

**ARABS AS ESL READERS OF AMERICAN LITERATURE:  
THEIR ATTITUDES, THEIR RESPONSES, AND THE SOURCES OF  
THEIR MISINTERPRETATIONS**

by

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Hala Ismail Hassan Ismail, PhD

The main objective of the current study was to investigate how the Arab ESL readers read and respond to American literature. It attempted to determine the role of the Arab readers' attitudes in responding to ESL literature. It also aimed to acknowledge the special place that the aesthetic aspect should hold in current ESL classes. This study also sought to analyze the readers' misinterpretations in order to determine its sources.

To achieve these objectives the study used a mixed methods research design. The study first examined the attitudes of Arab readers towards the American culture and towards reading the American literature. It also examined the responses of those readers towards four literary texts. The study investigated the relation between each of the participants' attitudes and the way they responded to the selected readings. Finally, the study investigated the misinterpretations of the participants of the literary texts.

Results indicated that participants had in general a positive attitude towards reading American literature and towards the American culture. The responses of the participants were analyzed on the aesthetic vs. efferent continuum. The responses of the participants to the four texts varied in range between aesthetic and efferent. Besides the response types used for analyzing, the researcher has identified four themes in the

participants' responses. Results also indicated that the participants drew heavily from their own culture when they responded and that they engaged their personal attitudes and perceptions about the culture of the literary texts. It also appeared that the participants who had positive attitudes towards reading the American literature and towards the American culture responded aesthetically to the four reading texts. Whereas, the participants who had negative attitudes towards the American culture and towards reading the American literature responded efferently to the four reading texts. Results also showed that the participants' misinterpretations were attributed to the inability of the readers to activate the appropriate schemata that gives the text coherence. The findings of the study highlight the importance of attitudes when learning a second language.

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## PREFACE

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

**For readers do not of course encounter texts in a void: all readers are socially and historically positioned, and how they interpret literary works will be deeply shaped by this fact. (Eagelton, 1983, p. 83)**

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

Literature has been widely used as a main component in any ESL class. The importance of literature stems from the fact that it represents an authentic sample of the target language. The benefits of teaching literature to ESL students has been widely researched and discussed. Most of the research stresses the usefulness of literature to language learning, since it provides an authentic and a meaningful context for language learning. It can foster various language skills, i.e. vocabulary knowledge, grammar, and reading comprehension. Moreover, it facilitates integration of the language skills and fosters the students' motivation towards learning the second language. This makes using literature as a context of language learning the first reason for using it in the ESL classroom and perhaps the most widely recognized reason. Although this is an important goal in itself, some researchers (i.e. Rosenblatt, 1995) have been against using literature merely as a



context for language learning especially in first language, and instead they advocate using literature for its own sake.

Other than using literature as a context for learning a second language perhaps the most compelling reason for using literature in an ESL class is “the potential power of good literature to transform, to change attitudes, and to help eradicate prejudice while fostering empathy, tolerance, and an awareness of global problems” (Ghosn, 2002, p. 176). Research on multicultural literature shows that literature has the power to develop tolerance, empathy, and conflict resolution. In short, literature can promote positive attitudes between the different cultures. Most of the wars in the world are the result of the difficulty of achieving tolerance and understanding among the different cultural groups. Therefore, positive attitudes toward other cultures should be encouraged. Literature is one important vehicle through which tolerance and understanding among different cultures can be supported and encouraged because literature can reflect many aspects of a culture: its values, beliefs, ways of life, and patterns of thinking. From literature we can learn to appreciate other ethnic groups and we can learn that in spite of our surface differences of color, culture or ethnicity, all people experience the same universal feelings (Bainbridge et al, 1999). Literature can actually be used as a therapy for prejudice and stereotyping. It allows students to examine their prejudices and attitudes, to identify negative feelings about others, and to realize the misconceptions they use to judge people. Literature can even be used to eliminate the negative feelings and replace them with positive ones.

Theories of literary criticism aim to explain how the readers make meaning when they encounter literature. Traditional theories regarded meaning as residing in the text

and assumed that each literary work has one correct interpretation. Reader response theories presented a radical change in how important the reader is in making meaning. Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory is perhaps the most widely referred to theory in the field of education. Key features of her theory as stated by Asselin (2000) are: 1) focusing on reader's psychological processes and 2) seeing literature as a means of promoting critical thinking and multiple perspectives. Rosenblatt believes that readers bring a wealth of emotions, experiences and knowledge to a reading and that reading literature in this way supports the open-mindedness, which is essential to democracy. According to Smith and Nelson (1997):

A keynote of reader-response theory is the individuality of the response, that is, the affective influence of personal experiences, attitudes, and backgrounds. Among these are culture and language. (p.8)

A critical concept in Rosenblatt's theory is the stance the reader adopts and which depends on his/her purpose of reading. The stance the reader adopts may be "efferent" or "aesthetic" depending on the reader's focus of attention. So, if his/her purpose is to be engaged in a literary work of art, the stance is aesthetic; but if the purpose is to extract and retain information from the text, the stance is efferent. Somewhere between the two stances there is a continuum of response possibilities.

Any text is produced in a certain social and political environment, and therefore, it includes embedded statements, assumptions, attitudes, and ideologies. The reader as well has his/her own attitudes, beliefs and ideologies, which will direct the reading and will be reflected in it. This means that political events can influence the reader and the way he/she responds to the text. The catastrophic events of September 11, 2001,

shuddered across America like an earthquake and rattled everyone's view of the world. But if the tragic terrorist attacks on New York and Washington DC were an earthquake, they carried with them a powerful aftershock-- a backlash that affected, and continues to penetrate, the lives of all Moslems and more specifically all Arabs not only across America but also all over the world. Several human rights agencies have reported a dramatic increase in hate crimes against Arabs after September 2001. Although the statistics reflect a drastic rise, the real numbers may be up to hundred times higher, because hate motivation is difficult to prove and because many victims are simply afraid to report.

The root of the problem of using literature to eradicate negative feelings is the attitudes readers have towards cultural differences. Attitudes of rejection or superiority towards those who differ from the accepted standards cannot serve the desired humanistic goals of using literature in the ESL class. Rosenblatt (1964) has highlighted the same point since her early writings:

If we tend to feel that our ways have an inherent rightness and divine sanction, that, too, is an illusion that we share with individuals shaped by other culture, which seem equally self-justified to them. (p. 460)

Although it is almost impossible to generalize the views and attitudes of Arabs and Americans towards each other, the predominant attitudes seem to be negative. It is needless to say that the Arab image in America has deteriorated rapidly after September 11. They are generally depicted as terrorists, bloodthirsty, stupid, cunning or backward. In his dissertation "Hollywood Shoots the Arabs" Alaswad (2000) has introduced a full description of the negative images of Arabs in America long before September 11. On the

other hand in the Arab world, America is also faced with similar stereotyping. Americans in the Arab world are generally viewed as being dishonest, materialistic, stupid, imperialistic or sex-crazed. That is not to say that all Americans or all Arabs have the same negative attitudes towards each other because there is a wide range of attitudes and views. As Rosenblatt (1946) states:

There will be many differences from individual to individual within a society, of course; but all will be shaped by reaction to the dominant pressures, the accepted habits, and the system of values of that culture.  
(p.460)

This study doesn't seek to find out how the September 11 fallout impacted the Arabs and what those four years have meant to those who were caught in the backlash. It seeks to identify the attitudes of Arabs in America after September 11 and how and if their attitudes are reflected in their responses to American literature.

### **1.1.1 L1 Influence on L2 Reading:**

Reading and comprehending in one's native language consists of an extremely complex and complicated set of processes. These processes include "perceptual, linguistic, and conceptual operations -- from encoding letters on the printed page to determining what or whom is referred to by a particular phrase or word while following the structures of the text" (Beck and Carpenter, 1986, p. 1098). It involves a coordination of attention, memory, and comprehension. This simply means that learning a language consists of learning a number of subcomponent processes. The more efficiently these sub-processes are carried out the better probability that they interact to produce a skilled learner.

However, if deficiencies occurred in the sub-process of learning, this would result in learning difficulties.

For a second language learner reading involves many factors that are similar to the factors involved in the processes of reading a first language. However, there are factors that are only involved in learning a second language. One of the factors involved in reading a second language is the learner's reading ability in his first language. Research on the question of the transfer of individual reading ability does not indicate that better readers in the first language are also better readers in the second language. Several studies have examined this issue and none of them seems to agree on the existence or not of this transfer. According to Henderson (1989) students of a second language are already literate in their own language, and since those learners have developed reading strategies in their own language, they do not have to learn the process of reading but to acquire specific skills in learning to read a new language. So, this means that the main area of agreement between learning to read in the first and in the second language is that the process will be the same for all languages. The learner only has to do specific modifications in the grammar and vocabulary to be able to read in the second language. However, the opposite of this view has been indicated by Huebner (1983) who claims that reading in a foreign or a second language involves more than this. It involves modifying all factors that influence reading ability. Also in learning a second language the learner may be faced with a shorter memory span especially in the early stages of learning the language. The learner also cannot process the new vocabulary with automaticity and speed, which is considered an important characteristic of the fluent reader. Another factor that is involved in learning a second language is the fact that the

native language might be a source of interference in learning a second language. This interference prohibits any transfer from the native to the second language, specially, if the two language systems are completely different. This means that there will not be any transfer from the first language to the second language. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that the development of language would be difficult for students whose native language employs a writing and phonological system other than the Roman alphabet. Arabic is a language that employs a different system. Therefore, it can be assumed that the beginning Arabic speaking ESL student is faced with difficulties in attempting to learn English.

There is proof from research that Arabic speaking students encounter difficulties when attempting to learn English as a second language. In a study by Henderson (1983) it is assumed that the development of reading skills would be difficult for Arabic-speaking students. The study highlighted the disadvantage at which Arabic-speaking students find themselves when competing with other students in an English speaking academic environment. There are also other studies that indicated the same results. For example, Yorkey (1977) has assumed that Arabic students face problems when attempting to learn English, and he has identified some of the linguistic basis of the learning problem. He also identified a practical procedure for teaching.

This means that even if that transfer from one's native language to a second language is possible sometimes there are language specific elements that make this transfer hard to achieve. For instance, as in the case of English and Arabic, orthographic and phonological effects from the first language on the word reading of the second language.

Some of the points of contrast between the two languages that can cause difficulty in reading English as a second language are the following: (Henderson, 1983; Huebener, 1983; Yorkey, 1977)

- *The Graphemic symbol:* The physical differences between the graphemes of English and Arabic are so great that there can be no significant transfer of specific letter identification skills from one language to another. For example, the orientation of curves and angles and particularly the placement of dots above or below the body of the letter are totally different from English graphemes.
- *Sound-Symbol Correspondence:* In English the connection between letters and the phonemic representation of the letters is far from perfect; Arabic has a more one-to-one correspondence with the sounds of the language.
- *Direction of Flow in Writing:* Arabic writing proceeds in a right-to-left direction. The fact that the Arabic speakers has already developed reading habits in one direction may make it difficult for learners to retain their eyes to pick up and process information from a written representation flowing the opposite direction.
- *Mechanics of Written Word Representation:* Arabic word units are identified in writing by the physical connections between most of the individual symbols and a distinguishing letter shape in word-final position without much regard to spacing within or between words.
- *The phonological system:* As for the phonological system, which is considered the basis of decoding, there are so many points of contrast between the two

languages, which makes decoding more difficult to Arabic speaking students. Some of the sounds that cause difficulty are /θ/ and /ð/. These two sounds cause serious difficulty for Arabic speaking students, in spite of the fact that these two sound exist in the classical dialect. The reason is that they are not used in the colloquial Arabic, therefore they do not transfer to English easily. The sounds /p/ and /b/ also cause difficulty to Arabic learners. Although /p/ exist in Arabic it only occurs as an allophone of /b/. The same can be said about the sound /ŋ/ which is only an allophone of /n/. Arabic also differs in English in that many Arabic words start with a voiceless stop (hamza), which in English is considered a distortion of stress.

- *Vocabulary*: The difference between the two languages is not only in the pronunciation system but it also extends to the way words are composed. In Arabic most words are based on a root that consists of three consonants. By combining these three consonants with other letters the meaning changes. This might be similar to the way words are formed in English but in Arabic it is far more systematic.
- *Grammar*: Another important difference between the two languages is in grammar. The sentence structure of Arabic can be S+V+O or V+S+O (the two structures do not affect meaning). Arabic does not use auxiliary verbs like *be* or *do*. Also, unlike English, it does not have an indefinite article. The indefinite noun is indicated by the absence of the definite article. The grammatical differences can cause problems in comprehension.



## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

For all high school students in the Arab world reading English is a basic requirement in school. They need to perform well not only to keep a good academic record that will help them enter universities, but also for career success. For immigrants and graduate students who arrive in America being able to read is even more important because they need the language to help them fit into a new environment. Literature is one means of achieving this goal. In addition literature has the ability to alter the ways we create our political and personal identities.

One of the theoretical components of this study is reader response theory, specifically Rosenblatt's transactional theory. She has cautioned in most of her writings of the absence of aesthetic reading to literature and of the predominance of efferent study of literature. This also seems to be the case in the Arab countries where the power of the text is nonnegotiable, and the reader's view is almost nonexistent, which produces limitations on students' performance. The responses of readers towards literature are affected by many factors, one of which is attitudes. This study will attempt to understand the nature of those attitudes and to determine the relationship between readers' attitudes towards target culture and their responses to its literature. It will also try to prove that possessing negative attitudes to target culture and to reading its literature can affect responses to literature and make reading more efferent. On the other hand positive attitudes are manifested in more aesthetic reading.

Another problem of this study is that in reading ESL literature and in responding to it there are certain sources that cause readers to misinterpret what they read and alter their responses to it. These sources of misinterpretation may include difficulties in

reading or lacking necessary background knowledge, etc. This study will attempt to identify these sources of misinterpretations as reflected in their responses.

### **1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is:

- a) To identify the Arab reader's attitudes towards the American Culture and towards reading its literature.
- b) To analyze the responses to the literature read during the study based on Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reader response by exploring the aesthetic and efferent stances of Arab readers during reading selected American literature.
- c) To determine the relationship between these attitudes and stance of response.
- d) To analyze the sources of Arab readers' misinterpretations as reflected in their responses.

### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Knowledge of the attitudes of Arab readers towards the American culture and towards reading American literature can lead to a better understanding of those readers. Since these attitudes may influence the processes of reading, the study may lead to better instructional strategies in adult ESL classes. Identifying the attitudes of Arabs towards

reading American literature has even gained more importance after the tragic events of 9/11. Moreover, for literature to be used effectively in ESL classes to serve its humanistic purpose we must understand the nature of the attitudes of the readers:

Their (literary texts) effectiveness for fostering humane attitudes will depend on the concepts about people and cultures which make up the climate of thought within which the reading and study are carried on. (Rosenblatt, 1946, p. 459)

Responding to literature is no simple matter especially for an ESL reader. One of the complicating factors is that readers bring to the text their own biases and attitudes. Therefore, it is important to heighten the awareness of ESL educators to the significance of attitudes as one of the factors influencing literary transaction. Recognizing the factors that affect the aesthetic dimension of reading especially in an ESL class can lead to acknowledging the special place that the aesthetic aspect should hold in current ESL classes. The study will also contribute to the knowledge of the sources of literary misinterpretations, which will ultimately contribute to the teaching of literature to ESL readers.

## **1.5 QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY**

To explore these issues, this study will focus on the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Arab readers towards the American culture and towards its literature?

2. What types of responses do Arab readers give when reading selected American literature?
3. Is there a correlation between their attitudes and the stance of their responses?
4. What are the sources of the Arab readers' misinterpretation of selected American literature?

## **1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The following limitations may influence the study:

- 1- The limited number of subjects may restrict generalizing the findings to other contexts.
- 2- The findings are limited to Arab Adult readers who are either immigrants or came to study in USA before September 11, 2001.
- 3- The American literature is going to be limited to selected short stories and poems. No long texts will be used due to time constraints.
- 4- The results of the study are limited to the selected texts.

## **1.7 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS**

Response: It refers to the processes that occur during reading. Benton (1995) made a distinction between “primary response”, the natural activity that cannot be fully known

and “stated response” which can be artificially elicited in speech or writing. The later type of response is the focus of this study.

Stance: The purpose or the focus of attention of the reader during the act of reading.

