much as they do, and then they tend to judge others wrong, as they did with Zero in this movie.

I don't recognize Zero in myself, but I do with other people I know. They have the same problem that Zero had and they have problems to get people to listen to them and understand.

What I think is very good in this movie, is that the rest of the group changes their minds about Zero in the end of the movie. As Zero begins to be friend with Stanley Yelnats, Zero begins to form his personality. He begins to talk, he proves that he is good at math, and the rest of the group notices this, and slowly gets another picture of Zero.

I think this movie was very good, and I would absolutely like to see it again one more time.

11. Gunnar's reader response essay

My favourite character in Holes

The character Hector Zeroni is the character I like the best. He seems like a kid that really is kind but he has problems showing this to other people. By a glance it might seem like he does not care for others, but I think in the end he seem to be glad to see the other kids.

Being an, or to feel like being an orphan, like the way Hector feels can't be easy. I kind of feel sorry for the way Hector lost his mother. Losing your own parents when you are a child cannot be easy. Because of this, I think Hector has become the way he is.

After seeing the movie I feel that Hector is compared to the pig we can see at the retrospective glance. Not only because he is carried up the mountain, I think they are kind of connected because it feels like he is growing, or develops through the movie, just like the pig did.

Seeing the way Hector reacts when Stanley is bullied is some of the reasons why I like Hector good. He is not only smart, but he is also seems like kind of a guardian.

C Readers' Diaries 2011

12. Harald's diary

Diary Entry. 1# 24.01 2011

Chapter 1-7

Here we are; starting to read an English book, and my first impression of the book was; nothing special actually. It looked like an ordinary written book, and Stanley was the name of the main character. How boring, so common and uncreative. Anyway, I continued to read, and frankly I must admit that I found the first few pages extremely, dull. First of all, why would he choose to go to a camp, hoping to find a lake so that he can learn how to swim. I mean, he should know that he's getting punished, and not rewarded. Pretty ridiculous in my opinion. However, as the story continued I began to get curious. Why are they digging holes? Who's the warden? What are the purposes of the camp? What kind of crimes did the boys commit? I just had to fill in the "holes", and when that thought came up in my mind, I understood one of the purposes of many in this book's title. As I found more about their names; my thoughts were that they are pretty creative and hilarious. Why the heck would he call himself "Mr.Sir"? And what about "mom" as a nickname for Mr.Pendanski. So basically as the book continues, I found the book more and more exciting, fun and that it stimulates my curiosity.

Diary Entry 2# Chapter 7-11

Stanley has begun to dig the holes and in the same time; I do the same. Why are they digging at all? Who the heck is the warden?! So hypothetically, I'm digging holes, just like the boys. In one of the chapters, it is also mentioned that "Caveman" was Stanley's nickname. That's awesome, really. It shows Stanley's strength, and that he's one of the "gang". In addition to that I was pretty amazed that there was a wreck room at all. Are they allowed to watch television, and play pool and stuff like that? Impressive. So in other words, the camp doesn't look too bad. Except for the lizards of course, and all the dehydration. Not to be sadistic, but still; you get stronger, faster, more disciplined and you still have other hobbies to do; to spend the time. So we got to know about the curse as well, and frankly I have to admit that it was very uncreative and common. The writer should have avoided the clichés. Typical fairytales, but anyway now we know why the family is cursed ...

Diary Entry 3# Chapter 12-17

Ok, here we are. Stanley's second hole, and the excitement increases. I stopped digging holes as well, I could fill them. First of all, Stanley found a tube with two letters carved on it. "KB", and here my perception skills struck into me. "Kate Barlow", the famous bandit. It got me thinking, perhaps some kind of treasure is buried there? But still I was not certain. I kept reading, and suddenly the Warden appeared, and he was actually a she! I was so shocked, I always pictured the Warden to be a war veteran or some kind. But no, she is actually a woman with long red hair and red fingernails. Creepy ... Anyway, after she realized that "x-ray" had found the tube in a hole, they were immediately ordered to keep digging. And there I cracked the code, and I filled a lot of the holes which were dug by me in my mind! Warden and her co are looking for the treasure buried there! It has to be! I am quite certain now! Still, I don't know the purpose of his great great great grandfather's origins and all that. I'll have to keep reading to find out, perhaps the hole story will make sense; in the end. I hope ...

Diary Entry 4# Chapter 18-22

Holes, holes, holes and even more holes. The boys have been digging for a while now, and I was astonished when I got to know that Zero couldn't read or write. What did he do to deserve this? At least I certainly know why he's called Zero, cause he hardly speaks, and plus, he can't even read nor write. Anyway, I feel sorry for the boys, and I can even picture the whole place in my head. A dry, desolated wasteland. Full of holes and the presence of hopelessness. Just thinking about it gives me the chills ... During these chapters; we also got to know that the Warden used red, poisonous nail polish, and that is creative and very dominating, really. I can't even imagine how a woman can use a nail polish like that, still, very creative by the author. Towards the end of the chapters; Stanley started to teach Zero how to read, and they also made some sort of "pact", or let's say a deal. If Zero digs a little part of Stanley's hole every day, then Stanley can teach him during the evenings in the wreck room and so on. To be honest that is pretty stupid, cause Stanley can teach Zero even though he's exhausted from all the digging, right? Well, I would have done that. But the most ridiculous nickname in this story has to be "Mum". Mr. Pendanski's nickname, that is just too hilarious! Although I can imagine why they call him "mum", Hehe. You know, he kind of watches after them. But most importantly, I hope we get to know more about Stanley's past and his family...

Diary entry 5#

Kate Barlow's fate, huh? What an interesting piece of trivia! We finally got to know her true past, and why she's turned out to be the way she was. In my opinion, that wasn't a good reason for her homicides... In addition, now I'm 100% sure of what they are looking for. Every piece is getting together to become a huge picture in my mind right now. Kate Barlow must have lived around 1890, when the Afro-Americans weren't slaves, but still suppressed by the whites. Interesting, I myself, find it pretty amusing that the Whites thought that they were so much superior to everyone else. Amusing in a terrible way of course. Anyway, I should continue to read to unlock the final code ...

Diary Entry #6 chapter 29-33

Wow finally it's the end of part one, and I must admit that their escape was pretty inevitable. Easily predicted, although the part where Stanley tried to steal the car was hilarious. Too bad it fell into a hole, because it would have helped a lot! I would probably have done the same, and I like the way Stanley thinks, he's still an easy-minded child like me. Anyway now he's alone out there with no water, a dry and desolated wasteland and with no food at all. Searching for his only friend in that godforsaken place, and I wonder how Stanley is going to survive out there. Frankly, something in me tells me that Zero is dead, but I certainly hope not. To be honest, I don't exactly know what I would have done in a situation like that. I would probably just have gone back to the camp, due to me not having the guts enough to stand up for myself, but still I guess we don't know how we would have reacted before experiencing the whole situation. I think Stanley's plan at the moment is to travel to the thumb of god to find shelter, food and water, I guess. I certainly hope so too. But still there is a small piece of the whole jigsaw which remains. Every time I get closer to it, it slips away! I need to fulfill the whole picture ...

Diary Entry #7 Chapter 34-39

This is the beginning of the end, I can feel it, and I must admit that I was very relieved when I read that Zero was still alive. I guess it was a miracle that the boat "Mary Lou" was located in the middle of that godforsaken wasteland. That boat belonged to Sam and his donkey Mary

Lou. I cannot believe how he could have survived for so long without any water or food, but then I got to know that Zero had eaten these “slooshes” in the jars. They were amazingly lucky to have survived for so long by eating those slooshes, but still; something in me is a little bit disappointed to have found out that Zero had survived. You know, because the story would have been more intense if Zero had died. Then Stanley would have tried to survive solostyle, and that would have built the suspense. Then again the puzzles in the story wouldn't fit together in the end. Anyway, when both Zero and Stanley climbed up the mountain; I was pretty shocked. They haven't eaten for so long, and the heat was scorching. Very astonishing, and when I read those chapters; it also encouraged me to never give up on things that may seem difficult at the beginning... Their accomplishments must have been survival instincts mixed up with some adrenalin. Frankly I love the feeling of adrenalin. I would probably have run all the way back to the camp. The feeling of that hunger and the thirst is too unbearable. Now I'm too curious to know WHAT they're going to find at the summit! ...

Diary Entry #8 chapter 40-44

I've begun to crack the final code, the last piece of the whole jigsaw. Stanley and Zero reached the summit of the mountain, and it was merely a giant stone precipice which looked like a thumb. Up there, they both found a little water, and oddly enough, onions. I was relieved when I read that they found water, and I guess they both have the will of iron. Anyway, I also read about the tragic death of Sam and his donkey Mary Lou, and Kate Barlow's origins! It was shocking and I was furious about how these “white” people reacted on Kate's love affair with Sam. Then at that particular moment, my perception skills struck me once again. AHA, the giant precipice, also known as God's Thumb must be the source of Sam's onions, and perhaps it is there Kate Barlow buried her treasure? That sounds quite logical to me, and if I were Stanley; I would have started to dig to find some sort of treasure. There is one more thing, and this may sound very odd, but when it was mentioned that Stanley sang a song for Zero up in the mountains. I noticed that it surprisingly resembled Eljah's deal with the notorious foreseer, madame Zeroni. AHA, Zero MUST be her descendant, and therefore ZERO must be an abbreviation for ZERONI. In addition, the deal was that Elja was supposed to carry madame Zeroni up a giant mountain and sing a song. It has to be, and then Stanley just performed that task, or deal and perhaps the curse is lit? I'll have to continue reading.

Ah and one more thing, Zero also apologized to Stanley. What for? Clyde Livingston's shoes ... Zero confessed that it was him who stole the shoes and lost them, and he also told him that, that was the reason for his serving time in camp green lake. Merely a coincidence that Stanley received the shoes? No... It has to be fate! Will they find the long lost treasure, and survive? Or will they rot in God's Thumb? Even after my comprehension of almost the whole jigsaw; I realized that the final piece still remained. There is something I've missed through the story, but I can't come up with that final piece! I'm getting so frustrated for not being able to foresee this story, one missing link ...

X-Ray's diary entry

I wonder if that guy caveman is ok. Yeah we have been harsh on that guy, but still he deserved it. Using Zero to dig like that! Here we dig for ourselves. Anyway, Zigzag kicked his ass, and if not Pendanski was there; I would have kicked Caveman's ass, personally. He and his worthless friend, Zero, have escaped. I bet they are all buzzardfood right now, serves them right. Anyway, now we have to dig their holes, little Grinches! However, if they are alive; I'm gonna apologize to both of them, I think that's the right choice.

13. Henriette's diary

Was Stanley's problem bad luck, destiny, or the fault of the curse on his great-great-grandfather, and why?

Dear diary

I think Stanley's problem is really bad luck. He is accused of stealing a pair of sneakers, although he is innocent. The Yelnats family talks about a curse. They mean that the family has a curse from their non-good-bad-rotten-pig-stealing-great-grandfather. He is accused of stealing Clyde Livingstone's sneakers from a homeless shelter. Everyone thinks that he is a bad person for stealing from poor people. He goes to court and has to choose between going to jail and go to camp. He doesn't know what a camp is, so he chooses to go to Camp Green Lake. The bus ride takes about 8 hours.

Diary Entry 2

- Today I dug my first hole!

Stanley dug his first hole this day. He used a very long time, much longer than the first one finished. He had blister all over his hands, and he had to use his cap to cover his hands from the shovel. But he could only do this when the sun wasn't so hot. He was very proud after doing this, because this was something he had finished and struggled for all by himself. It reminds me of the first time I did big things as well. For example the first time I could swim all by myself, or the first time I rode my bike. I had struggled a long time before I could to this without any help. I think this is the kind of feeling Stanley has when he spits in his hole after finished it.

To:

Long Island Street

1789 New York

Mrs. Yelnats

Dear mom!

Today was my first day at camp and I've already made some friends. We've been out on the lake all day, so I'm pretty tired. Once I pass the swimming test, I'll learn how to water-ski. I think it looks wonderful here; there are many big green trees and plenty of flowers. The lake is huge, and everyone loves to swim in it. We do a lot of funny things here, I like the people here a lot. We play games all day, and watch television in the evening. The food tastes extremely good every time, I have already had my favorite twice. The people who work here are very kind and friendly, they often find fun activities for us, and it is never boring here! All the boys are very friendly to me, and I get along with everyone. It is very luxurious here, I have a king size bed, and everything is new and clean. I even have my own bathroom. I have the time of my life here, and I don't regret a second for leaving home. How are you doing? And how is it going with dad's inventions? I miss you a lot, but I really have a good time here.

Love, Stanley

From:

Stanley Yelnats

CAMP GREEN LAKE

TEXAS

Diary Entry 3

- The Warden is interested in the gold tube. Write a paragraph predicting what the object is and why she is interested.

When Stanley is digging he finds a strange gold tube with initials on it. The letters is K and B, but he can't figure out what they stand for. X-ray tells Stanley that he has to give all his findings to him because he deserves it. He says that he has been there the longest, and that Stanley doesn't deserve to get the rest of the day off because he has only been there for some days. Stanley is a kind boy, so he does like X-ray says and gives it to him. X-ray is about to go give the finding to the warden when Stanley tells him to wait. It is much more clever to deliver the Gold tube the day after, so he gets the whole day, many hours rest. If he delivers it today he only gets a few hours free.

They can't decide what the object can be, but they think it could be a part of a pen, or something from a gun. But I think they are wrong. If it was something like that it wouldn't have initials on it. I think it is something more important.

Diary Entry 4

- His heart had hardened as well (82).

Stanley's heart has hardened in the time he has spent at Camp Green Lake. Now he is thinking more about what is best for him and not all the others, for example when he and Zero makes a deal. He thinks it is the best for him to have an hour rest during the day. I think it's a little selfish, because it is a much harder job for Zero who has to dig both his hole, and parts of Stanley's. In addition to this he has to learn new things. In my opinion Stanley could help Zero without getting anything back, since it is not so hard to explain things and learn other things to someone. It also shows that Zero is a smart kid, even though he can't read and write. The situation in the book where they mention that his heart had hardened as well, is when Zero begs him to teach him how to write and learn, and he says that he can't. But he is not always hard-hearted. He takes one for the team when they get busted with the sunflower seeds. He says that everything is his fault, and is going to take the blame for it. So he does, but it doesn't get big consequences.

Reading Diary 6, chapter 29-33

- Why couldn't Stanley blame his no-good-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather for what happened now?

Stanley has blamed his no-good-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather every time something bad has happened to him. This time he couldn't do this, because now it was his own choice. After the boys fought at Camp Green Lake, Stanley stole the watertruck from Mr. Sir and tried to drive away. This wasn't very clever of him, because he had never driven a truck before so he didn't know how to start driving it. But the new boy, Twitch was a car stealer, so he shouted to Stanley what he was supposed to do. Stanley managed to start the truck, but it didn't take long before the truck was stuck in a hole. Stanley regretted afterwards, and concluded with that he couldn't blame his no-good-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather this time.

Diary Entry 7

- “When you spend your whole life in a hole, the only way you can go is up (160).” Do you agree with Zero on this?

I don't think that Zero has a very good life outside Camp Green Lake. He probably doesn't have so many friends that he can hang with, and use his spare time together with. If his life is dark and miserable, and if it can't be any worse, he could just be happier. A Norwegian saying is that; “Det er i motbakker det går oppover” and I think it has a very similar meaning to what Zero says. He means that his life couldn't get any worse, so it doesn't matter that much what happens next.