Aesthetic stance: The focus of attention of the reader is on “what is being created *during* the actual reading” (Rosenblatt, 2001: 269).

Efferent stance: The focus of attention of the reader is on “what is being carried away at the end of reading” (Rosenblatt, 2001, p. 269).

Aesthetic response: It is a response towards a literary work in which the reader involves his/her own unique personality:

An aesthetic reading evolves through attention to the more personal nature of experienced meaning and focuses on the selective process of creating a uniquely individual literary work through the transaction between a reader and a text. (Cox and Many, 1992a, p. 106)

Efferent response: It is a response to a literary work in which the reader resorts to analyzing the text instead of appreciating it for its own sake:

An efferent reading is more likely to evolve as an analysis of the text by breaking it up into isolated segments and concentrating on the information to be retained according to some system of analysis or particular way of viewing the text. (Cox and Many, 1992a, p. 106)

Transactional theory: It is a reader response theory introduced by Louise Rosenblatt in which she stresses the unique relationship between the reader and the text. According to

her theory meaning resides in the transaction between the text and the reader. Her theory rejects the assumptions of New Criticism that meaning resides in text only.

Attitude: As defined by Lambert and Lambert (1973:72), it is “an organized and consistent manner of thinking, feeling and reacting to people, groups, social issues or, more generally, to any event in the environment”. The main components of attitudes are thoughts and beliefs, feelings or emotions, and tendencies to react.

ESL readers: “English as a second language readers” refers to readers of English as a second language in an English-speaking country. More specifically it refers to readers who have a chance to read authentic materials written in English almost every day in their daily life either for work, study or pleasure.

L1 reading: It refers to reading in one’s first or native language.

L2 reading: It refers to reading in a second language, which in this case is English.

## **1.8 SUMMARY**

This chapter has presented a background for the study and the main theoretical framework underlying it. It has also provided a statement of the problem of the study. The purpose and the significance of the study were also presented, and the questions of the study were stated. The chapter has clearly defined the limitations of the study. The main terms that are considered crucial to the study were also defined. A more detailed discussion of the essential theories to this study will be provided in the following chapter.

## 2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**For years I have extolled the potentialities of literature for aiding us to understand ourselves and others, for widening our horizons to include temperaments and cultures different from our own, for helping us to clarify our conflicts in values, for illuminating our world. (Rosenblatt: 2001, p. 276)**

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the literature and the accumulation of research that is relevant to the study, for the purpose of developing a theoretical framework in relation to the issue of reading literature by L2 readers. This framework builds on theories of literary criticism, theories of reader-response and the relatively small body of information about reading literature in L2 context. The chapter also discusses the different components of reading. The discussion includes the controversy of analyzing reading processes, the role of background knowledge, vocabulary, and metacognition in reading comprehension. It also discusses key studies in the field of reader response to literature to provide support for the study.

The chapter is subdivided into four main sections. The first section focuses on literary theories in general and reader-response in specific. The second section discusses the influence of Louise Rosenblatt and her transactional theory on the field of teaching literature. The third section deals with reading literature in L2 context and the role of

attitudes to ESL reading. It will also discuss the different components that are crucial for reading, which if lacking may cause literary misinterpretation. Finally, key studies in the field of response to literature will be discussed to provide further background and support to the current study.

## **2.2 LITERARY THEORIES**

The goal of this section is to discuss briefly the theories of literary criticism and to discuss in more detail reader response theories. Literary Criticism represents a range of theories about where meaning emerges in the relationship between readers and texts. The history of modern literary criticism can be characterized as occurring in three stages. In the first stage, Romanticism, it was assumed that meaning resides with the author and that art is “self-expression”. Therefore, the author was the center of attention and any literary interpretation aimed to discern the author’s intentions. The second stage is the New Criticism, which sees meaning as residing in the text itself. According to Holland (1998) in this “text-active” stage the text dominates and defines the response to reading because the author is no longer considered accessible to the interpreter. New criticism tends to emphasize the text as something complete within itself, written for its sake, unified in its form and not dependent on its relation to the author’s life. It also tends to emphasize the formal and technical properties of the work of art. This stage underlies much postmodern talk about the text dominating the individual, discourse replacing the subject, and the text subverting its own meanings. Holland (1998), an opponent of new criticism, accused it of focusing only on similarities in response and not accounting for variation. A similar view



is that of Henderson & Brown (1997) who criticized new criticism for ignoring identity, for ignoring contradicting forces within the western tradition, and for ignoring the exchange between western and non-western cultures. New criticism has guided literature instruction since the late 1940s. Teachers assumed that the text is central, that their job is to make students appreciate its complexity and that therefore their job is to teach the skills of analyzing the text (Beach, 1993).

The third stage is a marked shift of attention to the reader; this is the literary theory that has come to be called Reader-Response Criticism. Unlike the New Criticism, reader-response critics see a readers' interaction with a text as essential to its interpretation. They feel a literary work has gaps that a reader must fill in from his experiences and knowledge. The text cannot be understood or analyzed as an isolated entity. The 'meaning' of the text is what happens when the reader reads it; it is determined by the readers who can find different responses in it.

According to Henderson and Brown (1997) reader-response criticism views the reader as a producer rather than a consumer of meanings. In this sense, a reader is a hypothetical construct of norms and expectations that can be derived or anticipated from the work. Because expectations may be violated or fulfilled, satisfied or frustrated, and because reading is a temporal process involving memory, perception, and anticipation, the charting of reader-response is extremely difficult and continually subject to construction and reconstruction, vision and revision.

Many literary critics (i.e. Beach, 1993; Lye, 1996a, 1996b; Henderson and Brown, 1997) have clarified that reader response criticism embraces an extremely wide range of positions towards the roles of the reader, the text, and the social cultural context

shaping the transaction between reader and text. This is to say that reader-response does not represent a conceptually unified critical position. However, all these various theories are interested in how readers make meaning from their experience with the text and they all share the same essential assumption of reader-response that the text has no real existence until it is read. Lye (1996) has pointed out that the different theories of reader-response have various attitudes towards the following issues:

- The question of in what sense a text exists.
- The extent to which knowledge is objective or subjective.
- The question of whether the world as we experience it is culturally constructed or has an essential existence.
- How the gap, historically, culturally and semiotically between the reader and the writer is bridged, and the extent to which it is bridged.
- The question of the extent to which interpretation is a public act, conditioned by the particular materials and cultural circumstances of the reader, vs. the extent to which reading is a private act governed by a response to the relatively independent codes of the text.
- The question of what the process of reading is like, what it entails.

Beach (1993) has divided theories of reader-response to five categories: textual, experiential, psychological, social and cultural. Textual theories of response concentrate on the readers' knowledge of text conventions and how they use this knowledge to respond to text. Therefore, the meaning depends on the competence of the reader in responding to the structures and practices of the text.

Experiential theories of response focus on reader's engagement with the text and how readers identify with it (Beach, 1993). Louis Rosenblatt is central to experiential theories and she and her transactional theory will be discussed in more detail in this chapter.

Psychological theories assume that readers respond to the text in a highly personal way. Therefore, their responses are shaped by their level of cognitive or intellectual development, cognitive abilities and subconscious forces. The role of schemata is also stressed by the psychological theorists of reader response, it is viewed by them as a scenario that helps guide readers' attention to certain aspects or features of texts. Holland is a key figure to psychological theories of response; he has a psychoanalytic view in which he considers the ways in which readers' subconscious fantasy shapes the meaning of the text. Holland (1998) has addressed the questions of: why do individuals' readings of the same text differ so much? Why are they the same? He believes that reader-response criticism offers the best answer because it explains both likeness and difference in reading. The similarities according to him come from similar hypotheses applied to the same text, hypotheses formed by gender, class, education, race, age, or "interpretive community". The differences come from differing hypotheses out of individual beliefs, opinions, values, neuroses or simply one's identity.

According to Beach (1993) social theories focus on the influence of the social context on the reader/text transaction. The social theories of response emphasize the importance of the social roles that readers play to constitute their responses. Central to social theories of response is the idea that the meaning of any utterance depends on the situation in which it was used.

The fifth approach according to Beach (1993) is the cultural theories of response and it includes a wide range of theories like Post-modernism, Post-structuralism, Feminism, Marxism, as well as Anthropological, Historical, and Ideological theories. They all assume that the text includes ideological assumptions and attitudes and that the reader as well has ideological attitudes and convictions, which will direct the reading. They also emphasize the impact of gender roles and attitudes, as well as social class on responding to literature. The cultural attitudes and values of a certain community are reflected in the reader's response to a certain literary work because various institutions implement certain reading formations to socialize readers. According to Beach (1993) "The community's way of responding is a learned cultural practice and through their responses members establish their allegiance to these community values" (p. 132). At the same time readers do not simply and passively acquire reading formations; they also acquire the cultural practice of resisting the norms. Readers learn to resist traditional beliefs through explaining new and alternative sensibilities.

Stanley Fish, an important figure to cultural theories of response, has a post-structuralist's view of how readers respond to literature. His view is that any reader belongs to an interpretive community, which is a reading public that shares a strategy or approach to interpretation. The interpretive community will have taught the reader to see a certain set of forms, topics and so forth in a certain manner. This means that the culture of the reader is the determining factor in responding to literature and that readers, or rather the interpretive reading community, create the meanings of the text as they read. Lang (1996) explains the theory of Stanley Fish by stating that:

For Fish the very thoughts one thinks are made possible by presuppositions of the community in which one lives and furthermore the socially conditioned individual, which all individuals are, cannot think beyond the limits made possible by the culture (p. 3).

Although all these theories have an impact on the field of teaching literature, perhaps the experiential theory of Louise Rosenblatt, the transactional theory, has had the most impact on the field. The following section will focus on Rosenblatt and her transactional theory.

### **2.3 THE CONTRIBUTION OF ROSENBLATT TO THE FIELD OF TEACHING LITERATURE**

Rosenblatt is central to the theory of reader response. In her, now famous, first work Literature as Exploration (1995) she has described the process of readers' engagement and involvement with the text to compose their own "poem". Like other reader response theorists she believes that the literary text has no meaning until it is read, "a novel or poem or play remains merely inkspots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols" (Rosenblatt, 1983, p. 24). Moreover, she stressed the relationship between literature and the students' social, psychological and cultural worlds. She wrote:

It is easy to observe how the beginning reader draws on past experience of life and language to elicit meaning from the printed words, and it is possible to see how through these words he recognizes past experiences to attain new understanding . . . .

The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition. (Rosenblatt, 1995, pp. 25-30)

She also described what happens when readers read and that reading any literary work is a unique experience that involves the minds and emotions of the readers. She focused on reading as an event by stating:

Reading is a constructive, selective process over time in a particular context.... Meaning emerges as the reader carries on a give-and-take with the signs on the page. As the text unrolls before the reader's eyes, the meaning made of the early words influences what comes to mind and is selected for the succeeding signs. (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 26)

Moreover, she urged teachers and readers not to think of the reading of literature as a passive act. She pointed out that when a piece of literature is successful for readers that success comes from the fact that they bring to the selection all that they are and have experienced.

Her second major work is The Reader, The Text, The Poem (1994) in which she examined more closely the classroom application of her theories. In this work she differentiated between two opposing models of responding to text the “efferent” and the “aesthetic”. This work projected her as a shaper of pedagogical philosophy.

From her first work Rosenblatt started to develop what she called the transactional theory of reading. The transactional theory of reading stresses the equal importance of the text and the reader in the formation of meaning. The Transactional theory has received a lot of attention and many writers analyzed its main assumptions. According to

Rosenblatt's transactional theory reading is "a transaction, a two-way process, involving a reader and a text at a particular time and under particular circumstances" (2001, p. 268). It stresses the interconnectedness of reader and text in the process of constructing meaning. The term 'transaction' implies that the reader and the text are more flexible and more dynamic. This makes the relationship between the text and the reader central. The theory insists on the reader's role in conjunction with the text, the reader's individuality affecting and being affected by the text. This means that a work of literature only comes to life when readers bring to it their unique experiences and insights. In other words, her theory explains how the reader's reactions to a certain literary work are the reason behind the way he/she responds to it. Rosenblatt points out that when a piece of literature is successful for readers that success comes from the fact that they bring to the selection all that they are and have experienced. So, a merger of reader and work occurs. From that merger comes a new creation that never has been and never will be duplicated because it contains the unique quality of the single reader (Small, 1992). Rosenblatt also cautions that the creation that results from the merger of reader and text should be true to the work, just as it should be true to the reader. This means that the literary work is not marginalized or reduced to an insignificant part of the interaction.

According to her transactional theory, readers are not passive spectators of the text; on the contrary, she realized how active they are during the reading process. The literary work exists in the 'transaction' between the reader and the text. The term 'transaction' denotes the special nature of the relationship between the reader and the text during the reading event. The reader and the text affect each other and act on each other in order to evoke an experience for the particular reader of the text. This means that the

reader's response to the text changes from one reader to another, simply because the individual reader approaches the literary work with a particular frame of mind formed by his/her own personal background. Readers, influenced by past experiences and current circumstances, regional origins and upbringing, gender, age, past and present readings, will vary in their responses from those of others. Even readers of the same age, similar background, and circle of relationships will express differences in general impressions and nuances of feelings. These differences are also influenced by the given moment, the situation, the mood, the pressures and reasons for reading and the stance taken toward reading.

The role of the author according to the transactional theory is that he/she creates out of his own experience and imagination a literary text, which once published is no longer in the author's control. His work has no real meaning until the reader has experienced it. She wrote:

The text is the outward and visible result of an author's activity...Yet we must remember that once the creative activity of the author has ended, what remains for others--for even the author himself--is a text. To again bring a poem into being requires always a reader, if only the author himself. (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 15)

The text is an important component of the transactional theory and it does not have a single static meaning. It is actually dynamic and variable. Thus responses of audience with different backgrounds and variant experiences will be different. Rosenblatt stated the function of the text by saying:



First, the text is the stimulus that focuses the reader's attention so that elements of past experience, concepts linked with verbal symbols, are activated. Second, as the reader seeks a hypothesis to guide the selecting, rejecting, and ordering of what is being called forth, the text helps to regulate what shall be held in the forefront of the reader's attention. (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 11)

In later articles she stressed the importance of the text by stating:

Recognizing that the reader's stance inevitably affects what emerges from the reading does not deny the importance of the text in the transaction. (Rosenblatt, 1991, p. 269)

Several prerequisites are necessary before the reading transaction can take place. Karolides (1992) has pointed out some of those prerequisites. First, the text must be understandable within the grasp of the reader, but also the reader must be an active participant. This applies to the selection of materials for classroom use. Second, the literature must have some connection to student's life. Third, the students must be engaged to the point where the discussion leads to 'raise personally meaningful questions'. Fourth, the language of the text should be within the knowledge of the reader. This means that if the reader has insufficient linguistic or experiential background to allow participation, the reader cannot relate to the text, and the reading will be short-circuited. This focus on the experience of a reader with a text is one of the major contributions of Rosenblatt's theory, because it draws the attention to how reader's belief system is constituted by and constitutes reading.

A critical factor that affects the reader's activity in responding to a text is the way the reader approaches the text, that is, the reader's focus of attention or purpose of reading. Rosenblatt states that the product of reading depends not only on the text but also on the stance of reading, and she differentiates between two stances an "efferent" and an "aesthetic" stance. The reader's response falls on a continuum of response possibilities, somewhere between the two opposing poles. According to Rosenblatt (1983, 2001) the term "efferent" (from the Latin word *effere* meaning to "carry away") refers to the kind of reading in which attention is centered on what is to be extracted and retained after the reading event. Reading a medication label, or a newspaper, or a legal brief may be examples of an efferent reading.

The opposite term that Rosenblatt used is 'aesthetic' (from a Greek word meaning perception through the senses, feelings, and intuitions). In this kind of reading the reader focuses attention on what is being lived through during the reading event. She wrote:

If, on the other hand, the reader seeks a story, a poem, a play, his attention will shift inward, will center on what is being created during the actual reading. A much broader range of elements will be allowed to rise into consciousness, not simply the abstract concepts that the words point to, but also what those objects or referents stir up of personal feelings, ideas, and attitudes. (Rosenblatt, 2001, p. 269)

According to Rosenblatt in aesthetic reading readers shape the text by drawing on their past experiences and by identifying with the characters and sharing their conflicts and feelings. She explains further:

At the same time there is a stream of responses being generated. There may be a sense of pleasure in our own creative activity, an awareness of pleasant or awkward sound or movement in the words, a feeling of approval or disapproval of the characters and their behavior. We may be aware of a contrast between the assumptions or expectations about life that we brought to the reading and the attitudes, moral codes, social situations we are living through in the world created in the transaction with the text. (Rosenblatt, 2001, p. 270)

Her theory highlights how the reader's aesthetic experience with a text contributes to the formation of meaning. By stressing the importance of experience in literature classes, Rosenblatt hopes to restore aesthetic value of literature as well as to enhance its value in achieving educational goals.

This emphasizes the major principle of the theory that the reader is an active participant in the reading process. In fact, the reader determines consciously or unconsciously the purpose of the reading. The reading is influenced by many factors: the particular reading occasion, present needs, personal cues. Further, the reader decides what practical effects or state of feelings to attend to and what results to anticipate or desire.

To summarize, when taking an efferent stance, the reader seeks information and focuses attention on accumulation of what is to be carried away at the end of the reading. When taking an aesthetic stance, the reader focuses attention on what is being created during the actual reading, the experience itself.

As mentioned before, Rosenblatt is considered a shaper of pedagogical philosophy. She has also tested her theory to practice. Since her early writings she stressed the implications for teaching. She has stressed the importance of encouraging an aesthetic stance, which can be achieved according to her if reading is presented in a meaningful, purposive activity, and if texts are presented in meaningful situations. According to Rosenblatt (2001): “a receptive, nonpressured atmosphere will free the child to adopt the aesthetic stance with pleasant anticipation, without worry about future demands” (p. 275).

The educational value of this is that teachers must note that students spend most of the class time efferently because, after all, tests usually assess students’ knowledge of the text, and teachers will be evaluated based on the results of tests. This signals a message to students and teachers: adopt an efferent stance because this is the guide to what is tested. Of course students need to be able to answer particular questions, but an over emphasis on skills and comprehension may lead to overlooking the aesthetic experience of reading.

## **2.4 READING LITERATURE IN L2 CONTEXT**

Different theories of language acquisition have influenced how literature has been taught in L2 classes, therefore, a brief description of the major theories that have most influenced the field seem necessary. The earliest method and perhaps the most widely used is grammar-translation method. It focused on accuracy in grammar usage in order to produce grammatically correct sentences. The behaviorist approaches in the mid sixties

introduced the audio-lingual method, which focused little attention on reading and writing. Its main focus was on the aural-oral aspects of the language. Reading instruction began late and only to support oral skills because it was considered a source of interference. The Communicative approach came into prominence in the 1970s, and reading became more important, as a matter of fact it became a central component of L2 teaching. Communicative approach still influences L2 teaching until today, especially Krashen's monitor model and Cummins' description of language acquisition (Carlo and Sylvester, 1996; Cox & Boyd-Batstone, 1997). Cox and Boyd-Batstone (1997) compared Krashen's and Cummins second-language acquisition theories and Rosenblatt's transactional theory and found both theories agree in many points. The points they seemed to agree on are how both theories describe the role of students, language, the teacher, and the classroom.

The field of research on literature instruction for L2 learners didn't receive the same emphasis that L1 received. Although literature itself constitutes the core curriculum of intermediate and advanced L2 studies, few studies have focused on issues in literature instruction (Davis et al, 1992). This might be due to the fact that literature is treated as a subject matter content.

Over the recent years the marked shift of attention to the reader with the emergence of reader response theories that has been discussed earlier in this chapter has affected the teaching of literature to L1 students, whereas "audience-oriented criticism seems to have had less of an impact upon foreign-language literature instruction" (Davis, 1992, p. 360). Teaching literature to L2 learners has always been "over taught" as Davis (1992) puts it. The focus is always on the linguistic, literary conventions, historical-

cultural aspects of the literary text. Focusing on those aspects is extremely important, but it lead to imposing the correct interpretation of the text on the readers and not allowing the readers unique re-creation of the text.

When L2 readers are confronted with responding to a literary text certain problems may occur. Davis (1992) has identified some of those problems. The first problem is the limited linguistic proficiency on the part of the reader, which leads to inaccurate decoding of the text. This makes it impossible for the reader to enter into the literary world. The second problem is: not knowing the meanings of just a few words, which may lead to misinterpreting the whole text. The third problem is focusing much attention on literal understanding of the text. Moreover, many ESL learners come from cultures of learning where the authority of the text is unquestionable. This means that they didn't experience how to resist a text. Resisting the text to many ESL students is an inappropriate response to text. Alford (2001) suggested that students from language backgrounds other than English may find it difficult not to position themselves at the side of the ideological assumptions of the text, "having experienced socialization through another cultural and education system that actively requires and rewards memorization and reproduction of culturally and historically endorsed texts and thought" (Alford, 2001, p. 242). This means that ESL students can resist attempts to become critically literate and prefer to submit to the text, which is a preferred learner response. This can easily be seen when attempting to respond to literature where ESL students may tend to respond to the literary text in an efferent manner to avoid resisting the text. Other problems include lack of background knowledge and using inappropriate metacognitive strategies.

Reading a second language is far more complicated than reading one's native language, because of the differences between the first and the second language. It requires most of the cognitive components that are needed for reading one's native language plus other components as well. Reading a literary text in a second language requires even more cognitive components. Davis (1992) has identified four components for the successful reading of a literary text: first, decoding the single words and words combined into sentences; second, acquiring the necessary schema about the cultural-historical referents and the "spatiotemporal context" in which the text was written; third, acquiring knowledge of conventions of reading literature such as genre constraints; fourth, the reader's unique reaction and response to the text in which the reader infuses his own identity, feelings, previous experiences, and attitudes. The discussion of this section will focus on the following components of reading in general and of reading a literary text in particular in an attempt to identify the different components of a successful reading of a literary text. The discussion will also shed light on the different reasons for misinterpreting literature.

In order to identify the different components of reading literature the cognitive processes of reading should be reviewed as well. The goal of this section is to review what is known about the processes involved in reading and in learning to read both in L1 and in L2 context. Topics to be discussed include the controversy in analyzing the reading processes, the role of schema and vocabulary in reading comprehension, and metacognitive strategies. Reading is a domain in which research findings have implications for important social issues, such as the education of children, and in the case

of ESL/EFL education findings can be applicable to reading in L2 context. It is no wonder, then, that a large amount of research has been carried out on reading.

#### **2.4.1 The Controversy of Analyzing Reading Processes**

In order to explain what happens when we read, researchers have proposed different models of reading. Models of the reading process are models of an ideal reader reading: they tell us what such a reader does (Eskey, 1998). For L2 reading teachers, like other reading teachers, these models have direct implications for teaching L2 reading in general and teaching literature in specific. Teachers can use the models to compare their students to the models to identify their students' needs, and to identify one of the possible sources of misinterpreting L2 literature, keeping in mind that such models tell us nothing at all about other important aspects of reading.

The models to be discussed are:

- Bottom-up models.
- Top-down models.
- Interactive models.

Bottom-up models are those models that suggest that when we read we begin with the smallest units and end with larger units of meaning. According to these models readers respond to the signals arriving at the sensory system. The direction of analyzing the reading process starts with the lowest level of information, sensory data and moves gradually towards the highest level of information that is meaning and structure. Thus bottom-up models claim that the reader perceives every letter, organizes perceived letters into words, and then organizes words into phrases, clauses and sentences. Thus the reader



will have to process all the letters in a word before the meaning of the word is accessed; likewise, the reader will process all the words in a phrase or a clause before constructing its meaning. To sum up, reading according to bottom-up models proceeds from part-to-whole.

Top down theories, in contrast, hypothesize a non-linear view of the process of reading in which the direction of analysis starts with meaning structures, which is the highest level of analysis, and goes down to lowest data or the sensory data. Top-down reading models assume that processing of a text begins in the mind of the readers with meaning-driven processes. From this perspective, readers identify letters and words only to confirm their assumptions about the meaning of the text (Dechant, 1991).

The main assumption of the top-down models, as Gove (1983) explains, is that readers can comprehend a selection even though they do not recognize each word. It also suggests that readers should use meaning and grammatical cues to identify unrecognized words. Reading for meaning is the primary objective of reading rather than mastery of letters, letter/sound relationships, and words. Reading requires the use of meaning activities rather than the mastery of a series of word-recognition skills. Readers need only to see enough of the text in order to be able to guess the meanings of the words or phrases. The primary focus of instruction should be the reading of sentences, paragraphs, and whole selections. The most important aspect about reading is the amount and kind of information gained through reading (Gove, 1983).

An interactive reading model is a reading model that recognizes the interaction of bottom-up and top-down processes simultaneously throughout the reading process. McCormick defines it as follows:

An interactive reading model attempts to combine the valid insights of bottom-up and top-down models. It attempts to take into account the strong points of the bottom-up and top-down models, and tries to avoid the criticisms leveled against each, making it one of the most promising approaches to the theory of reading today (McCormick, 1988, p. 23).

Interactive models were based on an extended series of research studies that were used to support either of those theoretical assumptions. Eye fixation studies provided some insights. Treiman (2001) has summarized the results:

Research has shown that the eye does not sweep across a line of text in a continuous fashion. Rather, the eye comes to rest for somewhere around a quarter of a second, in what is called a fixation, and then makes a rapid jump (a saccade) to the next fixation . . . . Researchers have found that skilled readers fixate at least once on the majority of words in a text. They do not skip a large number of words, as the top-down view predicts, but instead process the letters and words rather thoroughly (p. 2).

However, this doesn't mean that top-down processes are unimportant. Studies have also shown that words that can be predicted through context are fixated for shorter periods of time and are skipped more often than words that are less predictable. Therefore, recent views see comprehension as drawing upon both top-down and bottom-up processing, in what is known as interactive processing. The claim is that bottom-up processes influence top-down processes, and vice versa. This means that skilled readers can process the print on the page accurately and rapidly and convert it into the information it represents and, they can also relate this information to the relevant information they already have to construct the meaning of the text. Skilled readers do

these two things at the same time: they decode and interpret as they read. As they become more proficient in the former, eventually achieving automaticity, they can devote more attention to the latter, in what is technically called parallel processing.

The discussion of the bottom-up models, top-down models and interactive models lead to the discussion of what is referred to as “the great debate” in the field of teaching reading. Just as there are theoretical differences in the cognitive process of reading, there are differences in approaches to teaching reading. The question has always been: what is the best way to teach children to read? The two opposing poles, bottom-up vs. top-down, were always the focus of the debate. On one hand, there are those who believe that children should start at the bottom and work their way up. In the bottom-up approach children learn the names and shapes of the letters of the alphabet. Next, they learn consonant sounds, followed by simple and then more complex vowel correspondences. Instruction proceeds from the simple to the complex. The widely accepted instructional program that utilizes bottom-up principles is the “Phonics” approach to reading. On the other hand, a top-down approach starts at the top and works downward. Instruction may begin with teaching the students a whole story and later teaching them the individual words in the story. The famous educational approach that implements a top-down approach to reading is “Whole Language”. In between these two opposing poles there are the currently popular interactionists. These interactive programs teach skills directly and systematically without overdoing it, and at the same time they allow students to read whole texts. Thus, as Eskey (1998) claims:

Interactive programs suggest that the most successful readers are both skillful ‘bottom-up’ processors of texts-- they can convert the language on

the page into the information it represents both rapidly and accurately-- and skillful 'top-down' processors-- they can relate this new information to the relevant knowledge they already have to construct a plausible meaning for the text (p.1).

In the field of L2 reading the same controversy took place. Carlo and Sylvester (1996) have reviewed the research of L2. Their review focused on empirical studies of L2 reading and covers a broad variety of studies on adults learning to read a second language. Their research review shows that both bottom-up reading processes and top-down processes are important to L2 reading and that the balance between the different types of processing is crucial for second language teaching without over reliance on one of them. The bottom-up processes include letter recognition, word recognition, lexical access, and syntactic knowledge. Letter recognition in L2 involves reading a new script and applying sound symbol correspondence. Research shows that automaticity in letter recognition is related to comprehension performance. There is also proof from research that the development of efficient sound-symbol relationships might differ for a reader whose native language uses a different script (e.g. Arabic-English) and one whose native language uses essentially the same script (e.g. Spanish-English), "different script readers need to learn to associate a new symbol with a new sound, whereas same script readers need to learn to associate a familiar script with a new sound" (Carlo and Sylvester, 1996, p. 19).

This research review leads to the conclusion that both bottom-up skills and top-down skills are important for L2 readers as well. Eskey (1998) suggested that the most successful L2 readers are both skilful bottom up and top down processors. At the

decoding level if the readers cannot decode automatically and accurately they will have trouble recovering the information contained in the language of the text, and in struggling to do so they will be prevented from engaging in efficient top-down processes. At the top-down level even if they can decode they may lack the relevant background knowledge on the subject of the text. Thus, even if they can determine the meaning of the words they may be unable to understand what it means (Eskey, 1998). It is most likely that readers who have problems in bottom-up or top-down processes or with both will have trouble reading. Therefore, second language teachers should encourage the development of automaticity, because good readers are characterized by fluent, automatised use of bottom-up processes. At the same time teaching reading strategies such as predicting, guessing words from context, scanning and skimming is also important but it should not be a goal in itself, because it is likely to be used when linguistic ability is poor.

#### **2.4.2 The Role of Background Knowledge**

The role that reader's background knowledge plays in comprehending a text has been recognized as one of the most fundamental components in reading. Both top-down models and interactive models stress that efficient comprehension requires readers to activate their background knowledge to aid them in comprehending any text. Many studies have been done to confirm the effect of background knowledge on the comprehension of text. Some of the early studies are Pichert and Anderson (1977), Pearson et al. (1979), and Graves et al. (1983).

According to Anderson & Pearson (1984) schema theory was first introduced by Bartlett (1932), who is considered to be the first psychologist to use the term schema in the sense it is used today. Ausubel and Piaget are also important figures in the history of schema theory. By late 1970s there was a full development of schema theory as a model and it became the driving force behind empirical investigations of basic process in reading comprehension. The word *schema* is an abstract knowledge structure, which summarizes what is known about a variety of cases that differ in many particulars. It refers to a kind of mental structure. Pichert and Anderson (1977) explained that schema:

Characterizes the typical relations among its components and contains a slot or place holder for each component that can be instantiated with particular cases. Interpreting a message is a matter of matching the information in the message to the slots in a schema. The information entered into the slots is said to be subsumed by the schema. (p. 314)

Schemata are driven from our past experiences, which are stored in long-term memory and are mediated when we attempt to interpret or comprehend new experiences. When we attempt to interpret or comprehend new information we map it onto an appropriate schema, which is already stored in memory.

According to Chandler (1995) readers comprehend a text when they are able to apply a schema that gives it coherence, and applying a schema on a text will make the reader view the text from a certain perspective. Schemata also allow readers to make inferences about what they read, and inferences are central to the overall process of comprehension. Comprehension can be regarded as selecting schemata and confirming, that they are appropriate for the text being read or constructing a new schema which

works. A reader who cannot find a schema which seems to fit finds the text incomprehensible. According to schema theory what is recalled is not the actual words used in a passage but a reconstruction based on what the reader understood.

Robeck & Wallace (1990 cited in Chandler, 1995) suggested that comprehension of written texts could be seen as involving two kinds of schemata: knowledge-based and text-based. Knowledge-based schemata are based on whatever prior personal knowledge the reader has. Text-based schemata are based on the formal patterns of organization, which are associated with particular textual genres. Readers tend to rely heavily on text-based schemata when the material is unfamiliar and especially with narrative texts. It appears that through repeated exposures to stories of various general types, i.e. fairy tales, thrillers, detective stories and so on, we internalize a schemata for them. These schemata make it easier for the reader to comprehend those stories, to store them in memory and to recall them. So, without an appropriate schema, comprehension and memory are reduced.

The schemata a reader has are mainly a result of their personal experiences, but they are also a result of their cultural background, social and gender roles. One of the early experiments by Bartlett (1932) showed how readers employed schemata to interpret stories from an unfamiliar culture in a manner, which made more sense to them. They drew upon these schemata to reconstruct the story when they wanted to recall the story. This resulted in a considerable amount of unconscious distortion and elaboration of the original.

Research shows that background knowledge has a great effect on L2 reading comprehension. Research on the effect of culture on L2 reading comprehension shows that culturally familiar topics are read faster and easier. It has been suggested that if the

L2 reader doesn't have the appropriate background knowledge about the text it is more likely that he/she will not be able to comprehend the text or have errors in the interpretation, even though they may have the linguistic knowledge.