Diary entry 8

Pretend that you are X-Ray, Zigzag, Magnet, Squid or Twitch; what do they think happened to Stanley and Zero? Write their diary! Start with: I wonder...

I wonder how it was for Caveman and Zero the moment right before they died. They had gone days without any water or something to drink. I don't think they could go long before they passed out or something. I really hope they are still alive, but the chances are really low. Maybe they have been saved by the police or some other people. Wonder if I should go looking for them?

A FILM REVIEW OF HOLES

Name of film: Holes

Film stars: Shia LaBeouf, Sigourney Weaver and Jon Voight

Film director and producer: Andrew Davis

Name of book: Holes

Author of book: Louis Sachar

What is this film about:

The film is about Stanley Yelnats, a boy with constantly bad luck. He is accused of stealing a pair of sneakers from a famous baseball player named Clyde Livingstone (Sweet Feet). He is sent to Camp Green Lake, a camp for “bad boys”. They have to dig holes every day, and one day he and Zero run away. They cannot survive in the desert for more than a couple of days maybe, but they find water on Gods Thumb, there are also a lot of onions there. When they head back to Camp Green Lake, they find a treasure chest with Stanley’s name on it. This is what the warden has been looking for past all these years. Stanley’s lawyer arrives, and they live happily ever after.

Is the film a good version of the book? Is it similar or very different?

I think it is pretty similar, the only thing that is different is that Stanley is fat in the book, but in the film he has a pretty normal body. The author said that this was because they couldn’t find a young boy who could loose that much weight in a short period. This wouldn’t be healthy.

What are your opinions of the actors?

I think they have found very good actors who fit perfectly to the character they are playing.

Would you recommend the film? If so, what sort of people would like it?

I think it is a film that reaches a lot of people, and I don’t think there is an age limit, it fits for everyone.

Can you give the film an age rating?

I think everyone can watch the film.

And a star rating?

I would give it a 5, because I think it is a good film.

14. Marita's diary

Diary 1-6

I think the curse of his great-great-grandfather is bad luck, and I think they should think about that they have and not what they don't have, for example Stanley's father, he want to do something great, something incredible, but maybe he had done something good without knowing it. I think Stanley just see the bad things in all, and not the good things, that he had a family who loves him, and that he can go to school and that he have food and so long.

Diary 7-11

If only, if only, the woodpecker sighs,

The bark on the tree was as soft as the skies

While the wolf waits below, hungry and lonely,

Crying to the moo – oo – oon,

If only, if only.

When Sara ask what it mean. Elya tried his best to translate it from Latvian into English, but it wasn't the same. I think the song means that the woodpecker wants the tree to be soft so the woodpecker can hide from the wolf, and the wolf is hungry and wants the woodpecker so fall from down from the tree. Maybe that's song is the curse. That Stanley is the woodpecker and the wolf is the wolf, because Stanley's fathers sing it to him, and they have done it to all the Stanley's in the family. As I said before, the woodpecker wants the tree to be soft, maybe the woodpecker don't make it, and the woodpecker cant make the hole, as Stanley, the books name is holes so I think Stanley try to make holes but the wolf, the word or the people in his live, dos so I don't make it.

Diary 12-17

The object he is a gold tube, a heart, and it interesting because Stanley wonder if he can take a day off, if the heart is interesting for Mr. Sir. Stanley thinks it looks familiar, and wonders where he have seen it before. Stanley didn't want to give x-Ray the heart so he can take a day off, because Stanley want a day off, but he is afraid for taking a day of because then he maybe t be the outsider as he was at school. When he tall de adders they say that its best to pretends that he find it the next day, so he can take a whole day off , instead of just an hour or so.

When the water truck came, Stanley started to take his place in the line, but X-Ray told him to move up in line, so maybe he won't be an outsider as he thought.

Diary 18-22

Zero is nobody. No one cares about him, and when zero walk into the tent Stanley stopped writing because he thought zero read his letter to his mother, but zero didn't know how, and he ask Stanley if he can teach him, but Stanley didn't want to, and then zero as if he just can teach him to read not to write, because he said he no one to write to, and then I feel sorry for zero, and I thought that Stanley is a little mean to zero. When Stanley come back from the warder his hole is big and zero hole is much smaller then they adders, when I think zero is a very nice person.

Diary 29- 33

Because he as choose to do it, he choose to teach zero to read, and that he can't blame his no-good-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather, it was his choice to do it because he didn't have to dig holes, and need the energy to teach zero, and I think zero is a smart person for learning so fast, and I think the adder boys is mean to Stanley, and I'm glad zero came and stopped zigzag.

Diary 34- 39

Well I kind of agree whit zero, because you can dig down, but you will be in the hole, so if you wants to get a way, then I agree in what zero said. I dint know how to it is to spent my whole life in a hole, and that zero knows better than I do, but if you dig dipper and dipper you way to get up is impossible, to do it by yourself, but if someone help you then you can come up, and I think zero is the person in the hole and didn't know how to get up, and that Stanley is the person to help him.

D Pupils' Essays about *Holes* 2011

15. Essay about *Holes* : Friday, 18 February 2011

Write an essay about one of the following assignments. You may use any notes you have written in your preparation while reading the novel:

1. Pretend that the characters of the novel are reunited after 20 years from the time the story ended. Imagine what their jobs, relationships, etc. will be like. Support your conclusions by stating why you think the characters turned out this way.
2. Pretend that you are describing a main character in the novel to a friend. Compose a complete description that includes the physical appearance and personal characteristics. Indicate also if the character is changing through the story. Cite examples from the book to support your description.
3. The novel *Holes* won several awards at the time it was published and has since had enormous success among readers of all ages. What, in your opinion, is it that makes *Holes* so popular? Think of the themes, messages, characters.
4. Who is your favourite character: Stanley, Zero, another of the characters in *Holes*? Why? Write a brief characterization of him/her and explain why you identify with this character. Base your text on your experience when reading the book.
5. Pretend that you are a newspaper reporter. Compose a newspaper article based on a climactic event in the novel. Include answers to the questions “who, what, when, where, and why”.

PS. As always your essay should have a good structure with a clear introduction, several paragraphs (one idea per paragraph) and a conclusion. When you quote from the book to support your arguments remember to include the page number. For example:

Zero is far from stupid: “I’m not stupid,” Zero said. “I know everybody thinks I am. I just don’t like answering their questions.” (p. 99)

Any other documents used in writing your essay must also be cited as a source at the end of the assignment !

16. Jessica's essay

Hector Zeroni

Holes is a book written by Louis Sachar. I really liked the book since I think that everyone can recognize themselves in one of the character in the book. This book is about curses, friendship and family relationship.

My personal favourite character in the book is Zero. His real name is Hector Zeroni, but he has been called Zero for the most of his life. Zero is a camper at Camp Green Lake with other boys who live in the tent D. Zero is the best digger at the camp and actually he likes to dig holes; "What about it, Zero?" asked Mr. Pendanski. "What do you like to do?" "I like to dig holes." (p.58). Zero lives on the street and since he doesn't have any education, he must actually steal money to buy food and clothes.

Mr. Pendanski calls especially Hector Zeroni for Zero, since he claims that there is nothing inside his head. Well, the opposite is that Zero is smart, but he doesn't speak too much so the impression everyone gets of him is that he is stupid. However, Zero is far from stupid. "I'm not stupid," Zero said. "I know everybody thinks I am. I just don't like answering their questions." (p.99)

Zero has been homeless for the most of his life; since his mother left him or lost him when he was young. We don't know that for sure. Even so, he has been doing well so far in his life, but he had bad luck when he was arrested for stealing.

Zero is the great-great-great –grandson of Madame Zeroni, the woman who has put a curse on Stanley's family. Elya Yelnats is Stanley's great-great-grandfather and he is the reason why Stanley's family have such bad luck. Elya travels to America, forgetting a promise he had given to Madame Zeroni about bearing her up the mountain. Elya is the reason why Stanley is at the camp.

Zero is smart and also honest. In chapter 22 he turns around to Stanley and says: "you didn't steal the sneakers," he said. Stanley said nothing. (p.96). it's then everyone who reads the book realise that Stanley is innocent. Stanley has always been at the wrong place at the wrong time.

I personally identify really with Zero. Sometimes I can be really quiet when people talk to me or ask me questions. It seems like everything is just blowing through my mind like Zeros, but in fact everything is captured.

Zero is also a boy who likes to learn new things. He is anxious about learning the alphabet and to read, so he wants Stanley to teach him. "I'll try to teach you to read if you want," Stanley offered. (p.96). personally I also like to learn new things myself and I'm really open to learn. In return Zero digs in Stanleys hole one hour per day, so Stanley wouldn't be too tired when he was about to teach Zero later the same day. I'm also that type of person who gives something in return for those who help me with things I want.

In chapter 30, Mr. Pendanski handles the shovel to Zero and says: "Here, take it, Zero. It's all you'll ever be good for." (p.139) Zero than gets angry and smashes the shovel to Mr.Pendanskis face. Zero soon runs away, and no one wants to go after him. Sometimes I'm also a person who also wants to run away from everything in my daily life, but that isn't so easy at the author writes in his book.

Zero and I are equal each other at many points, but I consider that Zero is more clever than me. He has survived without his mother and father his whole life and I think that I could never be able to do that. Zero is full of strength and willpower, and he doesn't give up that easy. I think that sometimes I can give up really easy even though I try not to. Zero is really my favourite character because he is such an inspiration for those who read the book.

Sources:

<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/holes/characters.html>

<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/holes/section7.rhtml>

The book Holes by Louis Sachar

17. Lars' essay

Task 3:

“Holes” has won several awards and has been a enormous success among readers of all ages. This book has been very popular, and some people may ask why. The author writes in a way, so the reader gets sympathy with the main characters, and this shows that Louis Sachar is a great author. The title “Holes”, may also mean other things than just digging holes.

First of all, I think “holes” is so popular because it is a very interesting story. The story is getting more and more thrilling as the reader reads. After around 12-13 chapters of the book, the boys on the camp have not found anything important in their holes. Here is the book not so exciting, but later it gets more and more thrilling. That is actually a very good way to write, because the reader gets to know a little bit more as the reader is reading the book. What also makes the book more exciting is that the story does not develop as the reader may think. Suddenly the main character(Stanley) does something he has never done before, and he tries to save a person that probably is dead, instead of caring about himself.

Another thing that makes the story so good is that the story is very open for thinking. Even in the end, the reader may have a lot of questions that is not answered. This makes the reader think, and the reader may think out the answers of some of the questions that are not answered. As the author says “You will have to fill in the holes yourself”(p. 231). This is great to learn English, because you can discuss in groups in the classroom about what you think will happen or what you think is the answer on the question that is not answered in the text. In addition to this, the title is “Holes”, but it does not only mean digging holes. It can mean that Stanley has some holes in his life, or that it is some holes in the story. So the book makes you think, and that is fantastic because then you learn more.

The main character who is called Stanley Yelnats is overweighed, but he gets thinner and he gets stronger both physical and mental. As it is written in the book “As Stanley tried to turn over on his cot, he was afraid it was going to collapse under all his weight. He barely fit in it.(P.23). He shows that he can do things that are incredible and this brings hope to the

readers that do not have the best qualifications to do something they want to. I think that the author chose Stanley, to show that you do not need to be very strong or have a nice body to achieve something. Stanley is a normal boy and he is able to dig a hole that is five feet deep and five feet wide every day and save a boy who is close to death. So the author is in a way comparing the reader with Stanley to find similarities, and if you feel very much like the main character, you get more excited and want to read more.

I think the message in the book is to try things you have not done before, and do not be scared to try to save someone even though you do not think you cannot make it. It surprised me that Stanley did go after Zero to try to save him. This shows that close friendships make people do almost anything for another person. Stanley is actually risking his life by going out in the desert with no water and no food. When the reader sees that Stanley is so brave, the reader also wants to be brave. Maybe the reader would not hesitate next time someone can be saved. Stanleys attitude is very nice, and many people can learn from him, even though the story is not true.

So the conclusion seems to be that "Holes" is popular because the author has written a very entertaining story. He has also made a story were everything is not revealed and this makes the reader think about what the answers may be and why. The main character is a normal boy and he becomes a hero just by being himself. This shows that friendships make people very close to each other, and makes them do almost everything for their friend.

18. Johnny's essay

Assignment 3

The successes of "Holes"

Louis Sachar has had a tremendous success with his novel "Holes". The book has won several awards (according to the assignment), and it is sold worldwide. Because of this, it is easy to say that Louis Sachar knows how to write. Although it is a popular book, what is it that makes it so? In my opinion, it is because of the way he has planned the book: Mysterious secrets that makes it impossible to stop reading, the creative concept of the book, emotions and feelings, the variation of personality between the characters, and all of his describing...

First of all, as said, Louis Sachar knows how to build up a book. All the mysteries that he has planned for the book, that are suddenly showing up have a lot to say for the success of the novel. For example: "Why does the Warden want them to dig holes?" "Is it something valuable in the lake?" After asking question like these, there only has to be read a few more pages before something else suddenly shows up. No wonder this book has turned out to be successful.

The story is brilliant. It is creative, exciting, mysterious etc. What makes this book so well-planned is that he includes the past of Green Lake into the present story, and in that way, he creates these holes, these question that is to be answered. For example: "One hundred and ten years ago, Green Lake was the largest lake in Texas." (Extract from the first sentence in chapter 23 of the book.) When this is mentioned, we start to wonder what happened to the lake. What changed it into a dry, empty wasteland?

During the novel, the reader also gets in touch with these feelings and emotions. Louis Sachar has written in such a solid way, that he makes the story realistic and real. We get to feel Stanley's dry mouth because of his dehydration in the excruciating warmth, his sore hands as a result of digging, his comfortable feeling around Mr. Pendanski, the hopeless feeling of

being trapped because of the vast, enormous wasteland, and the constant fear of being bitten by the deadly yellow-spotted lizards and other dangerous animals. The novel is written in a very good way, and there is no doubt that this is one of the reasons that it has turned out to be so successful.

All of the characters are very different from one to another. Stanley is this innocent, kind person, Zero is very sheltered, but smart, and X-Ray is not the biggest of the boys, but he is still “the leader”. This variation between the characters makes the story more exciting and fun to read. If it would not be like this, who knows how the book would have turned out...

The final reason of the book’s success is Louis’ way of describing. He makes the places very easy to imagine, and that is really important. When we are introduced to the first sight of Camp Green Lake through Stanley, the describing goes like this: “The land was barren and desolate. He could see a few rundown buildings and some tents. Farther away there was a cabin beneath two tall trees. Those two trees were the only plant life he could see.”(Extract from the first page of chapter 4.) There are of course much more describing than what is written on this page.

In the end, this is a book that it is popular for a reason. I would recommend everyone to read it, because it is made for everyone at any age.

19. Nina's essay

I choose to right this assignment because I thought it would be funny to play with how their future could have been. This is how I could have imagined their future.

This is the second time Stanley Yelnats is sitting on this bus. He remembers the first time, the fear he had. Not knowing what to expect. This time it is different. He came here spontaneous. And on the bus it wasn't just him and a guard. In front of him sat Zigzag, Armpit first and behind them Squid and Magnet. On Stanley's left side was Zero sitting. Only one was missing, X-ray.

They were all nervous; it felt like they were going back, back to the holes. It had been 20 years now, but it felt like yesterday. Digging holes in the sun, they were always digging. Stanley was glad that time was over, that they were not the same little boys any more.