### **2.4.3 The Role of Vocabulary**

The importance of vocabulary to our lives cannot be denied. Goerss et al. (1999) has highlighted the importance of vocabulary not only to reading but also to all aspects of our daily lives by stating that:

It (vocabulary) helps us communicate effectively and it affects others perceptions of us and our own feelings of worth. It is also an indication of intelligence and educational achievement, as evidenced by the use of verbal measures on intelligence tests and college boards to make predictions about success in school. (p. 151)

The educational research of vocabulary has been one of the oldest areas of interest. Research on vocabulary instruction has focused on building the readers vocabulary and making comparisons between the different instructional methods to decide the most effective. According to Goerss et al. (1999) it has focused on:

- Direct teaching of word meaning.
- Encouraging a broad scope of reading to allow students to learn words from context independently.
- Intervention to upgrade students' independent word-learning abilities.

The desired goal of vocabulary instruction is to enhance higher order processing skills such as comprehension (Mckeown et al., 1985). The importance of vocabulary to



reading comprehension has been indicated in a huge body of research. Educational research on the relationship between vocabulary and comprehension has focused on three areas. The first area is the strong correlation that exists between reading comprehension and vocabulary. Several correlational studies have reported the high correlation that exists between tests for reading comprehension and vocabulary (i.e. Sternberg, 1987; Thordike, 1973; Farr, 1969; Pavlak, 1973; Mezynski, 1983 In Arnouste and Leeuwe, 1998).

Another area of research is readability formulas. Readability formulas are applied by calculating the average word difficulty and sentence length in short samples of texts. It was based on two assumptions; the first is that difficulty of words indicates the difficulty of the text, and the second is that when a word has more syllables or when it is infrequent it was considered to be more difficult. Anderson and Davison (1988) argue that reading formulas are not reliable because word difficulty and sentence length may predict difficulty but they cannot control text difficulty and are not the most appropriate measure for determining the degree of difficulty of a text. Some long or infrequent words are not necessarily difficult and may not affect comprehension. There are variables that are not accounted for in readability formulas that are essential to determine the difficulty of a text; i.e. writing style, text cohesion, background knowledge of the reader, and interestingness of the topic to be read. Others defending readability formulas argue that they are meant to indicate how easy a text is to *decode* and that it may not necessarily mean how easy it is to *comprehend*. For example, a student can accurately pronounce a word but still not understand its meaning; to that student, the word is readable, but not understandable.

The third area of research involves replacing ambiguous, difficult words by clearer simpler ones. The goal of those studies was to provide a readable more coherent text through clearing any ambiguities that may be caused by vocabulary in order to improve comprehension.

Vocabulary knowledge research in L2 has focused on the similarities and differences in the procedures readers use to recognize words in their native language and L2. Research on eye movement suggests that even highly proficient L2 speakers take longer to process words in the L2 than native speakers. Research on lexical access shows that less fluent readers (poor readers) have to translate the words into L1 and then gain access to semantic memory, whereas fluent readers directly link between the L2 word and its meaning. Research also shows that syntactic knowledge and the complexity of the text are related to L2 comprehension. Moreover, The lack of knowledge of grammar can severely hinder comprehension and also the negative transfer from the L1 grammar (i.e. applying syntactic knowledge from L1 to L2 inappropriately).

#### **2.4.4 Metacognitive Reading Strategies**

Readers are said to use two levels of strategies; that is cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies. Cognitive strategies -- which have been just discussed -- are the strategies that enable the reader to understand a text. Metacognitive strategies govern the use of those cognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies include motivation, focusing attention, managing time, deciding what to read and methods for reading (Grow: 1996). In reading there is no separation between the two levels of strategies and they actually work together.

Based on Vygotsky's 1962 work and Flavell's 1976 work Brown (1980) defines metacognition as the self-integration that readers actively do to learn something or understand the gist of a text. To Brown (1980) metacognition is the monitoring of data intake and the regulation of comprehension and memory techniques used toward the achievement of some goal (i.e. the metacognition used for skimming and getting the gist of a text would be far different than those used for a verbatim recall). Brown (1980) calls the metacognitive skills the debugging devices we use when something triggers our awareness that our automated reading functions are not working and we are failing to comprehend. Tei & Stewart (1985) in Collins (1996) have a similar definition to Brown's; to them metacognition is having knowledge (cognition) and having understanding, control over, and appropriate use of that knowledge and that it involves both the conscious awareness and the conscious control of one's learning. Activities considered in the realm of metacognition include, but are not limited to:

- rating the difficulty and getting the gist of a text
- double checking the authenticity of an assertion
- categorizing data
- evaluating alternatives and evidence (in a multiple-choice context)
- previewing
- comparing and connecting and organizing ideas
- summarizing and taking notes
- predicting
- clarifying and generating questions
- agreeing, disagreeing and anticipating

- learning new concepts
- deciding what is important
- skipping
- problem-solving
- making connections
- reflecting, reviewing, comparing
- analyzing, synthesizing

(Brown, 1980; Collins, 1996; Grow, 1996)

According to Grow (1996) readers also make use of nonverbal cues when they read. They interpret: pictures, graphics, color, charts, symbols, decorations, cartoons, typography, rules (lines and boxes), spatial relations (i.e. indentation, over and under) and recurring positions and patterns.

Reading from a metacognitive perspective is related to a very important factor that is text. Text refers to the textual features of the reading materials which influence comprehension and memory. Factors such as arrangement of ideas in texts, vocabulary, syntax, clarity of author's intentions, and reader's interest and familiarity with a text all have an effect on readers' metacognitive process. Collins (1996) stressed that text structures influence the reader even if the reader is unaware of their effect.

In processing a text a narrative is easier to comprehend and remember, compared to expository text. Greaser et al (1990) have stressed the strong advantage of narrative over expository text. They stated that the different types of narrative are not only read substantially more quickly than expository passages but that also the scores on recall tests and comprehension tests are substantially higher for the narrative. The relative easiness

of narrative discourse is due to the familiarity of the text structure of a narrative. Although narrative is easier to comprehend and recall, it might be difficult for the reader to understand a narrative if its structure lacks coherence. Research shows that there is an interaction between text structures and its comprehensibility and that ambiguous words or confusions within the text affect cognitive processing. An important dimension that is likely to affect comprehensibility of a narrative is its coherence. Beck et al (1984) define coherence as: “The extent to which the sequence of events makes sense and the extent to which the surface structure of the text makes the nature of these events and their relationships apparent” (p. 264). In their study Beck et al (1984) revised texts to improve their coherence and then assessed the effect of its revisions on children’s comprehension. Results indicated that revised stories produced better comprehension both in recall and questions tasks.

Knowledge of text structure is critical for metacognitive process and for reading comprehension. Detecting the organizational patterns or structures of texts, helps the reader to observe how the author arranges ideas and determine which kinds of structures are used to interrelate ideas. Experienced readers will adjust their reading rate when they encounter inconsistencies in a text. They may return to an inconsistent sentence or passage several times, in order to compare what they know with what is written in the text. Fluent readers are more aware of text inconsistencies and can judge whether or not their comprehension is altered because of such inconsistencies.

Another variable of metacognition in reading is related to the purpose of reading and the task that the reader is required to perform. For example, reading a story that the reader is going to be tested in requires a different process than that needed for reading a

story for pleasure. An additional variable of metacognition involves knowing how to remedy comprehension failures or what is called by Collins (1996, p. 4) "fix-up" strategies. These include forming a mental image, rereading, adjusting the rate of reading, searching the text to identify unknown words, and predicting meaning that lies ahead. A final variable of metacognition in reading is the awareness of the reader of his or her own characteristics and his own metacognitive skills. For example, the reader needs to be aware of his background knowledge, degree of interest, skills, and deficiencies. Research shows that successful readers tend to relate information in texts to previous knowledge, whereas less successful readers are unable to use their knowledge to clarify the text at hand.

Another aspect of the L2 reading process to which researchers have devoted attention is the influence of text structure on L2 reading performance. As has been mentioned before, the manner in which ideas are structured in a text has been shown to influence how native language readers read the text. For L2 readers research also suggest that some text structures are more easily understood than others. It is also very important that L2 readers identify internal inconsistencies and deal with them appropriately to be able to comprehend the text correctly. If they are not able to do so, their comprehension will be hindered and they may misinterpret it.

## **2.5 REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES**

This section reviews the related studies, which in this case consist of studies of reader response both in L1 and in L2. Research on reader response has greatly increased since

Rosenblatt's theories were more broadly acknowledged. Surveys of reader response research are also numerous. The first comprehensive survey of research on reader response was produced by Purves and Beach (1972) in which they subdivided research on reader response into nine subheadings. This publication has been followed by a number of surveys of research on reader response which tried to divide studies of response to literature in a number of ways but as Purves and Beach (1972) put it "many studies can fall into two categories and the process of response is itself not easily divisible" (p. 1). However, for the purpose of this study this review is going to focus on research on reader response in four areas: first, studies that attempted to classify readers' responses to literature; second, studies that used reader response as a classroom practice and assessed its general influence on a variety of factors (i.e. on comprehension, personality, and promoting ethnicity); third, studies of the factors that affect responses to literature (i.e. culture, race, social class and gender); finally, studies that utilized reader response theories in ESL classrooms.

Studies that attempted to classify reader response into specific categories that describe the content of response are numerous. One of the major studies to be mentioned here is Squire's study (1964). His study is one of the most cited studies and his taxonomy has been widely used essentially because of its ease and because of its clear classification of response. Squire has identified seven categories of response: Literary Judgments, Interpretational Responses, Narrational Reactions, Associational Responses, Self-Involvement, Prescriptive Judgments and Miscellaneous. Similar to Squire's classification is Purvis and Rippere's (1968) classification in which they classified responses into five main categories: Engagement-Involvement, Perception, Interpretation,

Evaluation and Miscellaneous. Another famous study is Cox and Many's (1992) in which they designed an instrument for measuring reader stance on an efferent to aesthetic continuum. Their study analyzed 38 fifth grade students' responses to nine works of realistic fiction.

Langer's (1989, 1990, 1994) research has also presented a classification system for response to literature. Langer (1989) in her qualitative study examined the ways in which students create meanings when they are reading literary and non-literary texts. Subjects produced think-aloud protocols as they read two short stories, two poems, a science text, and a social studies text. The think-aloud protocols were analyzed and a set of patterns of student concerns was identified. Langer has classified the process of reading literary and non-literary texts into four broad recursive stances that the reader takes toward the text: (1) being out and stepping into an envisionment; (2) being in and moving through an envisionment; (3) stepping back and rethinking what one knows; and (4) stepping out and objectifying the experience.

Bogdan research (1986, 1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1992, 2000) has rendered three categories for analyzing stances: the stock response, the kinetic response, which is subdivided into a predictor response and an ideologue response, and the dialectic response. The stock response exists at a pre-critical level, it is a passive form of automatic reflex to the content. It is the positive or negative sympathetic identification in which the reader is concerned with clichéd thought and ego-message. Kinetic response involves a passive form of automatic reflex to the form. It is intellectually more sophisticated than the stock response. Kinetic response can fall into two main categories, the "predictor" and the "ideologue". The predictor response is a detached and



disinterested mode in which the reader relies excessively on literary knowledge. It operates at the critical level and “literary knowledge militates against literary experience” (Bogdan, 1992, p. 118). The ideologue is determined by extra literary knowledge and the reader’s belief system. The dialectic response incorporates both the intellectual and the emotional aspects to attain imaginative identity and oscillates between engagement and detachment. It is the closest to a full response where the merge between literary experience and knowledge is achieved.

Reader response is considered the new paradigm in teaching literature for L1 readers. Therefore, there are numerous studies that sought to study reader response as an instructional strategy and how it affects and is affected by a variety of variables. One of the variables that has been studied is comprehension and how reader response instructional strategies can actually improve reading comprehension. Reader response was also used to aid low-achieving or at-risk students in improving their word study skills, reading comprehension and strategy knowledge (i.e. Brown, 1994; Dugan, 1996).

Research has also explored the efficacy of reader response models on students’ thinking complexity and social development. Garber’s (1995) study indicated that students think with greater levels of complexity when reader response strategies were utilized as well as greater signs of social awareness, social adjustment, social responsibility and personal responsibility.

Research has also focused on the stance the reader adopts and how engagement with the text affects it. Research shows that the stance the reader adopts can be an indication of the level of understanding. Penn (2000) and Cox and Many (1992a, 1992b)

studies indicated that aesthetic stance is significantly linked to higher levels of understanding.

Reader response was also used as a method of promoting anti-bias education. Findings of many studies (i.e. Duff, 1992; Totten, 1998; Furniss, 1992; McKenna, 1996) suggest that using reader response, as a teaching strategy, will provoke unique and strong insights towards racial/ethnic diversity. It will also promote increased understanding among students from different cultures and ethnicities.

The nature of the response was also a subject of study. There are numerous studies that have tried to identify what happens when we respond to literature and what are the actual processes of the response. The factors that affect the response were also examined. These factors focus on backgrounds that the reader has and might affect response to literature such as gender, race, culture, age, genre, personal experiences, attitudes and preconceptions. Culture is probably one of the most important factors that affect response to literature and which has been extensively examined. Research that indicates the relation between culture and response is numerous (i.e. Altieri, 1993; Busch, 1994; Carter-Jones, 1999; Gordon, 2000; Katopish, 1997). The findings indicate that the transactions between the text and the reader do reflect the reader's backgrounds.

As has been mentioned before, despite the increase in L1 reader response research, L2 research in reader response has not been fully recognized and studied. The individual responses of ESL readers have not been fully integrated into teaching. However, the relatively limited research on ESL readers' response to literature has mostly focused on assessing the influence of native culture on responding to literature. Some studies have described the difference in ESL readers' response to a literary text

about their own culture and about the cultures of others (i.e. Arshad, 1994; Duenas, 1997; Katopish, 1997). Findings of these studies indicated a significant relationship between levels of responses and their cultural background in reading multicultural literature. Other studies have applied reader response as a classroom practice and assessed its influence on other variables such as comprehension (i.e. Clive, 2000; Wang, 1999). Fewer studies have examined the way ESL readers transact with and respond to the text. More research is still needed on how adult L2 readers respond to literature.

## **2.6 SUMMARY**

The goal of this chapter was to present a review of literature of the different theories and areas of study that are related closely to the purpose of the study. The main focus of this study is to identify the Arab ESL readers attitudes towards the American culture and towards reading American literature, to analyze their responses to American literature, and to determine the relationship between these attitudes and their responses. Therefore, theories of reader response were discussed and since Louise Rosenblatt efferent vs. aesthetic reading concept was central to the study her contribution to the field of literature was also presented. The chapter also presented the main theoretical frame for reading literature in L2 context, as well as the different components that are crucial for reading i.e. the role of schema, vocabulary knowledge and metacognition. Finally, the chapter discussed the main studies of reader response that are significant to the present study.

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

**The student's personal response to literary works will be primarily colored by his attitudes toward the characters and situations they present. To attempt to ignore these students' reactions would destroy the very basis on which any greater literary sensitivity could be built. (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 227)**

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the method that was used to achieve the purpose of the study and to answer the research questions that have been stated in Chapter One. The goals of this study are first to identify and interpret the Arab reader's attitudes towards American Culture and towards reading its literature, second to analyze and describe the responses to the literature read during the study based on Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reader response by exploring the aesthetic and efferent stances of Arab readers during reading American literature, third to determine the relationship between these attitudes and stance of response, and finally to analyze the sources of difficulty in interpreting literature read by Arab readers as reflected in their responses. This chapter describes in detail the research design, the criteria for selecting the participants, the materials design and selection, and the procedures that were followed in order to achieve the previously stated goals.

### 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employs a mixed methods research paradigm. The choice of this research design was guided by the purpose of the study and the nature of the data to be analyzed. The core material analyzed in this study is the data from the survey and the written responses of the participants along with the researcher's observations and field notes. To obtain an in-depth analysis of these data both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. Qualitative data from analyzing the survey and the written responses assisted in gaining a better perspective on the participants. In other words, it helped gain insights into the big picture that rendered a holistic, in-depth understanding. Quantitative analysis of the Attitude Measure data as well as data from the readers' responses was used to demonstrate the overall patterns and to establish the initial correlation between attitudes and the stance of response.

Mixed methods research (sometimes referred to as the third methodological movement) has evolved as a pragmatic way of using the strengths of both the quantitative and qualitative research traditions. Mixed methods designs incorporate techniques from both approaches yet combine them in unique ways to answer research questions that could not be answered in any other way. Tashakkori and Teddlie's (2003) argue that this combination is more than the sum of its qualitative or quantitative components. They also believe that mixed methods design is still in its adolescence and that it will be the dominant methodological tool in the social and behavioral sciences during the 21st century. The design of this study includes both qualitative and quantitative data collection, and analysis and it incorporates multiple approaches in data collection, data analysis, and final inference.

### 3.3 PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING

All participants are Arabs who speak English as a second language. They speak Arabic as a first language and they have studied English in their native countries for at least three years as a part of their study. English is taught as one of the main courses in the entire Arab world. Teaching English starts either in the elementary school as in Egypt or in the middle school as in Saudi Arabia and Oman. That is for public schools, but as for private schools it is taught in the elementary school for the entire Arab world. But in all cases English is a key course in preparing for college entrance examination. That is why it receives utmost attention from the schools, the students, and their families. Even in college, English is taught in most, if not all, of the colleges either as a core subject or as an elective. This means that three years is the minimum number of years for any Arab to study English. As a part of their study of English they read English literature, which includes plays of famous playwrights like Shakespeare, famous novels, and famous poetry. American literature is not distinguished from British literature until advanced stages. The amount of literature they have been exposed to differs dramatically from one country to another, from public to private schools and from one person to another.

All participants came to the US to study or to work not as immigrants or permanent residents. This means that all of them have high school diplomas, a college degree and most likely a few years in graduate studies. This indicates that they represent the elite class of the Arab world. Currently their level in English is advanced since they have stayed in the US for at least three years. All participants are between the ages of

twenty-one to sixty and they are both males and females. However, gender is not a determining factor in this study.

All participants came to the US before or immediately after September 11. This is important because they must have been here in the midst of the backlash after September 11, which might have influenced their attitudes. Participants represent different Arab countries but share the same religion. Although the Arab world includes Moslems, Christians, and Jews, participants of this study were only Moslems since they were the only religious group that felt vulnerable after September 11.

Twelve participants were chosen randomly from all those who met the criteria. Choosing the participants also depended on their willingness to participate. It took an extra effort just to convince them to participate, taking in consideration the current security situation.

Subjects were sought in the mosques located in the Pittsburgh area. For Moslems a mosque is not only a place for worshiping, it is also a place for social gatherings and community events, i.e. holidays, celebrations, weddings, and funerals. Therefore, the mosque was a suitable setting for meeting the participants and conducting the research. Setting was at the mosques in Pittsburgh. The mosques are the Islamic Center of Pittsburgh, Muslim Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh (MCCGP), Masjid Al-Mu'min, Masjid An-Noor, Masjid Al-Alameen, Masjid Al-Awwal, and Masjid Al-Tawheed. The mosque that the participants met at was MCCGP since it was the mosques that all of the participants preferred. It is important to note here that some of the participants were reluctant to become part of the study because of their fear that the data could be misused given the political climate in the United States after September 11.

Even those who were willing to participate were still worried about how the data would be used to the extent that some of the participants relied on the responses that make them sound politically correct. This issue will be discussed further in the following chapter.

## **3.4 MATERIALS**

### **3.4.1 Questionnaire Design**

To collect data about the attitudes of Arab ESL readers towards the American culture and towards reading American literature an Attitude Measure was designed by the researcher. The attitude measure aims to assess:

- Feelings and attitudes towards the host culture (the American culture) and towards what they perceive as its personal characteristics.
- The extent of comfort and involvement in their American social group.
- Willingness to communicate with people from the host culture (the American culture).
- Willingness to adopt distinctive characteristics of host culture behavior.
- Willingness to read American literature.
- Feelings and attitudes towards American literature.

The attitude measure contains the total of seventy-one items divided into three main sections: (1) Demographic Information Section, (2) Semantic Scale Section, and (3) Attitude Items Section. The last section is divided into two sections: (1) Attitudes



towards American Culture, and (2) Attitudes towards Reading literature which reflects American Culture.

The demographic section includes nine items. Two of these items are designed to collect data about the participants' own rating of their linguistic ability in English. The aim of these items is to get an idea about how these readers view their level in English. It could also help in determining if the way they perceive their linguistic level affects their attitudes towards reading the American literature or not. The aim of these items is to get enough background knowledge about the participants and how they perceive their linguistic level.

The second part is a semantic scale. The purpose of this section is to determine the participants' initial impressions and opinions about American culture and about reading American literature. It also aids in determining the direction of their attitudes. Morland and Williams (1969) indicate "the significance of semantic differential is that it can compare the direction of racial and ethnic attitudes across societies" (p. 107). The scale has two main concepts: (1) Personal opinion of Americans, and (2) Personal opinion of American literature. The two concepts have thirty-two bipolar descriptive adjectives and they are arranged on a 7-point scale. A high score represents a positive impression.

Semantic differential is considered the most common measurement tool used in research concerning student' perceptions of nations (Zevin and Corbin, 1989). The concept of semantic differential scale was first introduced by Osgood et al. (1957). The semantic differential was developed by Osgood et al. (1957) as a measurement technique to assess the multidimensional nature of meaning. Zevin and Corbin (1989)

state that research uses this tool because of several procedural and methodological considerations: (1) it is easily understood and administered to participants at any age, (2) it is easily scored and may be analyzed descriptively or analyzed to identify underlying dimensions and patterns of perceptions, (3) it is flexible and reflects the multidimensional and complex aspects of participants' perceptions, and (4) it can be used for individual and group interpretation of data. In addition, another important consideration for choosing the semantic differential technique is its reliability and validity as a means of measuring one's attitudes and beliefs about other cultures. The reliability and validity of the semantic differential was established by early cross-national studies. The semantic differential designed by Osgood et al. conceptualizes three main orthogonal dimensions to establish meaning. The dimensions are evaluative (i.e. good - bad), potency (i.e. strong – weak), and activity (i.e. slow – fast).

In designing the first concept, Personal opinions of Americans, and its bipolar descriptive adjectives Lambert et al. (1961) instrument was used as a guide. Their measure was a part of their questionnaire that consisted of fifty-seven other measures. In their measure they used a 23 7-point semantic scale to evaluate the participants attitudes about different concepts. The concepts were: (1) French people from France, (2) Me, (3) Americans, (4) Me as I'd like to be, (5) Franco-Americans, and (6) My French Teacher. Their measure used the evaluative dimension to assess the participants' attitudes about the different concepts. The study uses a slightly adapted version of their measure. As has been mentioned before the title of the section has changed to "Personal opinions of Americans". The twenty-three bipolar descriptive

adjectives were reduced to twenty. The following table shows the similarities and differences between the two versions.

**Table 1: Adapted Adjectives form Lambert et al. (1961) Measure**

Adjectives from Lambert et al. (1961) measure	Adjectives that were added
1. Prejudiced – Unprejudiced 2. Brave – Cowardly 3. Friendly – Unfriendly 4. Honest – Dishonest 5. Stupid – Smart 6. Kind – Cruel 7. Polite – Impolite 8. Sincere – Insincere 9. Successful – Unsuccessful 10. Hard-working – Lazy 11. Ambitious – Not ambitious.	1. Good - Evil 2. Sensitive - Insensitive 3. Approachable - Hostile 4. Fair - Unfair 5. Reliable – Unreliable 6. Patient - Impatient 7. Modest – Arrogant 8. Considerate – Inconsiderate 9. Moral – Immoral

In designing the second concept “Personal opinion of American literature” Gardner’s (1985) *Attitude/Motivation Test Battery* (AMTB) was used as a guide. The AMTB is designed to measure the attitudes towards French and French Canadians in Canada. The semantic differential scale of this instrument was divided into two sections and was titled: *Semantic Differential Assessments of my French Teacher and my French Course*. This study uses the second section *My French Course* as a guide. Gardner used four dimensions to assess *My French Course*. The four dimensions are: evaluation, difficulty, utility and interest. This study uses Gardener’s four dimensions in the same sense:

- Evaluation: to assess reactions to American literature (i.e. good – bad).
- Difficulty: to assess perceived difficulty of American literature (i.e. easy – difficult).

- Utility: to assess perceived utility of American literature (i.e. useful – useless).
- Interest: to assess level of interest in American literature (i.e. interesting – boring).

Gardner used twenty-five bipolar descriptive adjectives. This study uses the same descriptive adjectives that Gardner used, but they were reduced to twelve.

The third section includes attitude items about two variables: (1) Attitudes towards American Culture, and (2) Attitudes towards Reading American Literature. These two variables were assessed using a four point Likert scale, participants were asked to rate each statement in terms of how strongly does the statement represent their own opinion (4 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree). The whole section consisted of sixty items, thirty positively worded and thirty negatively worded. In designing these items several questionnaires were reviewed to seek inspiration for statement development (Gardner, 1985; Lambert et al, 1961; Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Davis et al., 1992; Bogardus, 1925).

The first variable “Attitudes towards American Culture” consists of twenty-nine items; sixteen of which are positively worded and thirteen negatively worded. Items from four scales served as models. Some of the statements were adapted to refer specifically to American culture. The following table represents items from Gardner (1985) scale of attitudes towards French Canadians that were adapted:

**Table 2: Adapted Items from Gardner (1985) *Scale of Attitudes toward French Canadians***

Gardner (1985) Scale of Attitudes toward French Canadians	Adapted Attitude Items
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. French Canadians are a very sociable, warm-hearted and creative people.</li> <li>2. I would like to know more French Canadians.</li> <li>3. French Canadians deserve no preferential treatment because of the way they treat minority groups.</li> <li>4. The more I learn about French Canadians, the less I like them.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Americans are a very sociable, warm-hearted and creative people.</li> <li>2. I would like to know more Americans.</li> <li>3. Americans deserve no respect because of the way they treat minority groups.</li> <li>4. The more I get to know the American people, the more I get to like them.</li> </ol>

The following table presents adapted items from Gardner's (1985) *Scale of Attitudes toward European French People*:

**Table 3: Adapted Items from Gardner's (1985) *Scale of Attitudes toward European French People***

Gardner (1985) Scale of Attitudes toward European French people	Adapted Attitude Items
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The more I learn about the European French, the more I like them.</li> <li>2. I have always admired the European French people.</li> <li>3. I would like to get to know the European French people better.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The more I get to know the American people, the more I get to like them.</li> <li>2. I have always admired the American people.</li> <li>3. I would like to know the American people better.</li> </ol>

The following table presents adapted items from Lambert et al (1961) *Anomie scale*:

**Table 4: Adapted Items from Lambert et al. (1961) *Anomie Scale***

Lambert et al (1961) Anomie Scale	Adapted Attitude Items
1. Having lived this long in this culture, I'd be happier moving to some other country now.	1. Having lived this long in America, I'd be happier moving to some other country now.

The following table presents items from Adomo (1950) *Anti-Semitism scale*:

**Table 5: Adapted Items from Adomo (1950) *Anti-Semitism Scale***

Adomo (1950) Anti-Semitism Scale	Adapted Attitude Items
1. There are few exceptions but in general Jews are pretty much alike.	1. There are few exceptions, but in general Americans are pretty much alike.
2. In order to maintain a nice residential neighborhood, it is best to prevent Jews from living in it.	2. I prefer to live in a neighborhood that is predominately Arabs.

The second variable “Attitudes towards Reading American Literature” consisted of thirty-one items; fourteen of which are positively worded and seventeen are negatively worded. This section uses the same dimensions used by Gardner (1985) to design his semantic differential section *My French Course* and that were mentioned before as a guide in designing this variable. The four dimensions are: evaluation, difficulty, utility, and interest. This section also uses items from Davis et al. (1992) *Attitudes toward the Study of Literature* as models. The following table presents those items:

**Table 6: Adapted Items from Davis et al. (1992) *Attitude toward the Study of Literature***

Davis et al (1992) Literature Questionnaire	Adapted items
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I find studying literature in French personally rewarding.</li> <li>2. I read literature - as the term usually understood in university classes (i.e., such texts as poetry, short stories, novels, and biographies) – in my own language for enjoyment.</li> <li>3. Literature is the highest form of writing in a culture.</li> <li>4. I enjoy reading literature about people and experiences similar to my own.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I find reading American literature personally rewarding.</li> <li>2. I read American literature for enjoyment.</li> <li>3. Literature is the highest form of writing in a culture.</li> <li>4. I might enjoy reading American literature only if it addresses people and experiences similar to my own.</li> </ol>

Items from Gardner (1985) scale of *Attitudes toward Learning French* were also used. The following table presents the adapted items:

**Table 7: Adapted Items from Gardner (1985) Scale of *Attitudes toward Learning French***

Gardner (1985) Scale of Attitudes toward Learning French	Adapted items
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I would rather spend my time on subjects other than French.</li> <li>2. Learning French is a waste of time.</li> <li>3. I think that learning French is boring.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I would rather spend my time reading an Arabic story rather than an American one.</li> <li>2. Reading American literature is a waste of time.</li> <li>3. I find reading American literature very boring.</li> </ol>

Validation of the questionnaire in order to determine if it measures what it was developed to measure was also obtained. Referring to similar studies by other researchers

validates some of the items. As has been shown the questionnaire included items from preexisting instruments used for measuring ESL students' attitudes and motivation and that have been validated. Other items that were designed by the researcher were validated through consulting experts in the field to ensure construct and content validity.

### **3.4.2 Text Selection**

#### **3.4.2.1 Selection Criteria**

The selection of the text was based on certain criteria. All texts are written by American authors. This means that they authentically represent American culture or at least aspects of it. They also represent different genres; three short stories and a poem. This allowed some sort of comparison between the readers' responses to the different literary genres.

The most important feature in all of the chosen texts is that they have a political and social theme and contain issues of significance and concern to the readers, especially to Arab readers. They are also texts that could encourage disagreeing with the characters and have a potential of controversy. This would allow participants' attitudes to surface during the reading. It also allowed the researcher to see to what extent the readers' attitudes and preconceptions towards these themes entered into their interpretation of the texts' tone and might have resulted in a failure in sensitivity towards its characters or events. It is the assumption of this study that the reader's attitudes might be, as Rosenblatt (1995, p. 95) suggests, "a screen between the reader and his evocation of the text".

Another important feature of the selected texts is the length of the story. All stories were deliberately chosen to be very short in length, two to four pages, to



encourage the ESL readers who might not be willing to read a long text, and also due to time constraints. The stories were also chosen to suit the linguistic level of ESL readers, keeping in mind that all participants are advanced ESL readers.

### **3.4.2.2 The Literary Texts**

All texts are written by different American authors. The chosen texts are as follows:

1. “My Son the Murderer”, by Bernard Malamud.
2. “Gerald’s Song”, by Philip O’Connor.
3. “Notes from a Bunker along Highway 8”, by Gabe Hudson.
4. “When the Skyline Crumbles”, by Eliot Katz.

The first text is a short story entitled “My Son the Murderer” by Bernard Malamud published in Scenes from American Life. The central theme is the relationship between a father and a son. Harry, the son in the story, is a rebel who suffers from mental breakdown that prevents him from communicating with his mother and father and is obsessively preoccupied with the issue of Vietnam War. He represents the suffering of the generation of the Vietnam War who were dissatisfied with the country’s position towards the War. Harry, who refuses to go to the War, struggles to make sense of his life and the world around him, but his personal war lacks organization and leads him to self-destructive limits when by the end of the story he feels tempted to finish his life. Leo the father is worried about his son; so he tries to spy on him and on his son’s mail but only to make sure that his son is O.K. and not to rule his life as his son thought.

The second text is a short story by Philip O’Connor. The title of the story is “Gerald’s Song”. The story is about Gerald who suffers from an economic crisis due to the war. His stocks have descended. His stocks are in a company that imports pottery but

the soldiers destroyed all the pottery. He is trying not to complain about the war and to act patriotically, but at the same time he is suffering and thinks that the war is not good for anyone and expresses his inability to understand this war.

The third text is the short story “Notes from a Bunker Along Highway 8” by Gabe Hudson and it is a story in his collection Dear Mr. President written about the first gulf war. The story is about G.D. who is a Green Beret assigned to the task of hunting SCUDs around Baghdad who deserts his team because of his feeling of guilt. He takes up residence in a deserted Iraqi bunker, where he proceeds to give medical aid to refugees. The story is both funny and tragic which evokes the intimate experience of the first Gulf War that has affected the entire Arab world.