They had all grown. Squid were living with his wife and was working at one of the biggest marked company in his town. Zigzag and Armpit worked with digging in the mountains, they were the best at their job and everyone in the digging industry wanted to hire them. Magnet was married and had to children, his wife was a famous cook and he worked in the shoe factory.

Stanley and Zero were working together in their family company. Zero had his own drugstore, where he sold different types of drugs made by onion and you could buy the famous product sploosh. Stanley continued working with different commercials for Zeros drugs. He had a lot of celebrities working for him. With all that they didn't have time to find someone to share their lives with. But Stanley did have a girlfriend, her name was Anna. Her name was also a palindrome.

All the six boys have life that they liked. But not x-ray. X-ray was the only one of them that did not adapt to the life outside the camp. When he got out he had no where to go, he had no home. So he lived in the street. He had no money, when x-ray was hungry he stole food from one of the stores nearby. He got bad friends, and began to rob bigger stuff.

One day he and his gang stole from a bank and ran away. It was all over the new for weeks, but eventually they got caught and were sent to jail. Nobody knows for how long.

The bus stopped and the boys went out. There they were, the five boys. They looked at the place before them. The houses were big and yellow, and there were a lot of flowers and fruit trees. Especially peach trees. The whole place was changed. A girl with a pink dress came out one of the houses, she went towards one of the fruit trees and climbed up. But the most shocking thing, there was no holes! Not one, even behind the houses no hole. They were gone, the holes that they had used a very long time to dig. Stanley and the others were glad.

20. Nils' essay

The first rain in hundred years!

In Camp Green Lake, Texas Wednesday the 4th of June the first rain came in over a hundred years. The local weather station says the last rainfall was reported the 7th September 1905. The local meteorologist Joe Gardener says the weather in Camp Green Lake is a phenomenon.

The weather station started its measurements in the 1850s. The old files from the weather station are very surprising. The files tell us about a climate with lots of rain and even a big lake situated central in the area. At the time 1850 to 1905 was Camp green lake an area full of life. Approximately 500 people lived in the small community and it was possible to harvest grain and different kinds of fruit. But today Camp Green Lake is completely different, a wasteland with just small amounts of water and no life except of some poisonous lizards. It's hard to imagine that it's even the same place, says Joe Gardener.

Joe Gardener who has lived his whole life in Camp Green Lake started a few years ago to investigate what really happened in Camp Green Lake in the year 1905. He started to search through the old samples of The Camp Green Lake journal, and he found out something dramatically. In 1905 the infamous Kate Barlow had an illegal affair with a coloured man. In 1905 Texas was a conservative state and the coloured man was sentenced to the death penalty. He was killed and as we know Kate Barlow left Camp Green Lake and became an outlaw. This is no logical explanation that will result in weather changes but the dates match perfectly, says Joe Gardener. After this event no rainfall is reported in Camp Green Lake until Wednesday this week.

With the first rain in over a hundred years the few inhabitants of Camp Green Lake have gained some hope. Maybe it will continue raining in the future, says Joe Gardener. He is the only inhabitant in the area except of the staff and inmates of the Camp Green Lake work camp. Joe is dreaming of reestablishing the society that once was in the area. If the rain keep coming maybe others than inmates will move to Camp Green Lake, says Joe Gardener with a smile.

Written by Nils Smith in the Texas post 18.02.201

E Readers' Diaries 2012

21. Rasmus' diary

I don't tend to find hidden messages in books, I just read them to have fun. But I do like that the author have connected two stories into one, it gives the text more fluency. It were a good book that I can recommend to anyone. I don't have anything else to say about the book.

I was not surprised when Stanley crashed the car. Something had to happen, otherwise the story would have turned boring.

I think the ending of the book was a little too happy. There wasn't anything that went bad, and the story ended as a cliché. It would have spiced the story if the reader were left with a bitter taste from the story.

22. Kristine's diary

I've finished reading the novel "Holes", but I'm going to try to write a reading diary anyway.

When I started reading Holes I felt really sorry for Stanley. When he chose to go to Camp Green Lake I think he was a bit naïve. He did not believe that the prisoners there were going to dig a huge hole every day. When I first heard about the holes they were digging, I believed they dogged because if it started to rain, the rain would be kept in the holes. If that wasn't right I thought they might were looking for a treasure, and so they did!

I think the book is very good and I like that the writer makes it very personally. When I read, it feels like I am in the story. I can feel the tension, the heat, the beating sun, the ground and hear the shovel digging in to it.

In the start I remember I thought it was weird that the Warden was a woman, and that she was very evil. It surprised me that she was hurting Mr. Sir instead of Stanley, when Stanley had stolen Mr. Sirs' seeds. But after a while I understood why she did it. She didn't care about Mr. Sirs' seeds, she only wanted him to disturb her when someone had found something.

When the writer starts to tell two stories at the same time, it gets really interesting. You understand more about the main story when you read the background story.

My favourite character is Stanley because I think he tells the truth about the sneakers and I feel sorry for him. He does not have any friends and he is being bullied at school.

If I could meet the author of Holes Louis Sachar I would ask him a lot of questions about Stanley. I would have asked him why Stanley behaves like he does, and if he feels like he is standing close to Stanley. Did he ever get bullied at school or work, and has he been accused for something he hasn't done?

I think the author chose to entitle his book Holes because there is a lot of "holes" in the story. By holes I mean that there is a lot of information that we don't get to know before the end of the text, and we don't get to know *all* the information in the end either.

I think the episode with the yellow-spotted-lizards was very interesting. The episode when Stanley and Zero almost got killed by them. It was interesting that they didn't got killed because of the onions they ate.

Dear Louis Sachar,

I think your book *Holes* was really amazing. You write incredibly well, and you make me feel like I'm really in the story. I can feel the beating sun, the hard ground and the shovels digging in to it. I like the way you describe the environment and Stanley's feelings about the other guys. I think you're a good writer and I have high expectations to the movie.

From Kristine

23. Camilla's diary

The main person is Stanley Yelnats (IV). He is a bad boy (but he has not done anything wrong. He was just “in the wrong place at the wrong time”), and therefore he is sent to Camp Green Lake to become a good boy. He does not have any friends at home, so he wants to make some new friends at the camp. Stanley is overweight and the kids at his middle school often tease him about his size.

Stanley's father is also named Stanley Yelnats (III) who is very unlucky. The family lives in a small apartment, because the first Stanley Yelnats (great grandfather) lost his fortune many years ago.

I started thinking when the bus driver said to Stanley: “Be careful”. What does he actually mean and why did he say that to Stanley?

I wonder why the boys at Camp Green Lake have to dig a hole every day

Stanley “stole” Sweet Feet's sneakers. (Bad luck)

The young boys have nicknames (Stanley= Caveman)

If the boys find something interesting while they are digging, they have to give it to either Mr. Pendanski or Mr. Sir

The yellow-spotted lizard

Under a stone: A fish fossilized in it

What are Stanley's thoughts when he goes to bed that first night at Camp Green Lake? Write his thoughts!

- Stanley's thoughts

I think he feels uncomfortable. Just lay in the small bed knowing that he is going to sleep there for several months ahead, after digging a big hole every day. His thoughts are about the next day. The boys are getting up early the next morning and Stanley is not satisfied with the food yet. I think he misses his mum and dad back home, and how everything was before Sweet-Feet's shoes showed up. I think he feels innocent. It is not right that Stanley has to dig

a hole every day instead of the real thief! He is taking another one's punishment and does it for him, not fair at all.

17.1.12

Dear diary

I really enjoy reading «Holes». It is a very exciting book so far!

In these chapters, Stanley has met the Warden for the first time. I thought the Warden would be a big, creepy, old man, but it was not! The Warden was a lady. I wonder why I thought so. I think the boys thought the same as I did. The reason why they are seeing the Warden for the first time is because of Stanley. He found a gold tube with the letters K B etched inside it while he was digging. But X-Ray, the "leader" of the group, told Stanley to give interesting things to him if he found something. And so he does. The Warden seems very interested, and the boys get more water than usually. X-Ray, who "found" the gold tube gets the day off. And therefore, he has a lot of energy when the boys come back after a long day at the lake.

The boys are also talking about the Warden's hidden cameras. They say she has them everywhere, even in the shower. Therefore, X-Ray pretends like he does not know what Stanley is talking about when he tries to say something about the gold tube. I think X-Ray wanted a day off, and that the Warden likes him. Unfortunately, the Warden now believes that X-Ray has sharp eyes and a good sight, but that is not correct. It is the opposite, actually. I think that will be a problem later in the book.

Stanley is thinking about the gold tube very often since he found it. And he thinks it looked familiar. X-Ray has changed a bit. He seems very nice to Stanley when the other boys want him to read a letter from his mother, and Stanley does not want to. X-Ray says: "Give him some space". But after reading a few chapters, I do not think that X-Ray seems very nice to Stanley anymore. After Magnet stole the sack of sunflower seeds from Mr. Sir and Zigzag threw it into Stanley's hole, none of the boys seemed nice to Stanley when he pretended that it was him who stole the sack. The smallest thing X-Ray can do now is to be nice to Stanley after he gave him the gold tube.

Stanley got hurt by Zigzag's shovel, but he just got a bandage around his head and has to go back to the digging.

Zero asks Stanley if he can teach him how to write and read. Most important is the reading-part, because Zero has nobody to write to back home. But Stanley is tired and exhausted after all the digging, so he starts laughing and says no. Stanley is not laughing at Zero, though. He was just surprised.

Mr. Sir takes Stanley to the Warden when Stanley says he has stolen the sunflower seeds. The Warden gets mad at Mr. Sir because she thinks he has bothered her (red fingernails, Mr. Sir writhing on the floor, flowered makeup kit). While Stanley was at the Warden's, he did not have the chance to dig in his hole, but when he comes back, Zero has dug a lot in it. Therefore, Stanley was the first one to finish that day.

K B = He had seen it in his mother's bathroom, that is why it looked so familiar. He had also seen it in the Warden's cabin, it was half of a lipstick contain

Camp Green Lake, Texas

Dear mum

Today was my first day at camp and I've already made some friends. We've been out on the lake all day, so I'm pretty tired. Once I pass the swimming test, I'll learn how to waterski. I'm looking forward to it! Can you imagine? A big, blue lake with all my friends waterskiing, that's going to be a great day. The leaders, who are very friendly and helpful, are also talking about a trip to one of the mountains over here and go rock climbing! Every night, when I'm trying to sleep in my soft bed in my beautiful cabin, I'm always looking forward to the day after. Some days ago, I actually couldn't sleep, because I was so excited!

Every day, we get a lot of great food. Unfortunately, some days ago, we had spaghettis and you now I'm not a fan of that dish. So I went to bed a bit hungry, missing your food at home. But every Friday the cooks make pizza for us and it almost tastes better than dad's pizza at home! Just try to not tell him, please!

The other boys here are very friendly. We have become a big group and our contact is a very friendly man called Mr. Pendanski. One of the boys here has homesickness, so Mr. Pendanski says it is OK for him if the boy wants to call him "mum", haha. But don't worry; the boy only misses his dog. Unfortunately, he couldn't bring it to the camp, but I think he is getting over it soon.

What about dad and his inventions? Tell him I'm very curious and that I miss him and his ideas. It is something about our family and sneakers! I already understand that it was wrong to steal the sneakers. Even though they were worn out and smelled pretty bad, they belonged to someone.

I'm having a good time over here. I wish I could show the place to you and dad, but the time is going very fast over here, so before you know, I'm standing outside our front door. But it is kind of sad that I have to leave this beautiful place someday. I'm looking forward to see you again, and I miss you very much.

Your wonderful son, Stanley Yelnats

Dear diary 22.1.12

I still think «Holes» is an exciting and enjoyable book. It is hard to stop reading it and that is quite irritating when I have to go to bed. But I think it distinguishes a good book; that I can't stop reading and only want more information about the happening. This time I have read chapter 23 to 33.

In the beginning of these chapters, we go back one hundred and ten years, and get to know the fertile Green Lake. We also get to know Miss Katherine Barlow and her popular peaches and Trout Walker with his smelly feet. Trout was the son of the richest man in the country. We also get to know Sam, the onion man. Everyone went to the doctor and Sam when they were sick or ill. Sam has a donkey named Mary Lou. Miss Katherine and Sam fall in love, even though everyone thought she would marry Trout. Sam is dark-skinned and Miss Katherine is white-skinned. Sam was shot and killed, because "it's against the law for a Negro to kiss a white woman".

After twenty years, Katherine turned back to Green Lake, still missing Sam. One day, Trout Walker comes by and threatens Katherine to tell him where she has hidden her loot. A redheaded woman is with Trout, her name is Linda Walker, one of Katherine's earlier pupils. The description of her reminds me of the Warden: Freckles and red hair. Kate says: "But there is no loot." and "Go ahead and kill me, Trout. But I sure hope you like to dig." Even though

I've understand that the children at Camp Green Lake are searching for something while they're digging, this was a clear proof.

Katherine got killed by a lizard with big red eyes. Kate Barlow died smiling. None but her knew where the loot was hidden.

Stanley meets Mr. Sir for the first time after the happening in the Warden's cabin. And when Mr. Sir arrives with the water truck later that day on the lake, he doesn't fill Stanley's canteen. He pours the water to the ground. Another day he puts something in Stanley's canteen, Stanley is afraid of what I can be inside it, so he poured it all out onto the dirt.

I wonder why Stanley won't talk about the happening in the Warden's cabin to the other boys because he thinks it will go away. Hasn't Stanley learned yet? When he didn't say anything about Sweet Feet's sneakers and told the truth, that it wasn't him who stole them, he end up at Camp Green Lake. Let's see where he ends up this time...

I think God punished the inhabitants in Green Lake, not Sam and Katherine. I think God punished the people of Green Lake, because they punished Sam and Katherine for no reason. Sam died and Katherine had to live with the grief for many years.

The other boys didn't like that Zero (Zero's real name is Hector Zeroni) was digging Stanley's hole for an hour in a day. But Stanley means that he needs the energy to teach Zero in the evening. The boys started tease Stanley and Zero and the boys start fighting. After a lot of pushing, Zero has his arm around Zigzag's neck and Mr. Pendanski fires his pistol into the air and the other counselors run out on the lake. Zigzag tells the Warden about Zero and Stanley's deal and she gets mad. Mr. Pendanski starts to be rude, and I thought he was a kind and helpful man. Suddenly, Stanley can't trust anyone, other than Zero. But Zero runs away, and Stanley realizes that he didn't need the extra energy to teach Zero to write and read. A new boy assigns Group D after Zero left. His name is Brian and he has stolen a car.

After some days, Stanley steals the water truck when Mr. Sir fills the canteens. Brian is shouting how he is supposed to start the car, but he drives straight into a hole. Therefore, he starts running away from the camp. He thinks he can reach the Big Thumb...

Part two is called "THE LAST HOLE" and I wonder why. Is Stanley digging his last hole in this part?

A loud boom of thunder is within reach of the lake where the boys are digging. Every time the lightning flashes, the dark shape of the mountains briefly appear. And the mountains are only visible at the sunup, before the air become hazy. Stanley can see an unusual rock formation on the top of one of the mountain peaks. It looks like a thumb sticking straight up. His great-grandfather said: "I found refuge on God's thumb" after he was robbed by Kate Barlow. But none ever understood what he meant...

School burned down in Green Lake

The school stood recently finish after a big redecorating some days ago. One of the inhabitants in Green Lake had fixed the leaky roof, the windows which would not open and the door which did not hang straight. As a protest against the teacher in Green Lake, Miss Katherine Barlow, the inhabitants burned the school down. We have asked an inhabitant who was joining the process and burned her grandchildren's school down with her fellow countrymen:



The school some minutes after the happening.