The fourth is a poem about September 11 by Eliot Katz published in a collection of poems written in the immediate aftermath of September 11 by different poets. The title of the collection is Poetry after 9/11: An Anthology of New York Poets. The poem is “When the Skyline Crumbles”, and in it the poet describes the event of September 11 and its influence.

### **3.4.2.3 Response Prompt**

After reading each text participants were asked to respond to the text that they have just read according to the following manner. In order to attain the responses of participants at different moments during the process of reading and responding the participants were asked to record their responses during reading and after they finish reading the text. First, participants were asked to give their primary responses while they are reading. To be able to get their primary responses participants were asked to read the text and to record any initial thoughts they might have during reading. Texts were copied in the center of the

sheet to give them a space to respond. They were asked to read the text as many times as they wanted. Additional copies were provided if they wanted to repeat the reading and add/change their responses.

After they were done reading they were asked to comment on it to get their final considered responses. In order to get their final responses they were given a prompt in the form of an open-ended question. They were also asked to answer six questions that aim to get more specific information about their responses to the text (see Appendix C).

By asking the participants to record their responses during reading as well as at the end of reading each text, evidence was obtained to suggest the development of responses during the total process of reading a literary text. This provided multifaceted data, which helped in interpreting the results and in better understanding of the nature of the relation between attitudes and responses.

### **3.5 PILOT STUDY**

The pilot study was conducted in February 2004. The aim of the study was to determine the functionality of the questionnaire that was developed by the researcher. The purpose of the pilot study was also to provide insights into the data collection and analysis process. The objectives of the pilot study were:

- To find out whether or not the questionnaire items actually elicit the intended information for the study.

- To find out if any of the items need to be rephrased in order to make it more comprehensible.
- To determine whether or not the literary texts suit the linguistic level of ESL readers.
- To determine the amount of time required to respond to the questionnaire and to the literary texts.

The pilot study was conducted on three participants who were excluded from the actual participants of the study. The outcome of the pilot study gave a more realistic understanding regarding the significant amount of time required to conduct the research material as well as to analyze the data. Responding to the questionnaire took forty to fifty minutes. Reading and responding to the literary texts took a significant amount of time. Reading and responding to each text took approximately an hour. Therefore three different appointments were scheduled with each participant. Each appointment lasted for two hours. The amount of data obtained from each participant also needed a significant amount of time. Hence, a more realistic time schedule was developed for the study. Moreover, based on that finding, the number of participants was decreased from twenty to twelve.

One item was rephrased in the questionnaire. The item was: “Americans are very sociable, worm-hearted and creative people.” It was rephrased to: “Americans are very sociable, warm-hearted and approachable people.”

In reading the literary texts there were no significant problems regarding the linguistic level of the texts. Although some of the vocabulary was unfamiliar to them, they did not express that it hindered their comprehension of the text.

### 3.6 PROCEDURES

The data were collected in the following manner and in the following order:

The first step was selecting the participants. Participants were twelve Adult ESL Arab readers who are either immigrants or students who moved to the US no longer than ten years ago and no less than seven years (All were here during 9/11 tragic events). As has been mentioned before, the participants were sought in the Mosques located in Pittsburgh. Before conducting the study the researcher sought support from the Mosques' Imams to facilitate contacting the participants and to aid in assuring them of the purpose of the study in case they had fears or worries because of the sensitivity of the issues being surveyed to the Moslem community.

After selecting the participants, the researcher explained to them the purpose of the study and that their participation is voluntary. The researcher also assured the participants of the confidentiality of the results and that their names will not be included in any presentation of the results.

The second step after securing consent from the participants was grouping the participants. Participants were grouped in four groups. After grouping the participants the attitude measure was administered to assess their attitudes to American culture and to reading its literature. The administration of the questionnaire was conducted by the researcher. The researcher explained the purpose of the questionnaire to the participants. Instructions beyond the introductory remarks were imparted to the participants by printed directions. The attitude measure consists of seventy-one items and takes about forty to fifty minutes to complete. The participants were asked to fill it out in the presence of the

researcher. Participants were not asked to write their names on the questionnaire but instead each questionnaire was assigned a code and the researcher will control the master list of the names and the assigned codes until the end of the research when it will be disposed of. Field notes and observations were taken during and immediately after administering the questionnaire.

After responding to the questionnaire the participants were presented with the literary texts. All the participants were given the texts to read and respond to in a random order:

1. “Notes from a Bunker Along Highway 8” by Gabe Hudson.
2. “My Son the Murderer” by Bernard Malamud.
3. “Gerald’s Song” by Philip O’Connor.
4. “When the Skyline Crumbles” by Eliot Katz.

The participants were asked to read and respond to the texts in the presence of the researcher. The stories were copied in the center of the sheet to give them enough margin space to write their initial responses. Participants were asked to choose the language in which they will write their response and to stick to one language. Participants were asked to read the stories and to write down their initial responses in the margins while they read. They were allowed to repeat the reading if they wanted to, and they were given additional copies in case they needed to change or add responses in the second or even third reading. After reading each text, participants were asked to comment on the stories and to write down their final stated response according to the response prompt described earlier.

Since reading and responding to the texts took a long time, approximately one hour for each text, depending on the length of the response, the researcher scheduled more than one appointment with each group of participants. No participant was given the texts to read on their own since face to face situation is important to taking field notes and observations.

After administering the research tools, data from the attitude measure and from their written responses were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively to answer the questions of the study. The written responses were analyzed to assess the type of responses they gave (aesthetically vs. efferently). Responses were also analyzed to identify the sources of their misinterpretations. Data from the attitude measure were analyzed to determine the type of attitudes the participants have towards American culture and American literature. Finally, analyzed data were used to determine the relation between the participants' attitudes and the way they responded to the texts. The following section describes the method of analysis in more detail.

### **3.7 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS**

Data gathered from procedures were analyzed and the results were used to answer research questions. The following table depicts how the data were analyzed:

**Table 8: Method of Data Analysis**

Research Questions	Type of Data	Type of Analysis
Research Question #1: What are the attitudes of Arab readers towards the American culture and towards its literature?	Data collected by the Attitude Measure.	Quantitative analysis, which involves Statistical methods. Mean of scores was calculated to indicate a positive or a negative attitude.
Research Question #2: What types of responses do Arab readers give when reading American literature?	Participants stated responses to the selected texts which were elicited by the response prompt.	Qualitative analysis, which involves categorizing the responses into two main stances (efferent vs. aesthetic) and identifying the recurring themes. Quantitative analysis was also used to indicate the percentage of responses of each participant and each text.
Research Question #3: Is there a correlation between their attitudes and the stance of their responses?	Data obtained from both the attitude measure and the stated responses.	Both quantitative and qualitative analysis were used to indicate the relation between the participants' attitudes and their responses.
Research Question #4: What are the sources of the Arab readers' misinterpretation of American literature?	Participants stated responses to the selected texts which were elicited by the response prompt.	Qualitative analysis, which involves further analysis of the stated responses to determine the sources of misinterpretations in literary interpretation.

In qualitative analysis the aim is to organize data into categories and identify the patterns and relationships among categories as well as the recurrent themes (Gay, 1996). This means that the patterns, themes and categories cannot be decided before data collection actually takes place but rather during and after collecting the data. However, the following section will shed light on the focal points of analysis. After collecting the data and categorizing the participants' responses and after identifying their attitudes, the relationship between the patterns of response and the attitudes was also analyzed. The



analysis of the relationship between attitudes and responses was done qualitatively and it also involved application of quantitative methods.

### **3.7.1 Classifying the Responses**

In order to answer the second question of the study, which is “What types of responses do Arab readers give when reading American literature?” the following was done. The participants’ responses to the selected literature were analyzed. The aim of analyzing the participants’ responses is to indicate the stance they adopt and the level of personal understanding and involvement they reached. In order to analyze the participants’ responses their responses were categorized according to Rosenblatt's distinction between aesthetic and efferent or nonaesthetic reading. Rosenblatt distinguishes between aesthetic and nonaesthetic reading by stating:

At the extreme efferent end of the spectrum, the reader disengages his attention as much as possible from the personal and qualitative elements in his response to the verbal symbols; he concentrates on what the symbols designate, what they may be contributing to the end results that he seeks -- the information, the concepts, the guides to action, that will be left with him when the reading is over. At the aesthetic end of the spectrum, in contrast, the reader’s primary purpose is fulfilled *during* the reading event, as he fixes attention on the actual experience he is living through. This permits the whole range of responses generated by the text to enter into the center of awareness, and out of these materials he selects and weaves what he sees as the literary work of art (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 27).

She also points out that the purpose of reading indicates the stance the reader adopts when he responds to literature.

Based on Rosenblatt's description of readers' stance Cox and Many (1992) designed a *Measure of Reader Stance Towards a Literary Work on an Efferent to Aesthetic Continuum*. Their measure is a five-point continuum with responses at one end indicating the most efferent stance and at the opposing end the most aesthetic stance. Cox and Many's measure was used as a guide in analyzing the participants' literary responses. The responses were classified using these broad categories of aesthetic vs. efferent. A sub-classification of these categories emerged from the data analysis of participants' responses.

The responses were calculated and converted into percentages to see the distribution of the types of responses. This shows the patterns of readers' responses to short stories and helps answer the second question of the study. The broad categories that Cox and Many used in their measure are as follows:

*Point 1 – Most efferent response:*

Clear evidence of efferent analysis. Analysis of elements according to outside structure (what was learned, literary elements, production analysis, realism). Responses focus on:

- What was learned or information gained from the reading or viewing.
- The structure of the work, genre, or elements such as plot, setting, mood, or characters.
- Identification of the theme, moral of the story, or what was to be 'learned'.
- Evaluating works in terms of social or historical contexts.

*Point 2 – Primarily efferent response:*

Focus on re-telling (concentration on relating the storyline, narrating what the story was about). Responses of this type focus on the storyline by recounting the narrative. It can be of two types: simply re-telling, and re-telling with preference or judgment statement.

*Point 3 – Elements of both the aesthetic evocation and efferent analysis:*

Responses include portions of both efferent analysis and aesthetic experience of work without a primary emphasis on either (primary focus using a single stance indeterminable). Responses might contain a mixture of either efferent analysis or re-telling, as well as selective attention to specific story parts or characters or an aesthetic emphasis on the lived-through experience of the story.

*Point 4 – Primarily aesthetic response:*

Selection of story events or characters to elaborate preference, judgment, or description (I enjoyed it when..., I thought it was good/funny/unfair when...). These responses involved responders' selective attention to the story world and a possible re-telling of the story part which drew their attention. Such selective attention to specific parts might include a statement of preference, a judgment of the quality of the story characters' behavior, or an impression about story events or people in the story.

*Point 5 – Most aesthetic response:*

Clear evidence of the lived through experience of the literary work (the world created while reading and the emotions or associations resulting from the

experience). In these responses attention was centered on the ideas, scenes, images, associations or feelings called to mind during the reader's transaction with the text. Responses of this nature often included a focus on imaging and picturing, relating associations and feelings evoked, and/or hypothesizing, extending, and retrospecting.

The responses were also analyzed qualitatively to see if the participants' attitudes are reflected in their responses. This was done by identifying and analyzing the recurring interpretations and themes throughout the data. The aim is to identify the overall pattern of response as well as the response types that are influenced by their attitudes.

### **3.7.2 Sources of Misinterpretations**

The responses obtained from the participants at different moments were further analyzed in a separate analysis to determine the sources of misinterpretations in literary interpretation. A careful study of the participants' responses revealed certain sources of misinterpretations. The errors may be minor and affect only the readers' understanding of the story, or it may be total distortions that affect the reader's total perception of the text. The sources of misinterpretation that can be more specific to ESL readers and which might cause failure to grasp the meaning and result in a misinterpretation of the text are:

- Lack of background knowledge.
- Lack of literary competence i.e. genre constraints.
- Misunderstanding key vocabulary.
- Unsuccessful decoding of single words or words combined in a sentence that might also be the result of lack of grammatical competence.

Other sources of misinterpretation were revealed after studying the participants' actual responses.

### **3.7.3 Questionnaire Data**

For the purpose of this study the data collected by means of the questionnaire were statistically analyzed and discussed to answer research question number one. In addition field notes taken in the actual setting or immediately recorded as soon as possible after leaving the setting were also analyzed. Field notes were used to describe as accurately and as comprehensively as possible all relevant aspects of what took place, i.e. the participants reactions to the questionnaire, their doubts and fears, their willingness to participate, their comments on the questionnaire items...etc.

As has been mentioned before, the *Attitude Measure* consists of three sections. Items on section one give background knowledge about the participants. Items on section two are bipolar seven-point items and a high score on each item represents a positive attitude. The mean of scores was calculated to be indicative of the overall attitudes.

Items on section three are divided into thirty positively keyed items and thirty negatively keyed items. All items are scored on a four points Likert-type scale. In the positively keyed items four points were assigned for each item for which a subject checks "strongly agree", three points were assigned for each item for which a subject checks "agree", two points were assigned for each item for which a subject checks "disagree", one point was assigned for each item for which a subject checks "strongly disagree". In the negatively keyed items one point was assigned for each item for which a subject

checks “strongly agree”; two points were assigned for each item for which a subject checks “agree”; three points were assigned for each item for which a subject checks “disagree”; four points were assigned for each item for which a subject checks “strongly disagree”. The mean of the scores was calculated to indicate a positive or a negative attitude. A mean score of three or four was considered indicative of a “positive” attitude. A mean score of one or two was indicative of a “negative” attitude.

### **3.8 SUMMARY**

This chapter presented a description of the mixed methods research design that was used in this study. The study mainly seeks to determine the relationship between the participants’ attitudes and their stance of response. An initial description of the participants and the criteria for selecting them was provided. The procedures followed in designing and selecting the instrumentation of the study were also described. The chapter also describes the questionnaire that was developed to gather information about the participants’ attitudes. The questionnaire included seventy-one items that measure attitudes towards American culture and towards reading American literature. The texts, the criteria for selecting them, and the prompt that was used to elicit responses were also provided. Finally, a brief description of the methods used for data analysis was also discussed.

## 4.0 FINDINGS

**A novel or poem or play remains merely ink spots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols. (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 24)**

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was first, to investigate the Arab reader's attitudes towards the American Culture and towards reading its literature. Second, to analyze the responses to the literature read during the study based on Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reader response by exploring the aesthetic and efferent stances of Arab readers during reading American literature. Third, to determine the relationship between these attitudes and stance of response in an attempt to prove that possessing negative attitudes to target culture and to reading its literature can affect responses to literature and make reading more efferent. On the other hand positive attitudes are manifested in more aesthetic reading. Finally, to analyze the sources of misinterpreting literature by Arab readers as reflected in their responses.

In search of a better understanding of the role of attitudes in responding to literature the researcher conducted a study that employed a mixed methods research design. The study investigated the attitudes the participants had towards the American culture and towards reading its literature, the stance they used when responding to the

selected readings, the relation between each of the participants' attitudes and the way they responded to the selected readings, and finally their misinterpretations, if any, and the sources behind them.

## **4.2 PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

The following section presents the profile of the participants. A brief description of the participants was presented in Chapter Three. This section provides a more detailed description of the participants. The information was obtained from the demographic section of the *Attitude Measure* and from the researcher's filed notes.

Before conducting the study all participants were informed about the nature and purpose of the study. Participants were grouped in four groups. The first group consisted of three subjects (two women and a man), the second group consisted of three subjects as well (two women and a man), the third group consisted of four subjects (two women and two men), and the last group consisted of two subjects (a man and a woman) the overall number of subjects was twelve. The names of the participants have been eliminated to protect their identities and to maintain their anonymity. Even though the participants were informed prior to administering the study that their identities will remain anonymous, many of the potential subjects refused to participate. Four of the potential subjects did not complete the study due to their sudden withdrawal and their responses were eliminated from the data. The four participants responded to the *Attitude Measure* and to a reading text and were unwilling to finish the three remaining readings. Each one of them came up with a different reason for not participating. The reason behind that in



the researcher's opinion and as stated by some of them is "fear". The Moslem community has suffered since September 11. Therefore, there is a general sense of fear and suspicion. Potential subjects were simply afraid of misusing the collected data. Some of them even went as far as believing that the researcher is an FBI informant. This fear might have even interfered with the responses of the participants who actually participated as will be discussed in this chapter.

As for the age of the participants, all of them were between 26 to 55 years. Four of the participants were between 26 to 30, one was between 31 to 35, five participants were between 36 to 40, one between 41 to 45, and one between 51 to 55. Seven of the participants were women and five were men.

All of the participants have lived in the United States for at least seven years. Five of them have lived in the United States for more than ten years; five have lived in the United States between eight to ten years; and two have lived in the United States for seven years. Ten of the participants have graduate education; two have undergraduate education; and none have less than college education.

As for the number of years they have studied English in their country of origin, eight of the participants have studied English for more than ten years, two have studied English for six to ten years, two for three to five years, and none of them have studied English for less than three years. As for the TOEFL score, ten have indicated that they had the paper format and the mean for their score was 586 (the highest score was 620 and the lowest was 550). Only two participants had the computer format the highest score was 285 and the lowest was 273 (the mean was 279). The participants were also asked to rate their overall English level. Three rated their overall English level as *Intermediate*,

two as *Intermediate High*, three as *High*, and four as *Superior*. None of the participants have rated their overall English level as *Intermediate Low* or *Beginner*.

The participants also rated their knowledge of English in seven different categories of English language. The following table shows the frequency and percentages of their responses:

**Table 9: Percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviation of Participants Rating of their Knowledge of English**

Categories	Percentage				Mean	Std. Deviation
	Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent		
Knowledge of grammar	0.0	33.3	50.0	25.0	2.91	.944
Knowledge of vocabulary	0.0	25.0	41.7	33.3	3.00	.775
Ability to write English	0.0	16.7	58.3	25.0	3.00	.894
Ability to read English	0.0	16.7	58.3	25.0	3.09	.701
Ability to speak English	0.0	41.7	25.0	33.3	2.91	.944
Listening comprehension	0.0	41.7	16.7	41.7	2.91	.944
Knowledge of American culture	16.7	50.0	16.7	16.7	2.36	1.027

As it appears from the table none of the participants rated their knowledge of grammar, knowledge of vocabulary, writing, reading, speaking and listening comprehension abilities as poor. Participants also rated their ability to read English as the highest whereas their knowledge of American Culture as the lowest. In the overall, it can be concluded that all the participants viewed themselves as advanced ESL learners.

### 4.3 THE ATTITUDES

The following section will answer the first question of the study, which is: “What are the attitudes of Arab readers towards the American culture and towards its literature?” In order to understand the nature of those attitudes an *Attitude Measure* was designed by the researcher and was administered to assess the subjects’ attitudes to American culture and to reading its literature.

The first section of the attitude measure was the *Demographic Information Section* which provided data about the subjects and which was presented in the previous section. The second section of the questionnaire was the *Semantic Scale*. The Semantic Scale was divided into two sub-sections: (1) Personal opinion of Americans, and (2) Personal opinion of American literature. The two concepts have thirty-two bipolar descriptive adjectives and they are arranged on a 7-point scale. The purpose of the first sub-section was to determine the participants’ initial impressions and opinions about Americans. The lowest possible score in the first sub-section was 20, and the highest score was 140 with an expected mean of 80. The second sub-section is: Personal Opinion of American Literature. The purpose of the second section was to determine the participants’ initial impressions and opinions about American literature. The lowest possible score in the second subsection was 12, and the highest score was 84 with an expected mean of 48.

The third section includes attitude items about (1) Attitudes towards Reading American Literature, and (2) Attitudes towards American Culture. These two variables were assessed using a four point Likert Scale. The whole section consisted of sixty items,

thirty positively worded and thirty negatively worded. For the sake of statistical analysis negative items were reversed. Therefore, 4 is always most positive rating and 1 is always most negative rating.

For the purpose of analysis subjects' attitudes will be presented in two sections. First, subjects' attitudes towards American literature, and second their attitudes towards American culture.

#### **4.3.1 Attitudes towards American Literature**

The purpose of this section is to assess reactions to American literature (i.e. good – bad), perceived difficulty of American literature (i.e. easy – difficult), perceived utility of American literature (i.e. useful – useless), and level of interest in American literature (i.e. interesting – boring). The following table presents the mean and standard deviation for each descriptive adjective in order from highest to lowest.

The following table presents the mean and standard deviation for each descriptive adjective in order from highest to lowest:

**Table 10: Mean and Standard Deviation of Participants' Personal Opinion of American Literature**

Bi-polar descriptive adjectives	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Valuable--Worthless	1	7	5.50	1.784
2. Necessary--Unnecessary	1	7	5.25	1.960
3. Easy--Difficult	1	7	5.17	1.899
4. Enjoyable--Un-enjoyable	1	7	4.92	2.193
5. Clear--Confusing	1	7	4.83	2.406
6. Good--Bad	1	7	4.83	2.250
7. Appealing--Unappealing	1	7	4.83	1.992
8. Useful-- Useless	1	7	4.75	1.865
9. Important--Unimportant	1	7	4.50	1.784
10. Interesting--Boring	1	7	4.50	2.023
11. Fascinating--Tedious	1	7	4.33	1.875
12. Simple--Complicated	1	7	4.25	1.765

All mean scores for this sub-section are above the expected mean, which indicates a general positive attitude towards American Literature. The highest mean is for (Valuable--Worthless) whereas the lowest is for (Simple--Complicated) which indicated that in general the participants viewed American literature as complicated rather than simple which might be attributed to several factors.

The following table presents the mean and standard deviation for each item, as well as the percentage of response for each point. Data are presented from highest to lowest:

**Table 11: Percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviation of Participants' Attitudes towards Reading American Literature**

Items	Frequencies				Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
	1	2	3	4				
1. Literature is the highest form of writing in a culture.	0	0	2	10	3	4	3.83	.389
2. You must understand English grammar to be able to read American literature.	1	1	1	9	1	4	3.50	1.000
3. I enjoy reading American literature if I can choose what I want to read.	1	1	2	8	1	4	3.42	.966
4. Literature helps to increase cultural awareness between cultures.	1	0	4	7	1	4	3.42	.900
5. Reading American literature provides me with a clear perspective of the American people and the way they perceive things.	0	4	2	6	2	4	3.17	.937
6. I find American literature very difficult to comprehend.	1	1	5	5	1	4	3.17	.937
7. I might enjoy reading American literature only if it addresses people and experiences similar to my own.	1	2	4	5	1	4	3.08	.996

Items (cont.)	Frequencies				Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
	1	2	3	4				
8. I would rather spend my time reading an Arabic story rather than an American one.	1	1	7	3	1	4	3.00	.853
9. Reading American literature is a waste of time.	1	0	9	2	1	4	3.00	.739
10. Reading American literature isn't really important.	1	2	6	3	1	4	2.92	.900
11. I read American literature only as a part of my study.	1	5	1	5	1	4	2.83	1.115
12. I'd rather read American literature when it is translated into Arabic.	1	3	5	3	1	4	2.83	.937
13. I'm not interested in reading American literature.	3	1	3	5	1	4	2.83	1.267
14. I read American literature to know more about the American culture.	2	2	4	4	1	4	2.83	1.115
15. I never read an American poem just to enjoy it.	1	5	1	5	1	4	2.83	1.115
16. I really enjoy reading American literature.	1	2	4	5	1	4	2.75	1.422
17. English is a beautiful language.	2	2	5	3	1	4	2.75	1.055
18. I find reading American literature very boring.	2	3	4	3	1	4	2.67	1.073
19. Literature is useful outside the classroom.	4	1	2	5	1	4	2.67	1.371
20. I don't like to read American literature.	3	2	4	3	1	4	2.58	1.165
21. I find reading American literature personally rewarding.	3	2	4	3	1	4	2.58	1.165
22. If I had the time I would read more American literature.	3	3	3	3	1	4	2.50	1.168
23. I would rather spend my free time watching TV than reading a piece of literature.	4	2	3	3	1	4	2.42	1.240
24. I try to read as much American literature as possible.	4	2	3	3	1	4	2.42	1.240
25. My only reason for reading American literature is to improve my English language.	4	1	5	2	1	4	2.42	1.165
26. I read American literature for enjoyment.	2	5	3	2	1	4	2.42	.996
27. American literature expresses my personal opinions as much as Arabic literature does.	3	5	0	4	1	4	2.42	1.240

Items (cont.)	Frequencies				Min.	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
	1	2	3	4				
28. I read American stories all the time.	5	2	3	2	1	4	2.17	1.193
29. People who read American literature are those who teach it or have to read it for course work (their study).	6	1	3	2	1	4	2.08	1.240
30. Arabic literature is distinguished from American literature by its better use of language.	5	3	3	1	1	4	2.00	1.044
31. Reading literature is frustrating when you don't know the vocabulary.	5	5	1	1	1	4	1.83	.937

As it appears from the table, participants viewed literature as the highest form of writing in any culture. They also agreed on the importance of literature in increasing cultural awareness. However, when it comes to the usefulness of American literature to them they mostly indicated that they read it if they had to and not to enjoy it. They also indicated that lack of vocabulary is not a determining factor when it comes to their willingness to read literature.

#### **4.3.2 Attitudes towards Americans**

The purpose of this section is to assess the participants' personal attitudes towards American culture. The following table presents the mean and standard deviation for each descriptive adjective in order from highest to lowest.



**Table 12: Mean and Standard Deviation of Participants' Personal Opinion of Americans**

Bi-polar Descriptive Adjectives	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Successful--Un-successful	1	7	5.75	2.050
2. Ambitious--Not ambitious	2	7	5.67	1.497
3. Friendly--Unfriendly	1	7	5.42	2.353
4. Hard-working--Lazy	1	7	5.00	2.523
5. Sincere--Insincere	1	7	4.92	2.193
6. Considerate--inconsiderate	1	7	4.83	2.167
7. Good--Evil	1	7	4.83	2.443
8. Polite--Impolite	1	7	4.75	2.417
9. Patient--Impatient	1	7	4.42	2.021
10. Kind--Cruel	1	7	4.33	2.146
11. Approachable--Hostile	1	7	4.25	2.379
12. Sensitive--Insensitive	1	7	4.25	2.179
13. Reliable--Unreliable	1	7	4.17	2.329
14. Smart--Stupid	1	7	4.17	2.368
15. Fair--Unfair	1	7	4.00	2.174
16. Brave--Cowardly	1	7	3.83	2.167
17. Moral--Immoral	1	7	3.83	3.070
18. Honest--Dishonest	1	7	3.50	2.431
19. Modest--Arrogant	1	7	3.25	2.527
20. Unprejudiced--Prejudiced	1	7	3.00	2.174

All the mean scores for adjectives 1 to 14 are higher than the expected mean of (4). The mean score of 4 as in adjective 15 indicated a neutral or a not-sure attitude. Whereas, the mean scores for adjectives 16 to 20 are less than the mean which indicates a negative attitude. The highest mean score is for (successful--unsuccessful), which indicates the participants' view of the American people as successful. The lowest mean score is for (Prejudiced--Unprejudiced) which might be attributed to the aftermath of September 11 and its influence on the community.

The following table presents the mean and standard deviation for each item, as well as the percentage of response for each point. Data are presented from highest to lowest.

**Table 13: Percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviation of Participants' Attitudes towards  
American Culture**

Items	Frequencies				Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
	1	2	3	4				
1. I would like to know more about Americans.	0	2	3	7	2	4	3.42	.793
2. I try to know more about American customs and traditions.	0	1	5	6	2	4	3.42	.669
3. I don't have any American friends.	1	1	5	5	2	4	3.33	.888
4. I would like to know the American people better.	0	2	5	5	2	4	3.25	.754
5. Having lived this long in America, I'd be happier moving to some other country now.	0	3	3	6	2	4	3.25	.866
6. Americans are cold because they ignore and walk away from situations in which other people were injured or in need of help.	0	3	4	5	2	4	3.17	.835
7. I prefer to live in a neighborhood that is predominately Arabs.	0	4	2	6	2	4	3.17	.937
8. I would like to know more Americans	1	1	5	5	1	4	3.17	.937
9. I have a lot of American friends.	0	4	2	6	2	4	3.17	.937
10. I always find encouragement and understanding from Americans.	1	2	4	5	1	4	3.08	.996
11. The more I learn about the American people, the less I like them.	0	2	7	3	1	4	3.08	.669
12. As much as possible I attend American celebrations and cultural festivities.	2	1	4	5	1	4	3.00	1.128
13. Most Americans are so friendly and easy to get along with.	1	1	7	3	1	4	3.00	.853
14. I always find Americans to be impatient, arrogant, and intolerant.	1	3	5	3	1	4	2.83	.937
15. If I have to choose a roommate I don't mind having an American one.	2	3	2	5	1	4	2.83	1.193
16. I feel comfortable dealing with Americans on the social level.	2	2	4	4	1	4	2.83	1.115
17. I have always admired the American people.	2	3	3	4	1	4	2.75	1.138
18. Americans are very sociable, warm-hearted, and approachable people.	1	5	3	3	1	4	2.67	.985

Items (cont.)	Frequencies				Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
	1	2	3	4				
19. Prejudice, racism, discrimination are not the true traits of American people.	2	3	4	3	1	4	2.67	1.073
20. I dislike American ideas about democracy.	3	2	3	4	1	4	2.67	1.231
21. Americans deserve no respect because of the way they treat minority groups.	2	3	5	2	1	4	2.58	.996
22. America is the best model for democracy in the world.	3	3	2	4	1	4	2.58	1.240
23. I feel hesitant to start any relation with Americans.	2	5	1	4	1	4	2.58	1.165
24. There are few exceptions, but in general Americans are pretty much alike.	4	1	3	4	1	4	2.58	1.311
25. The more I get to know the American people, the more I get to like them.	2	3	5	2	1	4	2.58	.996
26. I don't think the spread of American ideas and customs is a bad thing.	2	5	2	3	1	4	2.50	1.087
27. I think my country and America have different values.	2	5	3	2	1	4	2.42	.996
28. In gatherings I interact mostly with people who speak Arabic.	4	3	2	3	1	4	2.33	1.231
29. Americans believe that Arabs are not democratic in their political and philosophic views.	7	2	0	3	1	4	1.92	1.311

As it appears from the table the participants agreed that they would like to know more about the American people and their customs and traditions, even though they might not have many American friends, but they indicated their willingness to know more Americans. They also indicated that they try to interact with American people in gatherings, and did not think that their countries and America have different values.

#### 4.4 QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONSES

The following section will attempt to answer the second question of the study, which is: “What types of responses do Arab readers give when reading American literature?” In order to answer this question the responses to the literature read during the study were analyzed and described based on Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reader response. The responses were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively in order to explore the aesthetic and efferent stances of Arab readers during reading American literature. Students’ responses to each text were analyzed and coded with the aesthetic vs. efferent continuum proposed by Cox and Many’s (1992b) description of the aesthetic vs. efferent continuum of responses and which was outlined in Chapter III. It is also based on Squire’s (1964) categories of responses. From Cox and Many’s (1992b) and Squire’s (1964) classification of responses it was determined by the researcher that “Literary Judgment” and “Interpretational” responses can be categorized as “Most Efferent Responses” whereas, “Narrational” responses can be categorized as “Primarily Efferent” responses. Additionally, “Prescriptive Judgment” can be categorized as “Primarily Aesthetic Responses” while, “Associational” and “Self Involvement” responses can be categorized as “Most Aesthetic Responses”. This classification is also in agreement with Rosenblatt’s definition of those responses. The scale in its final form is as follows:

1) Most efferent:

a) Literary judgments:

Responses of this kind focus on direct judgments on the story, the structure of the work, genre, or elements such as plot, setting, mood, or characters. It also

includes specific reactions to style, language, and attempts to evaluate works in terms of social or historical contexts.

b) Interpretational Responses:

Responses of this kind focus on what was learned or information gained from the reading or viewing. In it the reader also attempts to discover the meaning of the stories.

2) Primarily efferent:

a) Narrational Responses:

Responses of this type concentrate on retelling the storyline, narrating what the story was about. These responses focus on the storyline by recounting the narrative.

3) Primarily aesthetic:

a) Prescriptive judgments:

These responses involve readers' statement of preference, a judgment of the quality of the story characters' behavior, or an impression about story events or people in the story. In it the reader prescribes a course of action to the characters based on absolute standards.

4) Most aesthetic:

a) Associational Responses:

Responses in which the reader associates ideas, events, or places with his/her own experience.

b) Self involvement:

Responses in which the reader associates himself/herself with the behavior or emotions of the character. These responses can be expressed through either identification or rejection.