We meet Hattie Parker outside of the burned-down school.

- Why did the inhabitants burn down Green Lake's only school?
- The school's teacher, Miss Katherine Barlow, and a man called Sam who fixed the school some days ago, were kissing outside on the street! Can you imagine? A Negro kissed a white woman! That is against the law!
- But what about the education in Green Lake after the happening? You don't have a place for the children to meet?
- I don't think that is the biggest problem. The biggest problem would be if my grandchildren learned to write and read by a witch!
- So Miss Katherine is no longer teaching the children?
- No, everyone in Green Lake hates her now. No one is allowed to kiss a Negro, especially not a teacher! A teacher is supposed to be a good role model and Katherine was not.

We are coming back with more information later. Stay tuned!

Dear diary

I am planning to write my first diary. I am alone most of the time, so why not try to collect my thoughts and feelings? I need an object to share my inner, a friend I can tell everything. I think you can do that, be a friend for me? I do not trust anyone anymore. I used to trust Sam. But Sam is dead, I cannot tell him what I feel and what I am thinking about. But I think I can reach Sam through this diary. I love you!

Dear diary

After the school burned down some years ago, I went bad. After Trout shot Sam, I went worse. And suddenly everyone feared me. I was the worst. I started stealing and robbing. Mostly in banks, but I also robbed people. Innocent people. I am not proud of it but I do not regret. I just feel empty. Everything was complete when Sam was alive...

Dear diary 25.1.12

Stanley runs away after stealing the motor truck and driving it into one of the holes. I wonder why he stole it. Maybe he was desperate and wanted freedom as soon as possible. When he

sat in the water truck with Mr. Sir on the way to the Warden's cabin earlier in the book, he felt the wind in his face. Maybe he wanted that feeling again... I also think he was a bit curious about God's Thumb and he could look a bit after Zero too. He thinks about to turn back the whole time, but the Thumb gives him the thumbs-up sign.

He finds a boat out on the wasteland named "Mary Lou". The same name had Sam's donkey. Zero is lying under the boat, which lies upside down. In the boat, the two boys find some jars which are over a hundred years old. They are eating the contents and Stanley thinks it tastes like peaches. Zero proves that he can read a bit when he recognizes the letters on the boat.

The boys are going up the mountains to the Thumb. Zero gets attacks after eating the "sploosh" and Stanley wonders how long it will take before he feels the effects. Zero gets a lot of problems on the way up to the Thumb and Stanley thinks a lot about his parents. I think he misses home now. A safe place where people cares about him, free access to water and food, a soft and big bed to fall asleep in. Air-condition and a mama-hug.

The boys are helping each other with the climbing and it is going great up the mountain, for two weak people to be. After a while, Zero gets one of his attacks and starts to throw up the "sploosh". Stanley realize that it has to be water around somewhere because of the weeds and bugs, but Zero gets quiet and Stanley has to pull him up to the Thumb.

I wonder why Stanley feels an inner strength on their way up to the Thumb. Maybe it has something to do with his great-grandfather who called it God's thumb? Stanley feels the Big Thumb is like a magnet which pulls him toward it.

Stanley finds some muddy holes and Zero is still unconscious. "You need water to make mud" ...And Stanley starts digging and finds water in the bottom of the hole! He also finds an onion in the bottom of the hole. Stanley pours some water in Zero's face and he wakes up with both water and onion. Zero tells Stanley that he was the one who stole Clyde Livingstone's shoes!

I was very surprised when Zero told Stanley he stole the sneakers. After reading many chapters in the book, I have almost forgotten that the boys went to Camp Green Lake instead of jail. Therefore, I almost forgot that Zero had done something wrong as the other boys. No I understand why Zero said something earlier about that Stanley did not steal the sneakers.

When Zero falls asleep, Stanley is singing the song that have been in his family for generations:

“If only, if only”, the woodpecker sighs,

“The bark on the tree was just a bit softer.”

While the wolf waits below, hungry and lonely,

He cries to the moo-oo-oon,

“If only, if only.”

The song made me think. When the song has appeared earlier in the book, I have not thought much about it. But now it is different. I think about the little woodpecker as Zero and the wolf as Stanley. The woodpecker wishes the bark was a bit softer, because then he would get what he wanted easier (water). The wolf stands below and cries to the moon (the Big Thumb): “If only, if only” – he could manage to get on the top of the thumb to get to the water.

I wonder, as Stanley also does, how the onion had come to be there. I think it maybe has to do with Sam and his onions. Stanley finds even more onions, and Zero seems a bit better.

The book brings us back to the “green” Green Lake. Mrs. Gladys Tennyson’s daughter Rebecca is well after her stomach sickness because she ate onions during the sickness period. Now, I hope Stanley gets well too, after eating the onion Stanley found.

Stanley decides to look after the shovel and the sack, and he finds them both, far away down the hill. He is amazed- how could he carry Zero for such a long time over such a long distance? With no water or food in his stomach?

Stanley is glad he ended up at Camp Green Lake. He finally got his first real friend in Zero and he is also more satisfied with himself.

Dear diary

It is sad that I am reading the last chapters of the book now. I think I am going to miss the reading project, it has been so much fun! Now, I’m really looking forward to watch the film with the rest of the class!

In chapter 43, Zero tells Stanley about his life before Camp Green Lake. Zero says his mother sang a song to him, that song Stanley sang to Zero, the version to Zero's mother was a bit different. He tells Stanley he has been living on the street. His mother told him to wait at different places, and she came back later. But one night she never came back. Zero waited for her for more than a month. He had a giraffe called Jaffy, I think Jaffy was Zero's only friend back in the days.

I wonder why Stanley had the powers to carry Zero the way up to God's Thumb. Maybe he felt he was dragging to a magnet, like his great-great-grandfather?

On the way down God's Thumb, Stanley falls. I think that is signing his exhaustion and tiredness. Water and onions are not factors which give a person a lot of energy, but it is much better than nothing.

Both Stanley and Zero are preparing the return to Camp Green Lake. They are collecting onions before the return, because they need strength and energy before they are going to search for the treasure in one of the holes at the lake. The boys are heading Camp Green Lake in the late afternoon. They will start digging when the Camp is silent.

After a while the only light on at camp is in the office. They decide to start their little project. Zero is going to refill the water jars and try to find some food, while Stanley starts digging in the hole he found the lipstick lid and after a while, he feels a hard object with his shovel. It is a suitcase. After digging it up from the hole, a bright light shines in his face. It is the Warden.

Mr. Pendanski is holding the flashlight, and he is the only one who is fully dressed. I think he had been on guard duty and discovered the boys.

A lizard has crawled up on the top of the suitcase with its white tongue and black teeth. After a while Stanley finds out that he is standing in a lizard nest. I think that is because Mr. Sir's sunflower seeds which Magnet threw in the hole. The lizards like sunflower seeds...

I still think Linda Walker is related to the Warden. The Warden said: "When I was little, I'd watch my parents dig holes (...)" The Warden has been waiting for the suitcase for a long time and the boys at Camp Green Lake have made the process faster and much easier to the Warden.

Mr. Sir says to Stanley that he is innocent after all and that his lawyer came to get him the day before. If I was Stanley, I think I would go crazy or something. It is very unfair to Stanley,

and of course to the rest of the boys. I think the Warden, Mr. Sir and the counselors are terrorizing the young boys. Ok, the boys have done something illegal, but no one deserves what they are going through! I mean that the Warden is doing something much more illegal than the boys have done.

The Texas Attorney General and Ms. Morengo.

When the guys in Green Lake were going to hunt rattlesnakes, they asked Sam if he had some “lizard juice”. The juice is a kind of immunity for lizards. I think that is the reason why the lizards did not attack Zero and Stanley. They had been eaten onions for a very long time! “Lizards don’t like onion blood”

I think Zero meets his mother at the small party in the end.

My reaction to the happy ending

Holes ended happily, and I am glad it did. Actually, I like happy endings the most. If I read a book which ends unhappy, I always make my own happy ending! But even though the book has a happy ending, I think the ending was very exciting. An ending does not have to be unhappy to be good and exciting!

Maybe I am a bit tired of happy endings. It is happy endings everywhere in books and films. But this time it was different. I really did enjoy the ending of this book. It was happy, but still surprising. Who would have known that a random lawyer was interested in Stanley’s case? That the lawyer found out about the cruel happenings at the camp? I think Ms. Morengo plays a big role in the novel, even though she does not take a big part in the text.

It was nice to read that the justice won in the end. I feel I know Stanley after reading about him. I want things to go well for him and I almost feel I have made a new friend! Therefore, I am glad he came home to his mum and dad at last.

F Pupils' Essays about *Holes* 2012

24. Essay about Holes - Wednesday, 15 February 2012

Write a 5-paragraph essay (consisting of one clear introduction, at least three developing paragraphs and one conclusion) on one of the following assignments. Start with a universal observation on your chosen theme (not "I'm writing an essay on *Holes*..."). You may use your preparation notes but remember to mention your sources; you must not copy and paste from anyone's work, as plagiarism is strictly forbidden! When you quote from the book to support your arguments remember to include the page number. For example: Zero is far from stupid: "I'm not stupid," Zero said. "I know everybody thinks I am. I just don't like answering their questions." (p. 99)

Any other documents used in writing your essay must also be cited as a source at the end of the assignment!

Do not forget to give your essay a title:

1. **Is life fair?** Basing your text on what happens to Stanley and the other characters in the novel *Holes*, reflect on this question. Justify your arguments with references and quotes from the novel.
2. **Friendship:** There are several acts of friendship carried out by different characters in the novel *Holes*. Although these acts may have been carried out for different reasons, most of them brought the characters closer as friends. Whom would you have liked to be friends with: Stanley, Zero, or another one of the characters in *Holes*? Why? Cite and give details about at least **three** acts of friendship, and comment them.
3. **Persistence:** Both Stanley and Zero, but also other characters (for example the Warden Mrs. Walker, Kate Barlow and Stanley's father) are truly persistent individuals. What does it mean to be persistent? Choose one or several characters and reflect upon situations which illustrate how they refused to give up. What were their goals and what did it take for them to reach them? Finally, has their example anything to say to you in your own life situation?
4. **Redemption:** *Holes* has been called a story of *redemption*. Why? Who do you think was saved, as the definition of the word means? Cite three examples of things that happened in the plots to save some characters from an unwanted fate.

25. Sara's essay:

Friendship between people

I would have liked to be friends with zero; he seems like a really nice kid. He is quiet and smart. Doesn't like to brag and does selfless acts. He seems silly and mature at the same time, but I would have also liked to be friends with armpit, he just seem like a really funny guy , at least that's my opinion, based on the book and the movie.

One of the acts of friendship was when; Stanley takes the blame for stealing the sunflower seeds, and has to go with Mr. Sir to the Wardens office, and when he comes back, he is surprised to see that his hole was nearly finished, so that he didn't have to dig anymore. Stanley thanks the guys, but as It turns out that zero had dug his hole. I think that was the beginning of the friendship between Stanley and Zero, because it showed that zero is a kind guy and who Stanley thought were his friends weren't. I think Stanley should have given zero a chance early on, instead of listening to everybody condescending him all the time.

This act of friendship is my favorite. It's when Stanley's lawyer comes to get him. He makes a stand and says that he won't leave without Hector, because he is worried about what they might do to him. He and Hector have gotten really close as friends at this stage, I thought it was a really nice thing to do, and admirable. If it was someone else they might have just left.

Well the Sam was a really nice friend to Kate; he fixed the school roof and the windows. Kate really liked talking to Sam, so she gave him things to fix, but when he was finished with everything. She was sad, because she would miss talking to him Things became more complicated I think, they went from friendship to falling in love with each other. In my opinion that's really sweet. But in those days a relationship between blacks and whites were not allowed. I guess if you want to follow your heart you have to take a risk.

When Stanley ran to look for zero, you could really feel by reading the book that he cared about zero, than to carry zero up the mountain. It takes persistence to carry somebody up a mountain, and it really shows how much you care about a person, I found it inspiring, and different from anything I have ever read before.

I think the friendship between Stanley and Zero, was like a nice change, but you often see to underdogs becoming friends. The two characters seem so real, that when I read the book I could really recognize what they felt.

26. Rasmus' essay

The fairness of life.

Is life fair? Does everybody get what they deserve, at all times, without exception? Or do unfair events happen all the time, or maybe they just seem unfair at first?

Stanley gets hit by a pair of shoes that seems to have fallen from the sky- and later he gets turned to a camp because the judge thinks he is guilty of stealing the pair of shoes. – It's not fair but it's Stanley's fault; he fails to explain what happened and because of that nobody believe him. He simply gets what he deserves for his stupidity; he is the *cause* of the unfairness in his life. Instead of saying "the shoes fell down from a bridge above me" He says "They fell from the sky" Further he fail to explain why he ran home, and therefore it seems like he was running away.

It's when life isn't fair that people get opportunities to show that they can help others without consciously expecting to get anything back. When Stanley learns Zero to read, he really doesn't expect to get anything back. Zero on the other hand wants to pay for the help, and pays with the only thing he have; the ability to dig holes. The judge at the end of the story looks into Stanley's case on her own. The father hired her to do some work with an invention, but she does more than she needs to. That does actually save Stanley's and Zeros life.

Life isn't always fair but it's not always unfair either. Stanley ends up with a good lot of money, which weight up for being at the camp even though when he was innocent after all. Zero gets some money from Stanley because he was a good friend, and uses that money to find his mother. Stanley's father get pay for his hard work, sometimes commitment pays off.

As asked in the first line of this text; is life fair? No, life is not and will never be completely fair for everybody- it's not possible in the world we live in. but its kind off nice that life isn't fair. Imagine how boring it would be if everything really was fair, and everybody were absolutely sure that they would get what they deserved. Then it would be impossible for people to be truly kind, without expecting to get something back. "You are the maker of your own life" That quote is pretty accurate, many people today have a pretty good possibility to control how they carve out their own life. There will always be exceptions though, and that spices life a little.

27. Camilla's essay: Fair or unfair?

Is life fair? If we look at our world today, can we say resources are handed out in a fair way? And can a book published in the United States in 1998 give us the answer? I am sure every person in the world has felt both unfair and fair treated during his or her life, but can a whole life be mentioned as unfair or fair?

After reading a novel by Louis Sachar called "Holes", I started thinking. The book made me think, that youths in industrialized nations today are unaware and maybe a bit ignorant when it comes to questions about a fair life. Youths who come from stable families with a good economic and social position in the society, may not think about other things than school, clothes and interests in life. Who are we to blame? Whose job is it to give us information about poor countries in difficult situations?

As an example to unfair situations in life, I use something I read in "Holes", where we meet a man called Sam and a woman called Kate. Sam is dark-skinned and Kate is light-skinned. They were deeply in love, but after they kissed each other, Sam got killed. At the time this happened, it was not allowed for "blacks" to kiss "whites". That makes me extremely angry. I hate when people are treated unfair because of their look. Cannot we just come together and act like a big family with billions of family members? Try to fight racism, which is one of the most unfair things in life?

The main character in the novel "Holes" is Stanley who is a very unlucky boy. One day, some shoes hits him and the police believe Stanley have stolen them. I think it is very unfair that the police blames Stanley. He is the innocent person. But because of the "stealing", he gets a choice: The judge says, "You may go to jail, or you may go to Camp Green Lake" (p.5) He picked the Camp, not to my surprise. But there is a big problem at the Camp. The people there believe that "If you take a bad boy and make him dig a hole every day in the hot sun, it will turn him into a good boy." (p.5) I do not think that it is fair at all and this symbolize that life is not always fair. Do we become better persons by digging in the heat? Is it a smaller change that the boy will become a criminal later in life if he digs? Can several holes in a young boy's life save the world?

In this case, we have to understand that "Holes" is a fictitious novel. But the theme in the book is about how we can turn something unfair into something fair. The book is maybe

not the correct answer to how fair our lives are in reality, but it can be an eye-opener. It can help youths who have a good life to realize that other people at their age may not have a good life. We cannot forget that humans belong to the same species. Although we have different language, skin-colour and behavior, I think humans can help each other in difficult situations. We are not different inside, and the outside should not mean anything.

Sources:

The book “Holes” by Louis Sachar (1998)

1. Generelt om dine leseomgivelser:

Antall bøker som finnes i ditt hjem, uavhengig av språk

	Ingen	1-10	11-50	51-100	101-250
Her handler det generelt om dine leseomgivelser. Dra på rullegardinene for å velge svar.	2.0% (1)	6.0% (3)	30.0% (15)	14.0% (7)	22.0% (11)

Antall engelske bøker i ditt hjem

	Ingen	1-10	11-50	51-100	101-250
Her handler det generelt om dine leseomgivelser. Dra på rullegardinene for å velge svar.	2.0% (1)	48.0% (24)	34.0% (17)	14.0% (7)	2.0% (1)








Ble du lest for da du var liten?

	Kan ikke huske, tror ikke det	Ja, en gang iblant	Ja, hver dag
Her handler det generelt om dine leseomgivelser. Dra på rullegardinene for å velge svar.	8.0% (4)	66.0% (33)	26.0% (13)

answ

skip

2. Hva skal til for at du skal kunne si at du liker en roman eller novelle? Kryss av (flere mulige svar).

		Response Percent	Response Count
Boka må være lett å lese, uten altfor mange ukjente ord		38.5%	20
Historien må være interessant og jeg må kunne kjenne meg igjen i den		46.2%	24
Boka må være spennende og full av aksjon		67.3%	35
Jeg må kunne identifisere meg med én eller flere av karakterene		11.5%	6
Når jeg leser den type bok glemmer jeg tid og sted		30.8%	16
Boka må ta opp viktige temaer (krig, kjærlighet, rasisme, mobbing, ...)		30.8%	16
Boka bør handle om et favoritttema (f. eks. en hobby som hester, historie, sport...)		32.7%	17

Hva er den beste boka du har lest til nå? Hvis du har glemt tittelen, kan du forklare kort hva den handlet om.
 Kan du presisere hvorfor den gjorde inntrykk på deg? Skriv i feltet nedenfor: 48

answered question	52
skipped question	0

2. Hva skal til for at du skal kunne si at du liker en roman eller novelle? Kryss av (flere mulige svar).

1	"Firestarter" av Stephen King. Jeg må virkelig si det er en helt fantastisk roman. Den er skrevet på engelsk, og er tung å lese om man ikke har 100% fokus på grunn av innviklede og lange forklaringer. Stephen King skildrer og forklarer handling og omgivelser på en utrolig bra måte. "Firestarter" handler om en ung jente som kan starte branner med tankekraft. Historien følger henne mens hun jobber for å finne ut hvorfor hun er som hun er, noe som etterhvert avslører ulovlige menneskeforsøk, drap og hemmelig fremdyrking av menneskelige våpen i et annerkjent forskningsselskap. Hele historien er flott. Jeg tror den gjorde inntrykk mest på grunn av skrivemåten, fordi forfatteren har et enormt talent for å skape et detaljert mentalt bilde for meg. Man blir liksom dratt inn i boken og det føles som man opplever det selv, fordi man blir så revet med.	Jan 18, 2012 2:08 AM
2	Alle Harry Potter bøkene. De første bøkene ble lest på senga for meg hver kveld og jeg har vokst opp med hovedpersonene. De handler om magi, vennskap, kjærlighet, mysterier, problemer, krig, det å ta ansvar og omsorg. Hver bok blir både mørkere og skumlere og passer eldre personer. Det passet bra når jeg også vokse med hovedpersonene. Jeg leste alle syv bøkene først på norsk, men har i ettertid lest dem flere ganger både på norsk og engelsk. Også det at det er filmer om dem, er fantastisk. Disse bøkene er bøker jeg kommer til å lese gjennom hele livet og også lese for mine barn. Harry Potter har gjort oppveksten min magisk. Jeg klarer ikke se for meg livet mitt uten Harry Potter.	Jan 18, 2012 1:59 AM
3	Sugemerket. Handler om en jente i min alder som mistet mammaen sin, som blir mobbet og ikke har det så bra hjemme. Men går til psykolog og liker og teste grenser. Den gjorde inntrykk på meg fordi jenta virket så svak og hjelpeløs. Men etterhvert får hun livet sitt litt på rett spor, og da merket man at hun er sterkere enn hun selv trudde.	Jan 18, 2012 1:26 AM
4	Twilight	Jan 10, 2012 11:44 PM
5	The Human Mind by ??? Dette er en bok om psykologi og hvordan man skal forstå hvordan mennesker tenker. Hvordan man kan manipulere folks hjerner. Grunnen til at denne boken gjorde inntrykk på meg er fordi den er ganske lærerik og sant. jeg har testet det som står i boken og det fungerer.	Jan 10, 2012 11:39 PM
6	Da jeg var liten, likte jeg boka Tause Skrik.	Jan 10, 2012 11:30 PM
7	twilight - Breaking down	Jan 10, 2012 11:29 PM
8	Twilight. Alle bøkene	Jan 10, 2012 11:28 PM
9	I Ching	Jan 10, 2012 11:28 PM
10	berlinepoplene. Det er en fin roman som også er filmatisert, det er en spenning i romanen. Også veldig realistisk tekst.	Jan 10, 2012 11:27 PM
11	Husker ikke.	Jan 10, 2012 11:27 PM
12	A walk to remember	Jan 10, 2012 4:40 AM
13	Jeg har ikke lest mye i det siste, men jeg tror den beste boka jeg har lest er "Narnia" (alle sju bøkene). Den handler om Pevensie søsknene som finner et magisk land i et klesskap. Den andre boka i serien "Løven, Heksa og	Jan 10, 2012 4:39 AM

2. Hva skal til for at du skal kunne si at du liker en roman eller novelle? Kryss av (flere mulige svar).

Klesskapet" handler om at landet Narnia har blitt forhekset av den onde hekse "hekse hvit" og søsknene Pevensie får i oppgave å befri Narnia. Akkurat nå leser jeg en bok som henter Villdyret.

- | | | |
|----|--|----------------------|
| 14 | jeg har ikke lest noen bøker. | Jan 10, 2012 4:36 AM |
| 15 | The game. den handler om hvordan man skal få jenter. | Jan 10, 2012 4:35 AM |
| 16 | Hvordan skrive website. :) kjempe godt | Jan 10, 2012 4:34 AM |
| 17 | Jeg har ikke lest så veldig mange bøker jeg har likt godt, men jeg husker jeg leste en bok som heter "Den Siste Magiker". Det er en bok som er starten på en triologi. | Jan 10, 2012 4:33 AM |
| 18 | Dødslekene Dette var en utrolig bra bok fordi den fenget meg. Jeg glemte fullstendig tid og sted, og forfatteren beskrev miljøet og personer på en helt spesiell måte. Den engasjerte meg på en helt spesiell måte. | Jan 10, 2012 4:32 AM |
| 19 | hundreåringen som klatret ut av vinduet og forsvant. dette var en bok som er utrolig morsom og vittig, samtidig som den er informerende om verdenshistorie det siste århundret. | Jan 10, 2012 4:32 AM |
| 20 | Boken snømannen er den beste boken jeg har lest til nå. | Jan 10, 2012 4:31 AM |
| 21 | Percy Jackson serien. (Lyntyven, Monsterhavet, Titanens Forbandelse, Slaget om Labyrinten og Den siste Olympier) (Amerikansk serie, av Rick Riordan) | Jan 10, 2012 4:31 AM |
| 22 | Vell den beste boken jeg har lest er med i en serie , så det blir bestebøkene jeg har lest hittil er Hunger,lies . Det handler om at alle voksne har forsvunne, og det er bare barn fra 14 og nedover som er i byen. Mat forsyningene er borte. Og det er noe skummelt som gjemme seg og prøver og drepe dem, det er 2 brødre , en ond og en snill. Den onde broren caine prøver å ta makten mens sam er blitt den ufrivillige helten. de har krefter, noen kan løfte ting med hendene og andre skyte ild med hendene, | Jan 10, 2012 4:30 AM |
| 23 | Harry Potter bøkene. Har ikke lest dem før. Jeg holder nå på å lese sjette bok; Harry Potter og Halvblodsprinsen. De er veldig spennende, jeg har sett nesten alle filmene før jeg begynte på bøkene. Jeg liker å lese fantasy-bøker fordi det er spennende nesten hele tiden. Jeg liker å leve meg inn i en verden som er annerledes. | Jan 10, 2012 4:30 AM |
| 24 | Eragon den handler om en gutt som finner et drage egg. jeg liker overtroiske vesner og sånt | Jan 10, 2012 4:29 AM |
| 25 | Boka handlet om en familie som hadde problemer med et av barna sine. Barnet forandret seg siden en av klassekameratene døde. De kunne ikke finne ut hva årsaken til det. Den var spennende bok og jeg lærte mye fra foreldrene. | Jan 10, 2012 4:29 AM |
| 26 | Drageløperen En utrolig fin bok i et vanskelig miljø. Jeg fikk en større oversikt over krigene i Afghanistan og hvordan befolkningen der reagerte. En veldig spennende og interessant bok. Saras Nøkkel Enda en veldig fin bok i et vanskelig miljø. Jeg fikk et større bilde over hvordan det var å være jøde under andre verdenskrig. Den var spennende til siste side og det var umulig å legge | Jan 10, 2012 4:29 AM |

2. Hva skal til for at du skal kunne si at du liker en roman eller novelle? Kryss av (flere mulige svar).

	den fra seg.	
27	Hodejegeren. Den var veldig spennende.	Jan 10, 2012 4:27 AM
28	Den Digitale Festning av Dan Brown. den tar virkelige fakta og danner en sannsynlig historie.	Jan 10, 2012 4:27 AM
29	The Hunger Games trilogi (In norwegian) Harry Potter (In norwegian) Tomorrow Series (In norwegian) I like those books because they have a good story and talk about important themes.	Jan 10, 2012 4:27 AM
30	Harry Potter 7 : Dødstalismanene Det er siste boken i en serie på sju bøker, og det har vært yndlings serien min siden første film/bok. Jeg elsker at det er en blanding av så mange forskjellige følelser og temaer.	Jan 10, 2012 4:26 AM
31	Doppler, heter boka. . Veldig morsom.	Jan 10, 2012 4:26 AM
32	inheritance cycle	Jan 10, 2012 4:25 AM
33	PS: I love you. Camorraaland.	Jan 10, 2012 4:24 AM
34	dødslekene1, 2 og 3 den gjorde inntrykk på meg siden den var interesang.	Jan 10, 2012 4:24 AM
35	Cosa Nostra, The history of the sicilian mafia av John dickie. Det er en historisk dokumentar om den sicilianske mafian. Den bygger på historikken, oppbygning, verdiene og kulturen som dreier rundt Cosa Nostra (vår sak) som den sicilianske mafian heter på morsmålet. Det som gjorde inntrykk på meg når det gjelder tema var hvor dypt mafian ligger i sicilianske samfundet og hvor mye det har påvirket den italienske og den internasjonale kriminaliteten.	Jan 9, 2012 3:37 AM
36	husker ikke tittlen, men det var spendene krim bok, leste sykkel bok fra Thor Husod og Dag Otto Lauritsen, den handlet om alt om sykkliling.	Jan 9, 2012 3:32 AM
37	hulebjørnnes klan, handler om en jente som heter Ayla. Hun blir tatt vare på av hulebjørnklanen når hun er liten, stammen hennes er borte og hun er helt alene da de finner henne. Siden hun ikke er en av dem blir hun nødt til å dra videre når han som var lederen når hun ble funnet dør. Siden sønnen hans hater henne. Denne serien tror jeg det er 6 bøker av, og jeg har lest 3 av dem.	Jan 9, 2012 3:31 AM
38	Har aldrig lest noen bra bøker.	Jan 9, 2012 3:30 AM
39	Harry Potter & Ildbegeret, den gjorde inntrykk på meg fordi den ga mye mer info enn filmen. Boka har også flere deler som filmen ikke har.	Jan 9, 2012 3:30 AM
40	jeg leser egentlig aldri bøker. men har lest noen i sammenheng med skole, men husker ikke hva noen av de heter og hva de handlet om. >:-)	Jan 9, 2012 3:30 AM
41	Hele serien til Svein Hazzel (den om de straffedømte under 2 verdenskrig) 1222 - Anne Holt	Jan 9, 2012 3:28 AM
42	Den Digitale Festning Den var spennende, men ganske tung å lese hvis du blir nødt til å stoppe å lese midt inne i et kapittel. Det var også vanskelig å slutte å lese fordi du blir bare revet med å setter deg inn i handlingen fra første kapittelet. En annen grunn til at jeg likte den var fordi den var skrevet av favoritt forfatteren	Jan 9, 2012 3:27 AM

2. Hva skal til for at du skal kunne si at du liker en roman eller novelle? Kryss av (flere mulige svar).

min Dan Brown.

- | | | |
|----|---|---------------------|
| 43 | Den beste bokserien jeg har lest er Dragonball Z. Det er en serie på 42 bøker som er full av action i alle bøkene. Serien er veldig godt skrevet, og det er en svært god historie. Man blir mer og mer kjent med karakterene gjennom hver bok man leser, og karakterene utvikler seg over en tidsperiode på ca 30 år. Bøkene gjorde et stort inntrykk på meg og jeg tenkte egentlig ikke på det før jeg var ferdig å lese alle bøkene. Jeg skulle ønske det var mange fler bøker i serien. Bøkene er orginalt japanske, så man leser alle bøkene speilvendt. Det ble en uvane når jeg jeg skulle lese vanlige bøker i senere tid :) | Jan 9, 2012 3:27 AM |
| 44 | En krimbok av Anne Holt | Jan 9, 2012 3:27 AM |
| 45 | stig larsson trilogien | Jan 9, 2012 3:26 AM |
| 46 | Den himmelske mann - hans egen historie. Dette er den eneste boka som jeg kan huske at jeg kunne sitte å lese i timesvis uten stopp. | Jan 9, 2012 3:26 AM |
| 47 | Leser ikke bøker, så er ingen spesiell. Det går mest i Pondus og andre tegneserier. | Jan 9, 2012 3:25 AM |
| 48 | Harry Potter Den vise sten. | Jan 9, 2012 3:24 AM |

3. Disse spørsmål handler om din interesse for engelsk

Hvor interessert er du i engelsk som fag?

	Veldig interessert	Interessert	Nøytral	Ikke interessert
Vennligst svar på disse to delspørsmål ved å dra på rullegardinene.	10.0% (5)	46.0% (23)	28.0% (14)	16.0% (8)

Hvor mange engelske romaner har du lest totalt cirka, hjemme og på skolen?

	Ingen	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-4
Vennligst svar på disse to delspørsmål ved å dra på rullegardinene.	14.3% (7)	57.1% (28)	10.2% (5)	12.2% (6)	6.1% (3)	0.0%

4. Kryss av ditt svar på hver linje. Hvor ofte leser du...?

	Aldri	Av og til	Hver måned	Hver uke	Flere ganger hver uke	Hver dag	Flere timer hver dag	Response Count
engelske bøker / romaner	46.2% (24)	46.2% (24)	5.8% (3)	0.0% (0)	1.9% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	52
engelske blad, magasiner og aviser	23.5% (12)	39.2% (20)	15.7% (8)	11.8% (6)	5.9% (3)	3.9% (2)	0.0% (0)	51
engelsk stoff (inkludert bruksanvisning på dataspill, sangtekster, chatting osv.) på internett?	3.8% (2)	1.9% (1)	5.8% (3)	7.7% (4)	26.9% (14)	34.6% (18)	26.9% (14)	52
answered question								52
skipped question								0

5. Hva gjør du vanligvis når du kommer bort i ukjente ord når du leser engelske romaner, skolebøker, blad og aviser, eller når du leser engelsk på internett? Kryss av ditt svar på hver linje.

	Aldri	Noen ganger	Ofte	Veldig ofte	Response Count
Slår opp ordet i ordbok	25.0% (13)	50.0% (26)	19.2% (10)	5.8% (3)	52
Gjetter ordets betydning ut ifra mine kunnskaper om temaet	2.0% (1)	39.2% (20)	49.0% (25)	9.8% (5)	51
Gjetter ordets betydning ut ifra lesesammenhengen	5.8% (3)	21.2% (11)	48.1% (25)	25.0% (13)	52
Spør en lærer	26.9% (14)	63.5% (33)	9.6% (5)	0.0% (0)	52
Spør andre elever	27.5% (14)	51.0% (26)	19.6% (10)	2.0% (1)	51
Fortsetter å lese	7.8% (4)	43.1% (22)	31.4% (16)	17.6% (9)	51
Gir opp å lese	80.8% (42)	15.4% (8)	5.8% (3)	1.9% (1)	52
				Kommentarer:	7
				answered question	52
				skipped question	0

5. Hva gjør du vanligvis når du kommer bort i ukjente ord når du leser engelske romaner, skolebøker, blad og aviser, eller når du leser engelsk på internett? Kryss av ditt svar på hver linje.

1	Som jeg har krysset av, så pleier jeg å forstå betydningen ut ifra sammenhengen.	Jan 18, 2012 2:01 AM
2	Jeg finner ikke lenger engelske ord jeg ikke forstår i engelske romaner	Jan 10, 2012 11:30 PM
3	prøver å lese videre for å se om jeg forstår.	Jan 9, 2012 3:35 AM
4	Spørs jo hva jeg leser om da, vis jeg skjønner innholdet så dropper jeg ofte å finne ut hva det betyr	Jan 9, 2012 3:31 AM
5	Klarer ofte å finne ut av ordet uten bruk av ordbok	Jan 9, 2012 3:31 AM
6	Har aldri hatt problemer med å forstå engelske ord og uttrykk.	Jan 9, 2012 3:30 AM
7	Ordbok = Google Translate	Jan 9, 2012 3:27 AM

6. Hvordan stemmer disse utsagn med din opplevelse av lesing av litterære tekster i engelskundervisningen? Med litterære tekster menes dikt, sang, noveller, romanutdrag som finnes i læreboka og/eller på bokas nettside. Kryss av ditt svar på hver linje.

	Helt enig	Nokså enig	Nokså uenig	Helt uenig	Response Count
De litterære tekstene i læreboka behandler temaer som er interessante for tenåringer, som kjærlighet, vennskap, fordommer, ensomhet, osv.	8.3% (4)	66.7% (32)	18.8% (9)	10.4% (5)	48
Jeg kan identifisere meg med karakterene i tekstbokas litterære tekster	2.1% (1)	39.6% (19)	47.9% (23)	14.6% (7)	48
Jeg lærer en del om livet og verden ved å lese tekstbokas litterære tekster	14.6% (7)	47.9% (23)	27.1% (13)	14.6% (7)	48
Jeg synes at tekstbokas litterære tekster tar opp universelle og tidløse spørsmål	6.4% (3)	48.9% (23)	38.3% (18)	8.5% (4)	47
Noen av tekstbokas litterære tekster overrasker meg fordi ting utvikler seg annerledes enn jeg hadde regnet med i begynnelsen	14.9% (7)	42.6% (20)	34.0% (16)	8.5% (4)	47
Noen av tekstbokas litterære tekster provoserer meg fordi de kolliderer med mine verdier	0.0% (0)	22.9% (11)	41.7% (20)	39.6% (19)	48
Noen av tekstbokas litterære tekster virker altfor fjerne fra min virkelighet	14.6% (7)	43.8% (21)	33.3% (16)	10.4% (5)	48
For meg er det alltid spennende å lese litteratur, og det gjelder også de litterære tekstene i læreboka	4.2% (2)	35.4% (17)	33.3% (16)	29.2% (14)	48
Jeg leser litterære tekster kun fordi de hører med i engelskundervisningen	16.7% (8)	35.4% (17)	39.6% (19)	12.5% (6)	48

6. I feltet nedenfor kan du kommentere ytterligere hvordan du opplever å lese litterære tekster i engelsk

undervisningen:

1	Ikke alltid like interessant, men jeg liker å utvide ordforrådet mitt ved å lese.	Jan 18, 2012 2:12 AM
2	De må være noe som interesserer meg, og noe jeg kanskje kan lære meg noe nytt fra.	Jan 18, 2012 2:03 AM
3	Tekstene i boka er kjedelige og gamle.	Jan 10, 2012 11:31 PM
4	Hvis vi går gjennom hva teksten handler om og hvilken dypere mening den har, synes jeg at jeg forstår bedre av den.	Jan 10, 2012 4:37 AM
5	Jeg synes det er bra at vi leser mye engelske tekster, og spesielt at vi får i oppgave å lese romaner.	Jan 10, 2012 4:36 AM
6	Mange av tekstene mener jeg har feil innhold. Gjerne kjedelig... I øverste spørsmål står det at ungdommer synes kjærlighet, fordommer osv. er intressant. Det er VELDIG kjedelig å lese om mener jeg. Liker gjerne krim	Jan 9, 2012 3:35 AM

7. Hvis du noen gang har lest et romanutdrag på skolen som ga deg lyst til å lese hele verket, presiser tittel eller tema i feltet nedenfor. Vennligst forklar også hva det var som ga deg lyst til å lese mer:

1	Vi leste en gang ett utdrag fra "Tempelridderen" av Jan Guillou. Det var et sammentreff siden faren min hadde allerede foreslått den første boka i den trilogien for meg. Utdraget ga meg på en måte et spark bak, slik at jeg begynte å lese før jeg hadde planer om å starte.	Jan 18, 2012 2:11 AM
2	har ikke forekommet, men er det et spesielt emne eller intresant for meg, så blir jeg ivrig til og lese. Lese om problematikken i verden for eksempel.	Jan 10, 2012 11:34 PM
3	jeg tror det var en bok men jeg husker ikke det.	Jan 10, 2012 4:46 AM
4	Nei.	Jan 10, 2012 4:45 AM
5	Jeg kan ikke huske noen tekster, men boka som vi leser på nå, "Holes", synes jeg virker som en ganske interessant bok.	Jan 10, 2012 4:41 AM
6	"Holes" fordi den er spennende.	Jan 10, 2012 4:41 AM
7	har ikke skjedd	Jan 10, 2012 4:40 AM
8	Jeg husker ikke helt, men det har vært flere bøker jeg har fått lyst å lese om. Husker at det var en historie om noen romvesener og penger osv.	Jan 10, 2012 4:39 AM
9	Jeg vet at det er noen utdrag som har gjort at jeg har hatt lyst til å lese hele boken, men jeg kommer ikke på navnene eller grunnen.	Jan 10, 2012 4:39 AM
10	Løvekvinnen , fordi jeg synes at historien virket bra skrevet og jeg ble fasinert av jentas liv. skrevet av Erik Fosnes Hansen	Jan 10, 2012 4:39 AM
11	The Hunger Games. Spenningsfylt.	Jan 10, 2012 4:34 AM
12	det har ikke vært det	Jan 10, 2012 4:33 AM
13	Nei, ikke som jeg kommer på.	Jan 10, 2012 4:33 AM
14	Husker ikke tittel.	Jan 10, 2012 4:32 AM
15	utdraget sluttet der det skjedde noe spennende	Jan 10, 2012 4:32 AM
16	dødslekene. den virket interesant.	Jan 10, 2012 4:28 AM
17	måtte i så fall være "holes" men vill som regel heller se filmen	Jan 9, 2012 3:41 AM
18	vi har ikke gått gjennom den teksten enda i timen, men jeg har lest utdraget selv. Teksten Stolthet og fordom har jeg lest, har sett filmen og synes den er veldig bra. Så jeg har også lyst til å lese hele boka.	Jan 9, 2012 3:40 AM
19	Hmm egentlig ikke da jeg synes mange av tekstene er litt kjedelige. Liker gjerne krim og krig som ikke har noe med de tekstene vi har lest å gjøre.	Jan 9, 2012 3:39 AM
20	Vet ikke	Jan 9, 2012 3:30 AM

8. Hvis du noen gang har hatt lyst til å lese flere romaner av en forfatter du "ble kjent med" på skolen, presiser tekstens tittel eller tema i feltet nedenfor; vennligst forklar også hva det var som tiltrakk deg i forfatterens verk:

1	Jeg husker ikke.	Jan 18, 2012 2:11 AM
2	Jeg har en forfatter jeg liker godt, hun skriver og tenker realistisk, så alle kan kjenne seg igjen det hun skriver.	Jan 10, 2012 11:34 PM
3	aner ikke	Jan 10, 2012 4:46 AM
4	NEI!	Jan 10, 2012 4:45 AM
5	Kan ikke huske noe av det.	Jan 10, 2012 4:41 AM
6	How did I Get Away with Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers in the State? It Was Easy. Forfatteren skrevet bassert fra virkeligheten.	Jan 10, 2012 4:41 AM
7	Hoe did I get away Den var veldig interessant. Det skjedde mye hele tiden	Jan 10, 2012 4:41 AM
8	J. k . Rowling, Tolking	Jan 10, 2012 4:39 AM
9	egentlig ikke , noen av forfaterne er ganske kjedelig.	Jan 10, 2012 4:39 AM
10	Har ikke blitt det.	Jan 10, 2012 4:34 AM
11	det har ikke vært det	Jan 10, 2012 4:33 AM
12	Nei. Har ikke hatt lyst til det.	Jan 10, 2012 4:33 AM
13	Roald dahl, morsomt, både for unge og eldre.	Jan 10, 2012 4:32 AM
14	"Hardy Guttene" krimserie som jeg leste mye. bøkene var lettlete og oppfinnsomme.	Jan 10, 2012 4:31 AM
15	puddingmannen. den hørtes så mosom ut.	Jan 10, 2012 4:28 AM
16	har ikke noen forfatter som jeg liker best, det er innolde i teksten som er viktigst.	Jan 9, 2012 3:40 AM
17	Hmm egentlig ikke da jeg synes mange av tekstene er litt kjedelige. Liker gjerne krim og krig som ikke har noe med de tekstene vi har lest å gjøre.	Jan 9, 2012 3:39 AM
18	Vet ikke	Jan 9, 2012 3:30 AM

9. Blant de litterære tekster (dikt eller sang, noveller eller romanutdrag) vi har arbeidet med i engelsktimene fram til nå, hvilken likte du best? Forklar kort hvorfor. Skriv i feltet nedenfor:

1	"A great day" var en tekst som var litt annerledes enn de andre vi har lest. Denne var spennende og litt forstyrrende (med tanke på at det er mord involvert) noe jeg synes er bra, siden vi ofte leser nøytrale og kjedelige tekster og kjærlighet og vennskap.	Jan 18, 2012 2:14 AM
2	"Somewhere warm and comfortable". Jeg syntes synd på jenta og jeg så for meg meg selv i hennes sko og prøvde å finne ut hva jeg hadde gjort og om jeg i det hele tatt hadde fått et slikt problem ved å handle andreledes og slik jeg ville.	Jan 18, 2012 2:11 AM
3	Somewhere warm and comfortable. Jeg likte den fordi den var spennende.	Jan 18, 2012 1:49 AM
4	Jeg hukser ikke.	Jan 10, 2012 11:40 PM
5	Holes. Handlingen var veldig spennende og bra!	Jan 10, 2012 11:34 PM
6	"Like The Sun" jeg likte den på grunn av hvordan den tok opp hvor mye løgn påvirker verdagen og at sannheten negativ eller positiv kan få både positive og negative utfall.	Jan 10, 2012 11:34 PM
7	Det har jeg ikke tenkt på.	Jan 10, 2012 11:34 PM
8	Tears in heaven, because it is a song I like very well, and it always make my mind travel when i listen to it.	Jan 10, 2012 4:45 AM
9	Ikke noen spesiell tekst, men jeg synes de tekstene som tar opp større temaer og har litt dypere meninger er interessante å lese på.	Jan 10, 2012 4:41 AM
10	Jeg likte diktet "You Gain Strength" Eleonor Roosevelt. Det er fordi hun har oppmuntert meg gjennom ordene hun brukte på diktet.	Jan 10, 2012 4:41 AM
11	Jeg likte veldig godt How did I get away og That's right. Morsomme	Jan 10, 2012 4:41 AM
12	somewhere warm and comfortable novellen var interessang fordi jeg synes jente problemer er interessant	Jan 10, 2012 4:40 AM
13	Jeg synes det har vært morsomt å jobbe med de fleste tekstene, fordi det er såpass varierende tekster	Jan 10, 2012 4:39 AM
14	Jeg vet egentlig ikke helt hvem jeg likte best. Jeg tror nok kanskje at "Holes" er favoritten når det gjelder engelske tekster vi har lest på skolen.	Jan 10, 2012 4:39 AM
15	how did i get away . its really interesting to see how it was back in the day.	Jan 10, 2012 4:39 AM
16	A great day, fordi den var interessant	Jan 10, 2012 4:34 AM
17	Vet ikke.	Jan 10, 2012 4:34 AM
18	husker ikke	Jan 10, 2012 4:33 AM
19	Somewhere warm and comfortable. Jeg likte den best, fordi det handler om ting som kan skje en vanlig ungdom.	Jan 10, 2012 4:33 AM
20	A perfect day. Den brå endingen/slutten, var interessant. Gav leseren noe å	Jan 10, 2012 4:32 AM

9. Blant de litterære tekster (dikt eller sang, noveller eller romanutdrag) vi har arbeidet med i engelsktimene fram til nå, hvilken likte du best? Forklar kort hvorfor. Skriv i feltet nedenfor:

	gruble på.	
21	they are made out of meat fordi den fikk meg til å se ting fra et annet perspektiv	Jan 10, 2012 4:32 AM
22	Somewhere warm and comfortable. Jeg likte demne historien fordi det er slike temaer jeg liker å lese om. Det er spennende og handler om en ung jente, slik som jeg er. Jeg får vite hvordan hun taklet situasjonen.	Jan 10, 2012 4:31 AM
23	a Great Day	Jan 10, 2012 4:30 AM
24	ingen	Jan 10, 2012 4:28 AM
25	"holes" fordi den var litt spendene og bra.	Jan 9, 2012 3:41 AM
26	Romanutdraget fra "Holes" av Louis Sachar er den litterære teksten jeg likte best, og det er fordi jeg har sett filmen en del ganger.	Jan 9, 2012 3:41 AM
27	jeg likte teksten "history of the english language" fordi jeg liker å lære om historie.	Jan 9, 2012 3:40 AM
28	Like the sun - R.K. NARAYAN It was a little interesting, but i dont think i would want to read it myself. I dont have any specific to answer, but i just like the plot in it.	Jan 9, 2012 3:39 AM
29	Jeg likte romanutdraget av romanen "Holes". Den virket spennende og skapte interesse. Jeg likte settingen og at den handlet om noen på min alder. Jeg kunne kjenne meg litt igjen i noen av karakterene og det gjorde at jeg ble mer interessert i romanen.	Jan 9, 2012 3:35 AM
30	Jeg synes filmen holes er den jeg likte best. Det er fordi jeg synes den får meg interessert i hva som vil skje videre.	Jan 9, 2012 3:35 AM
31	Jeg har aldri likt de tekstene som vi har gått igjennom på skolen, grunnen til dette er fordi de er uvirkelige, kjedelige og den eneste grunnen til at jeg har jobbet med dem er fordi det er en del av faget.	Jan 9, 2012 3:34 AM
32	Husker ikke helt, men må nok bli en sang, er ikke så glad i tekster uten melodi.	Jan 9, 2012 3:31 AM
33	Vet ikke	Jan 9, 2012 3:30 AM

10. Bakgrunnsopplysninger om deg selv.

Kjønn

	gutt	jente
Vennligst dra på rullegardinene for å velge svar.	65.3% (32)	34.7% (17)

Min studieretning er

	studieforberedende	yrkesfaglig
Vennligst dra på rullegardinene for å velge svar.	52.1% (25)	47.9% (23)

Morsmålet mitt er

	norsk	engelsk	annet europeisk språk	annet ikke-europeisk språk
Vennligst dra på rullegardinene for å velge svar.	83.7% (41)	0.0% (0)	6.1% (3)	10.2% (5)

Jeg snakker engelsk hjemme

	nei	ja, hele tiden	ja, nesten hele tiden	ja, ca 1/2 av tiden	ja, ca 1/4 av tiden	ja, mindre enn 1/4 av tiden
Vennligst dra på rullegardinene for å velge svar.	81.6% (40)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.0% (1)	4.1% (2)	12.2% (6)

Hvor mange år engelskundervisning har du hatt før dette året?

	1-2 år	3-5 år	6-9 år	10 år	mer enn 10 år
Vennligst dra på rullegardinene for å velge svar.	4.1% (2)	2.0% (1)	16.3% (8)	51.0% (25)	26.5% (13)

Hvor mange engelsktimer i uken har du hatt i gjennomsnitt før dette skoleåret?

Vennligst dra på rullegardinene for å velge svar.					

	1 time i uka	2 timer i uka	3 timer i uka	4 timer i uka	5 timer i uka	mer enn 5 timer i uka
Vennligst dra på rullegardinene for å velge svar.	0.0% (0)	28.6% (14)	38.8% (19)	18.4% (9)	12.2% (6)	2.0% (1)



10. Kommentarer: her kan du utfylle de svarene du ga gjennom rullegardinene:

1	Snakker ikke engelsk hjemme til vanlig hver dag, men har Amerikanske slektninger. Når de kommer på besøk, snakker vi bare Engelsk.	Jan 18, 2012 2:17 AM
2	Jeg og familien min er en helt vanlig norsk familie, men vi synes det er morsomt å av og til bare snakke engelsk for å trene og holde engelsken ved like.	Jan 18, 2012 2:13 AM
3	på spørsmålet "jeg snakker engelsk hjemme" svarte jeg "ja" i den sammenhengen av spill, chatt og lignende.	Jan 10, 2012 11:36 PM
4	ja!	Jan 10, 2012 4:47 AM
5	Jeg er litt usikker på hvor mange timer engelsk jeg har hatt i uka, men tror det er ca. 3-4timer.	Jan 10, 2012 4:42 AM
6	jeg snakker eventuelt engesk hjemme hvis jeg spiller på nettet.	Jan 9, 2012 3:43 AM
7	jeg snakker engelsk halvparten av tiden hjemme siden pappa har en kjæreste fra filippinene, siden hun lærer seg norsk må vi hjelpe henne med å oversette masse ting fra norsk til engelsk og engelsk til norsk.	Jan 9, 2012 3:42 AM
8	Begynte med engelsk i 1 klasse. Er en gutt som synes engelsk er ikke kjedelig, men heller ikke akuratt veldig morsomt. Helt greit om du forstår.	Jan 9, 2012 3:41 AM

EVALUATION OF THE READING PROJECT HOLES

1. How was your reading experience with Holes? Did you enjoy reading and working with Holes, or not? Please write your answer in the comment field:

1	It was funn to read and it was getting more intersting.	Mar 14, 2012 2:11 AM
2	I liked the way Holes was written. If you have some spare time, this book is a good way to enjoy yourself.	Mar 14, 2012 1:59 AM
3	I liked the book, becuse it was funny and it tells you about good friendship and trust.	Mar 14, 2012 1:54 AM
4	Jeg likte det, det var morsomt, også lærte jeg litt.	Mar 13, 2012 5:05 AM
5	I didn't quite like it. But i don't like to read either.	Mar 13, 2012 5:05 AM
6	it was nice	Mar 13, 2012 5:05 AM
7	I liked working with the book , it was aa ggreat experience	Mar 13, 2012 4:53 AM
8	I enjoyed reading holes because it is a good story and an easy book to read. i liked the characters.	Mar 13, 2012 4:53 AM
9	I did not like the book that much, although i loved the film. But there is books for me out there, that is very interresting.	Mar 13, 2012 4:49 AM
10	I enjoyed working with this book.	Mar 13, 2012 4:28 AM
11	Good, i think the book was interesting and fun to read.	Mar 13, 2012 4:23 AM
12	Jeg likte å lese boka, for da var det litt forandring i hvordan vi lærer. Også syntes jeg det var bra vi leste en bok som passa for alle, begge kjønn.	Mar 13, 2012 4:22 AM
13	Ja, jeg likte romanen Holes veldig godt. Jeg syns det var interessant å lese den, og syns den var veldig spennende.	Mar 13, 2012 2:43 AM
14	I really did enjoy reading and working with Holes.	Mar 12, 2012 7:22 AM
15	yes,i enjoyed to read holes	Mar 11, 2012 11:26 PM
16	Reading and working with "Holes" was ok.	Mar 8, 2012 2:24 AM
17	I enjoyed reading Holes	Mar 7, 2012 3:04 AM
18	Jeg likte å lese den, språket var enkelt og det var lett å leve seg inn i handlingen.	Mar 6, 2012 5:49 AM
19	It was ok, but not my favourite.	Mar 6, 2012 5:48 AM
20	It was very exciting and I enjoyed it very much. Once I started reading i coudn't stop it. The book was a little bit boring at the beginning but as I continued reading its getter more and more interesting and exciting.	Mar 6, 2012 5:48 AM
21	ok, men noen av spørsmålene var unødvendige	Mar 6, 2012 5:48 AM
22	I think the book was very good. I really enjoyed making it.	Mar 6, 2012 5:44 AM

23	ja, jeg likte veldig godt å lese Holes	Mar 6, 2012 5:43 A
24	I had already seen the film based on the book, and I knew what was going to happen in the story. I love the story, though, so it wasn't a problem.	Mar 6, 2012 5:43 AM
25	Yes. This was first longer book in other language. I liked write diary of reading beacuse i could remember this what i read-without it. i forgetting fast.	Mar 6, 2012 5:41 AM
26	Yes i quite enjoyed it.	Mar 6, 2012 5:36 AM
27	the reading experience was not to bad but i have readed better books before.	Mar 6, 2012 4:27 AM
28	Yes, i enjoyed it. It was a good book.	Mar 6, 2012 4:23 AM
29	I liked reading about holes, it was a good book and i enjoyed the end were everything was solved!	Mar 5, 2012 12:57 PM

2. Do you agree with the following statements? Click on the answers that apply to you.

	I fully agree	I partly agree	I do not quite agree	I completely disagree	Response Count
I enjoyed working with the reader response approach	20.7% (6)	55.2% (16)	20.7% (6)	3.4% (1)	29
I prefer working with more "traditional" literary analysis	6.9% (2)	20.7% (6)	65.5% (19)	6.9% (2)	29
In reading and working with Holes I learned things about myself that I had not thought of	3.4% (1)	37.9% (11)	48.3% (14)	10.3% (3)	29
Reading and working with Holes has helped me to understand other people and the world better	6.9% (2)	48.3% (14)	37.9% (11)	6.9% (2)	29
I enjoyed the way the novel Holes is written	62.1% (18)	31.0% (9)	10.3% (3)	0.0% (0)	29
Working with the reader response approach makes me want to read more	13.8% (4)	44.8% (13)	27.6% (8)	13.8% (4)	29
I like literature better when working with the reader response approach	10.3% (3)	27.6% (8)	55.2% (16)	6.9% (2)	29
I like literature less when working with the reader response approach	10.3% (3)	41.4% (12)	41.4% (12)	10.3% (3)	29

Please write any comments you may have in this comment field:

8

answered question

29

skipped question

0

1	Det er morsomt å lese, men noen ganger kan det bli litt kjedelig å skrive dagbok eller jobbe med boka.	Mar 13, 2012 5:05 AM
2	'I do not have any comment	Mar 13, 2012 4:53 AM
3	I think it is fun to read, and talk about it in the classroom, But not write resposnes or things like that.	Mar 13, 2012 4:23 AM
4	Jeg likte veldig godt diskusjonene vi hadde i klassen.	Mar 13, 2012 2:43 AM
5	Jeg liker best å lese bare for underholdning, men det å jobbe med boka som vi har gjort, har hjulpet meg å forstå den dypere meningen i handlingen.	Mar 6, 2012 5:49 AM
6	har ingen	Mar 6, 2012 5:48 AM
7	har ingen	Mar 6, 2012 5:43 AM
8	I like reading, but i do not like to write readers response or a diary, i understand that this is school, and the teacher must have some notes that we have read the text.	Mar 5, 2012 12:57 PM

3. What did the novel tell you about life, society and human experience? What is, in your opinion, the most important message of the novel? Please write your answer in this comment field:

1	I think that is " every night have and end with a day".	Mar 14, 2012 2:11 AM
2	You should never back down. Stand up for what you believe in. Everyone is unqiue.	Mar 14, 2012 1:59 AM
3	IT told me that skin color makes different in life. Friendship is also very important in this world	Mar 14, 2012 1:54 AM
4	Det er vennskap, også er det samholdet mellom personer osv.	Mar 13, 2012 5:05 AM
5	Den fortalte ikke direkte så mye om livet eller samfunnet. Det er jo en fortelling.	Mar 13, 2012 5:05 AM
6	be the maker of your own life	Mar 13, 2012 5:05 AM
7	That life's not fair, but if you have family and friends. you are quite lucky	Mar 13, 2012 4:53 AM
8	I think that a little bad luck can destroy a life, but that it can be fixed again with just a little luck	Mar 13, 2012 4:53 AM
9	the book is partly about the past, and i like the past, what people did before	Mar 13, 2012 4:49 AM
10	Justice don` t come easlie. and never give up.	Mar 13, 2012 4:28 AM
11	That everything can happen.	Mar 13, 2012 4:23 AM
12	At man burde stå på og ikke gi opp så lett. Jobber man hardt nok for å oppnå det man vil, si vil man som regel oppnå det også.	Mar 13, 2012 4:22 AM
13	Jeg syns det viktigste i romanen er at folk må lære å akseptere hverandre, og tro på hverandre.	Mar 13, 2012 2:43 AM
14	The novel told me alot about friendship and how important it is to find the right friends in life. Friends you can trust and have a good time with. I think this is the most important message of the novel. To take care of other people when they are weak and be helpful in life.	Mar 12, 2012 7:22 AM
15	some are more unlucky than others	Mar 11, 2012 11:26 PM
16	Life doesn't work out as you thought. What you think is unfair, may turn out to be the rigt thing.	Mar 8, 2012 2:24 AM
17	That when you help someone, something good will happen to you.	Mar 7, 2012 3:04 AM
18	Det å ikke gi opp, stå for den man er og hjelpe venner. Jeg synes at disse er de viktigste temaene boka tar opp.	Mar 6, 2012 5:49 AM
19	Ingen kommentar.	Mar 6, 2012 5:48 AM
20	I learned that life is not about destiny. It depends on us what we will be in the future. It's the decisions we make in life that matters. I also learned that in this world there is always challenges and problems to test us how strong we are. I guess the most important message in the novel is life is unfair but we just need to do the best of what we have. In order to succeed we need to work hard and endure to the end. Another message from the book is never give up and keep on working.	Mar 6, 2012 5:48 AM

21	...	Mar 6, 2012 5:48 AM
22	That you should not give up	Mar 6, 2012 5:44 AM
23	folk dømmer deg etter hvordan du ser ut og hvor du kommer fra. selv om du har gjort noe dumt er du ikke automatisk slem. det er viktig med venner man kan stole på.	Mar 6, 2012 5:43 AM
24	I think it told me to be brave, to stand for you rights and don't give up on yourself. I think the most important message was that the more people we are who stand together, the stronger we get.	Mar 6, 2012 5:43 AM
25	friendship	Mar 6, 2012 5:41 AM
26	it tauth me that life is valuable, and that the sosiety isn't all nice. the most important messege i think is probably to have good friends.	Mar 6, 2012 5:36 AM
27	just that you learn how to be as the persons around you. the most important message in the book was that you should never give upp if you ask me.	Mar 6, 2012 4:27 AM
28	That we have to accept other people. I think the message is that people need a new chance. All human can make a mistake.	Mar 6, 2012 4:23 AM
29	That everyone can make it trough something. Life doesn't stop if you experience something bad.	Mar 5, 2012 12:57 PM

4. Would you recommend the novel Holes to others? Why/Why not? Please write your answer in this comment field:

1	yes, because you will find it more inresting stories in that story that are coneccted with eachother.	Mar 14, 2012 2:11 AM
2	I guess i would, it's a good book, but i don't think adults would enjoy it as much as younger ones.	Mar 14, 2012 1:59 AM
3	i would recommend it for other people, between age 15-21 its interessting and much fun to read.	Mar 14, 2012 1:54 AM
4	Det er en bra bok, og fler bør lese den. Selv om det ikke er mye action osv. så er det en bra bok	Mar 13, 2012 5:05 AM
5	For de som liker å lese ville jeg anbefalt boka.	Mar 13, 2012 5:05 AM
6	I would, it's a good and easy-read book	Mar 13, 2012 5:05 AM
7	yes, its a great child book , about friendship and tolerance	Mar 13, 2012 4:53 AM
8	yeah because it's an easy book to read	Mar 13, 2012 4:53 AM
9	no, but i would recommend the film	Mar 13, 2012 4:49 AM
10	Yeah i think so. It is a great book.	Mar 13, 2012 4:28 AM
11	Yes, if they are going to see the movie, then i would recommend them to also read the book.	Mar 13, 2012 4:23 AM
12	Ja, fordi da jobber man på englesk på en annen måte en vanlig. Og man lærer flere ord en vanlig, ettersom det var noen vanskelig ord i boken.	Mar 13, 2012 4:22 AM
13	ja, jeg vil anbefale Holes fordi jeg syns den var veldig bra og spennende.	Mar 13, 2012 2:43 AM
14	Yes, I will. But not like: "Everyone! Go read Holes!" But if someone asks me if I have a book to recommend, I wolud recommend Holes.	Mar 12, 2012 7:22 AM
15	yes, because it was a really good book.	Mar 11, 2012 11:26 PM
16	Yes, I would recommend the novel to others. It's a good book and it teaches many things about life.	Mar 8, 2012 2:24 AM
17	Yes	Mar 7, 2012 3:04 AM
18	Jeg ville anbefalt andre i tenåringsalderen å lese den. Det virker ihvertfall som om forfatteren har skrevet den for tenåringer.	Mar 6, 2012 5:49 AM
19	Ingen kommentar.	Mar 6, 2012 5:48 AM
20	I would recommend it to my friend because it's a good book and it is also entertaining. The book will teach us how to handle during bad situations.	Mar 6, 2012 5:48 AM
21	kanskje, hvis du liker å lese	Mar 6, 2012 5:48 AM
22	i would recommend it with other, because it did have a quite easy language and a good story	Mar 6, 2012 5:44 AM
23	ja, fordi det er en bok som nesten alle ungdommer kan kjenne seg litt igjen i og den er lett å lese.	Mar 6, 2012 5:43 AM

24	Absolutely, I found the story exciting and i could as a teenager relate to some of the conflicts of the story.	Mar 6, 2012 5:43 AM
25	Yes beacuse it give you something to think and it isnt wrote in difficult english words.	Mar 6, 2012 5:41 AM
26	yes, because it's a good book	Mar 6, 2012 5:36 AM
27	i will because the book was good after a little while but very bad at the beginning.	Mar 6, 2012 4:27 AM
28	Yes, it was a very good book.	Mar 6, 2012 4:23 AM
29	This is a book written in English, and as an English book i would recommend this, because the book is easy to read, and it is not so boring.	Mar 5, 2012 12:57 PM

5. How did you experience the following? Please draw on the drop-down menus to choose your answers:

level of difficulty:

	too difficult to read	OK	too easy to read	Res C
drop-down menus	0.0% (0)	89.7% (26)	10.3% (3)	

reading progression:

	too slow	OK	too fast	Res C
drop-down menus	3.4% (1)	86.2% (25)	10.3% (3)	

reading homework:

	too much to read every week	OK	too little to read every week	Res C
drop-down menus	20.7% (6)	69.0% (20)	10.3% (3)	

amount of writing (diary)

	too much writing	OK	too little writing	Res C
drop-down menus	6.9% (2)	93.1% (27)	0.0% (0)	

amount of class discussion

	too much discussion	OK	too little discussion	Res C
drop-down menus	10.3% (3)	72.4% (21)	17.2% (5)	

Please write any other comments you may have (either positive or negative, for example: did you run into any problems when reading Holes? How could this have been avoided?)

answered question

skipped question

1	I found it quite boring.	Mar 14, 2012 1:53 AM
2	Maybe just slow down, and maybe read the book in the class.	Mar 13, 2012 5:18 AM
3	I have no comment	Mar 13, 2012 4:58 AM
4	i dont have any opinion about this.	Mar 13, 2012 4:52 AM
5	.	Mar 13, 2012 4:27 AM
6	no i didn't have problems	Mar 11, 2012 11:35 PM
7	...	Mar 7, 2012 1:51 AM
8	Jeg synes det var godt tempo å lese. Jeg kunne lest den fortere, men man bør ta hensyn til at alle ikke leser like fort.	Mar 6, 2012 6:06 AM
9	I learned new things during class discussions that i never learned while i was reading at home. Some of the gaps were filled when i heard opinions and thoughts from my classmates.	Mar 6, 2012 5:53 AM
10	ingen	Mar 6, 2012 5:47 AM
11	It was OK to read the book, but sometimes it was almost to much, but i managed to do the reading homework every time.	Mar 5, 2012 1:16 PM

6. Which of these tasks did you find useful? Please click on the alternatives that apply to you.

	not useful at all	not very useful	useful	very useful	Response Count
individual written tasks (vocabulary, quizzes...)	0.0% (0)	24.1% (7)	69.0% (20)	10.3% (3)	29
writing your reader's diary	0.0% (0)	17.2% (5)	69.0% (20)	13.8% (4)	29
pair discussions	3.4% (1)	3.4% (1)	48.3% (14)	48.3% (14)	29
group discussions	6.9% (2)	13.8% (4)	37.9% (11)	48.3% (14)	29
teacher's explanations	3.4% (1)	10.3% (3)	69.0% (20)	17.2% (5)	29
watching the film Holes	0.0% (0)	13.8% (4)	27.6% (8)	58.6% (17)	29
essay writing	6.9% (2)	34.5% (10)	44.8% (13)	13.8% (4)	29

Was there any other task you would have liked to work with? Please specify in this comment field:

9

answered question

29

skipped question

0

1	No.	Mar 14, 2012 11:32 AM
2	discuss differens of film and book.	Mar 14, 2012 2:16 AM
3	maybe a little bit more with the film	Mar 13, 2012 5:18 AM
4	nope	Mar 13, 2012 4:58 AM
5	no	Mar 13, 2012 4:52 AM
6	.	Mar 13, 2012 4:27 AM
7	no	Mar 11, 2012 11:35 PM
8	nei	Mar 7, 2012 1:51 AM
9	jobbe mer med å sammenligne boka og filmen	Mar 6, 2012 5:47 AM

7. What did you learn from the group discussions? Please write your answer in this comment field:

1	everybody hade thier own thoughts that was a thing that i learn to see every one had thier own opinion.	Mar 14, 2012 2:16 AM
2	Other persons view of the book and their oppinion of Holes.	Mar 14, 2012 2:04 AM
3	That everyone had their own sight off the novel	Mar 14, 2012 1:56 AM
4	How other in my class understood the text	Mar 14, 2012 1:56 AM
5	Jeg fikk med meg sammenhengen.	Mar 14, 2012 1:53 AM
6	others opinions.	Mar 13, 2012 5:18 AM
7	that the story can be read in different ways	Mar 13, 2012 5:07 AM
8	I learned that other people can have different opinions of the book and they caan have a different view than me	Mar 13, 2012 4:58 AM
9	i learned how the others thought of diffrent scenes in the book , some were totally diffrent from my views	Mar 13, 2012 4:55 AM
10	I learned alot, like why they did what they did	Mar 13, 2012 4:52 AM
11	Different opinions about the text	Mar 13, 2012 4:51 AM
12	other people points of view	Mar 13, 2012 4:42 AM
13	How others view of the book/movie	Mar 13, 2012 4:27 AM
14	Da fikk jeg andre ideer fra andre som jeg ikke hadde tenkt på.	Mar 13, 2012 4:27 AM
15	Jeg lærte mye om de andres syn på boken og hvordan de tolket og oppfattet den.	Mar 13, 2012 2:44 AM
16	I learned a lot. We found out different things together as a group.	Mar 12, 2012 7:27 AM
17	others thinking perspective	Mar 11, 2012 11:35 PM
18	People can understand a text in differently. Therefore it was important to discuss what we've read with the others, to see if we understood it right.	Mar 8, 2012 2:32 AM
19	ikke noe	Mar 7, 2012 1:51 AM
20	Not much, it was not very organized, and a bit noisy.	Mar 6, 2012 6:20 AM
21	Jeg fikk vite mer om den dypere meningen i handlingen. Jeg fikk også se flere forskjellige syn på samme hendelse.	Mar 6, 2012 6:06 AM
22	I learned that many heads thinking is better than one. Hearing from others helps me a lot. I learned many things and got som new ideas.	Mar 6, 2012 5:53 AM
23	de andre sitt syn på saker.	Mar 6, 2012 5:47 AM
24	I learned what kind of opinions the other people had.	Mar 6, 2012 5:45 AM
25	how to discuss	Mar 6, 2012 5:44 AM
26	not much.	Mar 6, 2012 5:39 AM

27	nothing that i didnt already know from reading the book.	Mar 6, 2012 4:31 AM
28	I understood more about the book when we talked about it together.	Mar 6, 2012 4:25 AM
29	i learned different views of the story, and what my classmates was thinking about the book	Mar 5, 2012 1:16 PM

8. What did you learn from writing a readers' diary? Please write your answer in this comment field:

1	it helped me in writting my easay.	Mar 14, 2012 2:16 AM
2	You can try to analyze what you've read and it makes you want to read more.	Mar 14, 2012 2:04 AM
3	i tought i had forgotten what i read, but becuse of the writing i remembered much more than from just reading	Mar 14, 2012 1:56 AM
4	Not much	Mar 14, 2012 1:56 AM
5	Jeg fikk et bredere ordforråd.	Mar 14, 2012 1:53 AM
6	not much, but i remembered more of the book	Mar 13, 2012 5:18 AM
7	not much, I wrote the stuff i knew from before.	Mar 13, 2012 5:07 AM
8	I did remember the book better	Mar 13, 2012 4:58 AM
9	that you can remember better if you write in a diary.	Mar 13, 2012 4:55 AM
10	thoughts	Mar 13, 2012 4:52 AM
11	you got to write down your ideas and thoughts	Mar 13, 2012 4:51 AM
12	it was a way to remember the story bether	Mar 13, 2012 4:42 AM
13	Understanding the book better.	Mar 13, 2012 4:27 AM
14	Det var en minnelse over ting og problemer jeg lurte på iløpe av boken.	Mar 13, 2012 4:27 AM
15	Jeg lærte ikke kjempe mye, men siden jeg var ferdig med boken før ferien var slutt var det en grei måte å friske opp minnet på.	Mar 13, 2012 2:44 AM
16	I could go back to earlier diaries to see what I had written.	Mar 12, 2012 7:27 AM
17	to place my thoughts in a place, and later learn from them	Mar 11, 2012 11:35 PM
18	Writing the readers' diary makes you reflect about what you've read.	Mar 8, 2012 2:32 AM
19	ikke noe	Mar 7, 2012 1:51 AM
20	I learned how to express myself better.	Mar 6, 2012 6:20 AM
21	Jeg husket handlingen bedre og fikk tenke litt mer over hvilke spørsmål som er aktuelle å stille.	Mar 6, 2012 6:06 AM
22	I learned more about the characters on the book and their rules.	Mar 6, 2012 5:53 AM
23	vet ikke	Mar 6, 2012 5:47 AM
24	the meaning of the book	Mar 6, 2012 5:45 AM
25	about friendship, how write diary and that i can write what i want there. Help to remember	Mar 6, 2012 5:44 AM
26	not much.	Mar 6, 2012 5:39 AM
27	i didnt learn anything since i was the one writing and then i already know	Mar 6, 2012 4:31 AM

everything i writed down.

28 To understand the book more.

Mar 6, 2012 4:25 AM

29 not so much, but i learned to remember more of the story

Mar 5, 2012 1:16 PM

9. Should the project have been organized in a different way? If I used this novel again with another class, do you have any comments or suggestions to me as a teacher? Please write your answer in this comment field:

1	no! i think i can't find a better way then this.	Mar 14, 2012 2:16 AM
2	I think this project was very good organized. It was nice having reading as homework.	Mar 14, 2012 2:04 AM
3	no	Mar 14, 2012 1:56 AM
4	Not so much diary writing, and some different essay tasks	Mar 14, 2012 1:56 AM
5	Nei, jeg synes det var lagt opp bra. Men det var litt mange sider å lese i løpet av en uke.	Mar 14, 2012 1:53 AM
6	no, it was actually very good	Mar 13, 2012 5:18 AM
7	It's fine as it is	Mar 13, 2012 5:07 AM
8	no it was good	Mar 13, 2012 4:58 AM
9	maybe get some one to read it out loud?	Mar 13, 2012 4:55 AM
10	lydbok!!!!!!!	Mar 13, 2012 4:52 AM
11	I think it was a bit too much to read for each week, because we have so many other homeworks too.	Mar 13, 2012 4:51 AM
12	do the same	Mar 13, 2012 4:42 AM
13	Maybe instead of writing an essay we could have a group presentation.	Mar 13, 2012 4:27 AM
14	Synes du gjorde en god jobb :)	Mar 13, 2012 4:27 AM
15	Jeg synes det var kjempe interessant å lese og se Holes og jeg synes det var veldig lærerikt å diskutere det med andre elever.	Mar 13, 2012 2:44 AM
16	No, not at all! I think it was very good organized and well done	Mar 12, 2012 7:27 AM
17	no	Mar 11, 2012 11:35 PM
18	The organization was good, but maybe there should have been a little bit less to read at home.	Mar 8, 2012 2:32 AM
19	ja, bare lese	Mar 7, 2012 1:51 AM
20	I think we should have had fewer reading diary entries, it wasn't easy trying to write alot so often.	Mar 6, 2012 6:20 AM
21	Jeg synes det var en god måte å gå gjennom den på. Det var ikke alle som rakk å lese alt, men jeg skjønner at det er vanskelig å få en som ikke vil lese til å lese en hel bok.	Mar 6, 2012 6:06 AM
22	The project is better as it is.	Mar 6, 2012 5:53 AM
23	vet ikke	Mar 6, 2012 5:47 AM
24	No	Mar 6, 2012 5:45 AM

25	no	Mar 6, 2012 5:44 AM
26	no	Mar 6, 2012 5:39 AM
27	less group discusion, and more pair discusion.	Mar 6, 2012 4:31 AM
28	No, i don't think so.	Mar 6, 2012 4:25 AM
29	it is okay that we can choose our own groups, then we talk more. Maybe we could read our diaries to each other in the group, because then we could make a sum up of what we read, and then do the exercises	Mar 5, 2012 1:16 PM

10. Please answer by drawing on the drop-down menus:

I am

	a boy	a girl
my gender	55.2% (16)	44.8% (13)

What kind of reader am I?

	apathetic (I do not read for pleasure, and reading fiction is not important in my life)	average (I read a bit for pleasure, and reading fiction occupies a certain place in my life)	eager (I love reading and I read a lot of fiction)
my gender	20.7% (6)	58.6% (17)	20.7% (6)

Please comment upon your attitude to reading in this comment field:

answered question 29
skipped question 0

1	I love reading. To disappear in a story and don't have anything other in my mind than whats happening in the book.	Mar 14, 2012 2:06 AM
2	I like reading some books. But it has to be books i want to read. Not books that are choosen for me.	Mar 14, 2012 1:54 AM
3	I mostly read science articles. but I also enjoy reading fiction from time to time.	Mar 13, 2012 5:08 AM
4	I like to read if the book is exciting	Mar 13, 2012 4:59 AM
5	I love reading, beacuse there are so many great authors that can make you fall in love with their book, and it feels like the book transports you inside and makes you one of the characters.	Mar 13, 2012 4:57 AM
6	Jeg leser litt, som regel i ferier og andre ting når man har litt tid til overs.	Mar 13, 2012 4:29 AM
7	I don't read books, but i read much on the internet and in newspapers and television	Mar 13, 2012 4:28 AM
8	Jeg leser når jeg føler for det, men når jeg leser bøker så leser jeg på norsk.	Mar 13, 2012 2:44 AM
9	I used to read more for pleasure when I was younger. No I have to do my homework and go to practise after school every day. I wish I had more time to read.	Mar 12, 2012 7:29 AM
10	jeg leser hvis jeg ikke har tilgang på feks internett	Mar 7, 2012 1:52 AM
11	I mostly read science articles and newspapers, not fiction.	Mar 6, 2012 6:21 AM
12	Jeg liker å lese, men mest for underholdning. Derfor foretrekker jeg fantasy litteratur hvor det er spenning nesten hele tiden.	Mar 6, 2012 6:08 AM
13	liker å lese spennende bøker i blandt	Mar 6, 2012 5:49 AM