In order to establish the reliability of the results obtained through the scale used in the study, the researcher randomly selected five responses that have been analyzed by her and gave it to a second rater. The researcher met with the second rater, a researcher who is familiar with reader response in general and with Squire's categories in particular. The researcher and the second rater had a discussion about the study and the scale being used. After the second rater finished her classification of the responses, the classification of the researcher and the second rater was correlated for the five selected responses. The correlation coefficient for the categories was between .92 and .95. The correlation achieved was a very positive correlation.

All written responses are cited here in the original, without any corrections, modifications, or alterations. Therefore, the examples given may include possible spelling or grammar errors.

#### **4.4.1 Quantitative Analysis of the Responses**

##### **4.4.1.1 Responses to "My Son the Murderer":**

The total number of responses for "My Son the Murderer" was 219. The following table shows the distribution of the response types:

**Table 14: Response Types to Reading "My Son the Murderer"**

Categories	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	#	%
Literary Judgment	.00	.40	.1599	.12979	35	16.0
Interpretational	.00	.69	.2628	.20160	55	25.1
Narrational	.00	.28	.1026	.08239	23	10.5
Prescriptive Judgment	.00	.35	.1462	.12540	35	16.0
Associational	.00	.45	.1442	.13933	31	14.2
Self Involvement	.00	.55	.1844	.16624	40	18.3

Table (14) shows that 25.1% of the responses were “Interpretational” responses. The second highest percentage of responses was “Self Involvement” responses. Additionally, “Literary Judgment” and “Prescriptive Judgment” were both 16% of the responses. The lowest percentage of responses was “Associational” responses.

The following table shows the distribution of the efferent vs. the aesthetic responses:

**Table 15: Aesthetic vs. Efferent Responses**

Response Type	Number of Responses	Percentage
Most efferent	90	41.09
Primarily efferent	23	10.5
Primarily aesthetic	35	15.99
Most aesthetic	71	32.42

Table (15) shows that among all the participants’ responses to “My Son the Murderer”, forty-one percent are most efferent responses, whereas thirty-two percent are



most aesthetic responses. It also shows that fifteen percent of the responses are primarily aesthetic responses, while ten percent are primarily efferent ones.

The participants were also asked to answer six questions (Appendix C) to get more specific information about their responses to the text. The answers showed that the main feeling that the story evoked in the participants were feelings of sorrow to the main characters. However, some participants showed that that they were more sympathetic with the son's character because they felt that his position against the war should be more respected by his father. The son was described as "smart", "brave", and "noble", whereas the father was described as someone who "doesn't understand his son's dilemma". Most of them also mentioned that they liked the story and felt emotionally involved in it because of the fact that Harry (the son) has an opposing position against the war. Some participants also saw a parallel similarity between the events of the story and the current events. The main personal memory that they agreed that the story evoked in them were memories of their parents.

#### **4.4.1.2 Responses to "Gerald's Song":**

The total number of responses to "Gerald's Song" was 208. The following table shows the distribution of the response types:

**Table 16: Response Types to Reading "Gerald's Song"**

Categories	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	#	%
Literary Judgment	.00	.35	.0757	.10798	17	8.2
Interpretational	.06	.63	.2657	.17326	56	26.9
Narrational	.00	.35	.1653	.10176	36	17.3
Prescriptive Judgment	.00	.41	.1488	.11857	3	14.4
Associational	.00	.31	.1593	.10265	32	15.4
Self Involvement	.00	.44	.1853	.14178	37	17.8

Table (16) shows that 26.9% of the responses were “Interpretational” responses. The second highest percentage of responses was “Self Involvement” responses. Additionally, “Associational” and “Prescriptive Judgment” were both around fifteen percent of the responses. The lowest percentage of responses was “literary judgment” responses.

The following table shows the distribution of the efferent vs. the aesthetic responses:

**Table 17: Aesthetic vs. Efferent Responses**

Response Type	Number of Responses	Percentage
Most efferent	73	35.09
Primarily efferent	36	17.31
Primarily aesthetic	30	14.43
Most aesthetic	69	33.17

Table (17) shows that among all the participants' responses to "Gerald's Song", thirty-five percent are most efferent responses, whereas thirty-three percent are most aesthetic responses. It also shows that fourteen percent of the responses are primarily aesthetic responses, while seventeen percent are primarily efferent ones.

In response to the questions the main feeling that the story evoked in the participants was feelings of sympathy towards the main character. However, some participants mentioned that they were unable to have any feelings while reading the story and said that it was a boring reading. Most of the participants liked the story and those who mentioned that what they didn't like about it was that it "felt depressing" to them. Most of the participants said that they were not emotionally involved in the story and couldn't sympathize with Gerald because he was unrealistically naïve. Some even sympathized with his mother for losing her money because of her sons' bad judgment. Most of the participants mentioned that the story didn't evoke any personal memories in them and was not touching to them. Those who mentioned that the story has evoked personal memories in them wrote about similar experiences they, or someone they know, have gone through.

#### **4.4.1.3 Responses to "Notes from a Bunker along Highway 8":**

The total number of responses to "Notes from a Bunker along Highway 8" was 209. The following table shows the distribution of the response types:

**Table 18: Response Types to Reading "Notes from a Bunker along Highway 8"**

Categories	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	#	%
Literary Judgment	.00	.39	.0620	.12546	13	6.2
Interpretational	.09	.50	.2601	.13944	52	24.9
Narrational	.00	.40	.1898	.12760	38	18.2
Prescriptive Judgment	.00	.30	.1291	.11877	29	13.9
Associational	.00	.33	.1542	.11107	34	16.3
Self Involvement	.00	.57	.2047	.15646	43	20.5

Table (18) shows that 24.9% of the responses were “Interpretational” responses. The second highest percentage of responses was “Self Involvement” responses. The lowest percentage of responses was “literary judgment” responses. The following table shows the distribution of the efferent vs. the aesthetic responses:

**Table 19: Aesthetic vs. Efferent Responses**

Response Type	Number of responses	Percentage
Most efferent	65	31.1
Primarily efferent	38	18.2
Primarily aesthetic	29	13.9
Most aesthetic	77	36.8

Table (19) shows that among all the participants’ responses to “Notes from a Bunker along Highway 8”, thirty-one percent are most efferent responses, whereas thirty-six percent are most aesthetic responses. It also shows that almost fourteen percent of the

responses are primarily aesthetic responses, while eighteen percent are primarily efferent ones.

When answering the questions the main feeling the story evoked in the participants was again sorrow and sadness. Most of the participants sympathized with G.D., and some considered him a hero, and some participants sympathized more with the Iraqis for suffering all these wars because of their ruler. Some of the participants mentioned that they didn't like the style of writing and described it as sarcastic, whereas some others mentioned that they liked the attitude of the writer towards the Iraqis and mentioned that he "sounded sympathetic" with them. All of the participants mentioned that the story evoked in them memories of the first and Second Gulf War and that they felt emotionally involved in the story.

#### 4.4.1.4 Responses to "When the Skyline Crumbles":

The total number of responses to "When the Skyline Crumbles" was 186. The following table shows the distribution of the response types:

**Table 20: Response Types to Reading "When the Skyline Crumbles"**

Categories	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	#	%
Literary Judgment	.08	.44	.2434	.11071	46	24.7
Interpretational	.09	.32	.1111	.11953	21	11.3
Narrational	.00	.20	.0809	.07062	16	8.6
Prescriptive Judgment	.00	.21	.0947	.08437	18	9.7
Associational	.06	.38	.2441	.009013	44	23.6
Self Involvement	.00	.40	.2258	.12171	41	22.1

This text had the lowest number of responses. However, Table (20) shows that 24.7% of those responses were “Literary Judgment” responses. The second highest percentage of responses was “Associational” and “Self Involvement” responses. The lowest percentage of responses was “Narrational” and “Prescriptive Judgment” responses. The following table shows the distribution of the efferent vs. the aesthetic responses:

**Table 21: Aesthetic vs. Efferent Responses**

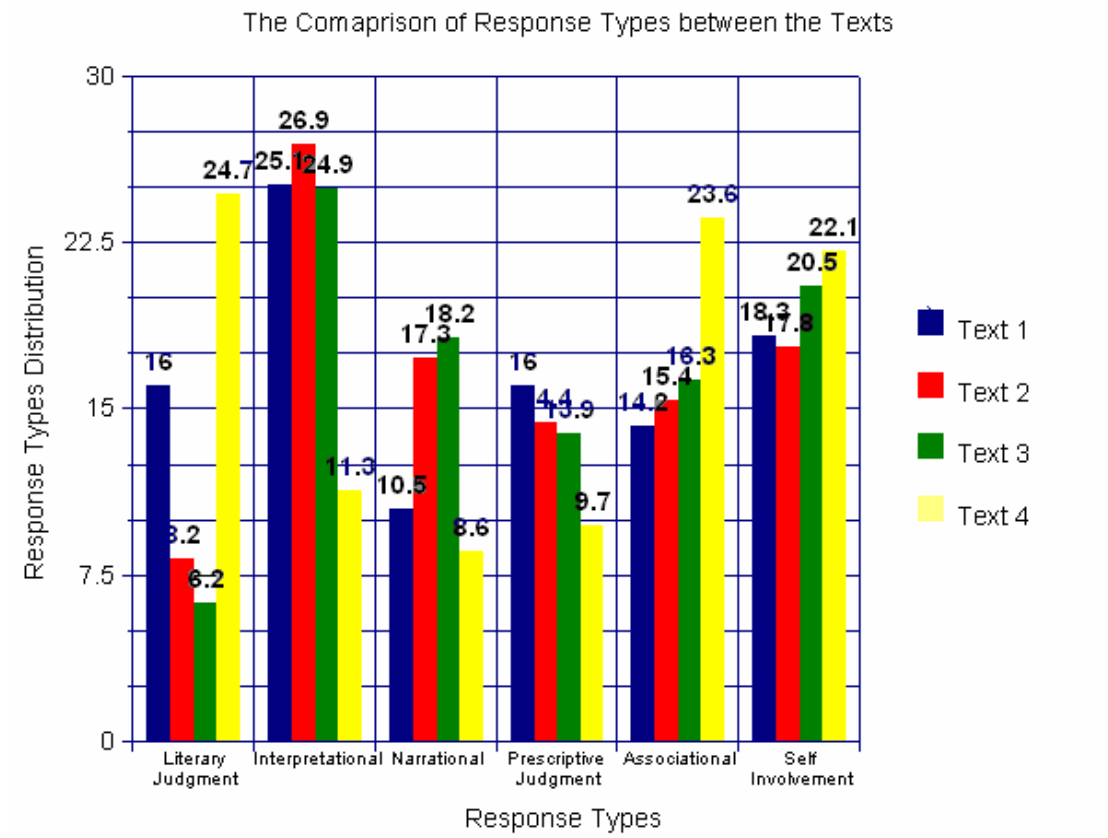
Response Type	Number of responses	Percentage
Most efferent	67	36
Primarily efferent	16	8.6
Primarily aesthetic	18	9.7
Most aesthetic	85	45.7

Table (21) shows that among all the participants’ responses to “When the Skyline Crumbles”, thirty-six percent are most efferent responses, whereas forty-five percent are most aesthetic responses. It also shows that almost nine percent of the responses are either primarily aesthetic responses or primarily efferent ones.

When answering the questions all of the participants mentioned that the story evoked feelings of sadness and grief. They commented on the fact that they were not familiar with that style of poetry and some of them were even not sure if it is a poem or a short story. However, they liked the anti-war message of the poem. All of the participants mentioned that the poem has evoked their personal memories of September 11, and felt emotionally involved and personally touched by the poem.

#### 4.4.1.5 The comparison of the response types among the four texts:

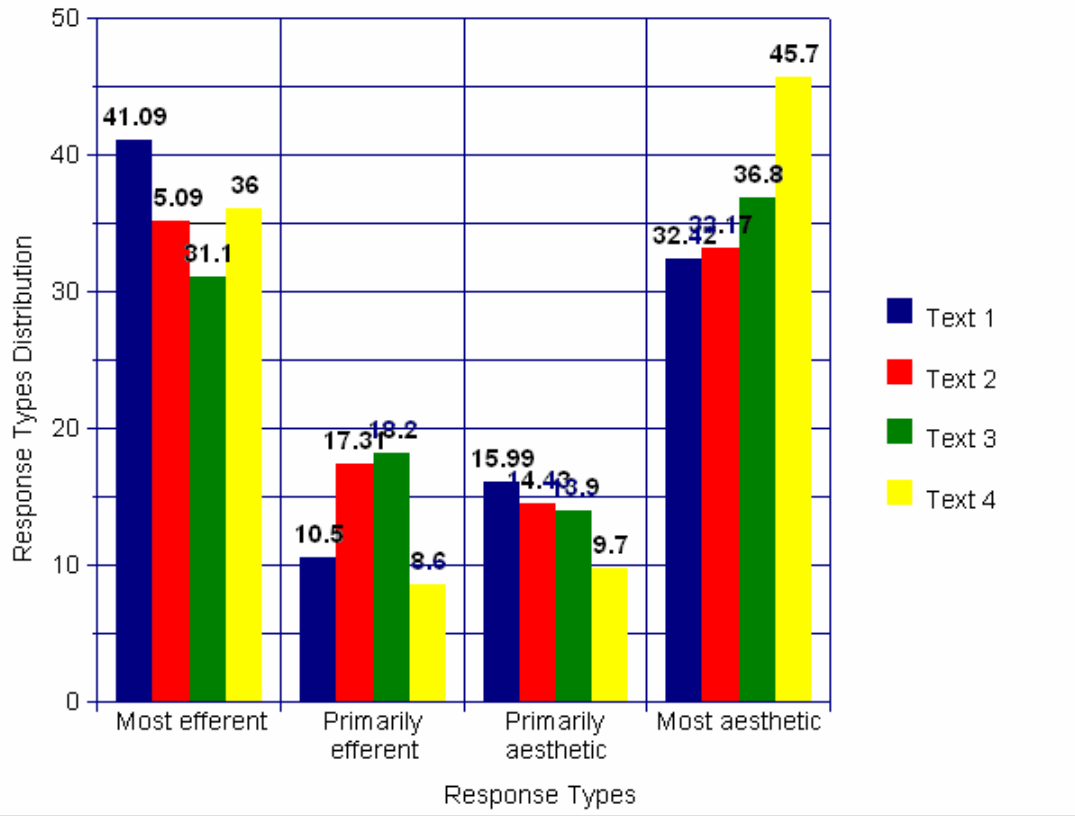
It is also important to compare the response types among the four texts. Therefore, the following graph shows the responses types the participants gave through out the four texts:



**Figure 1: The Comparison of Response Types between the Texts**

The participants gave more “Literary Judgment” responses in, “When the Skyline Crumbles”, than in the rest of the texts, which might be attributed to the nature of the text as a poem. They also made more “Associational” and “Self Involvement” responses while reading “When the Skyline Crumbles”. But they made more “Interpretational” responses while reading “Gerald’s Song”. The distribution of “prescriptive Judgment” and “Self Involvement” was almost the same in the four texts. They gave very few “Prescriptive Judgment” in all four texts.

The following graph shows the comparison of the efferent vs. aesthetic responses among the four texts:



**Figure 2: The Comparison of the Efferent vs. Aesthetic responses**

As it appears from the graph the participants gave more “Most Efferent” and “Most Aesthetic” responses in all four texts than “Primarily Efferent” and “Primarily Aesthetic” responses. The percentages of the “Most Efferent” response and the “Most Aesthetic” responses in all four texts were close. Also the percentages of the “Primarily Efferent” and “Primarily Aesthetic” responses were close in all four texts. The distribution of all the responses in all four categories in all four texts was also close.



#### 4.4.1.6 The responses to the guided questions:

The participants were also asked to answer six questions (Appendix C) that aim to get more specific information about their responses to the text. It has to be mentioned that not all the participants were willing to respond to these questions; and since these questions were designed to elicit a response of an aesthetic nature, it is important to present the number of participants who responded to each question. The following table presents the number of people who responded to each question:

**Table 22: The Number of Participants Who Responded to Each Question about the Four Texts**

The questions	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4
1- What feelings did the story evoke in you?	12	12	12	12
2- What did you like or dislike in the story?	12	12	12	12
3- Did you feel emotionally involved in the story? Explain.	10	7	7	11
4- Which one of the characters did you sympathize the most with? Why?	7	6	6	na
5- What personal memories did the story evoke in you?	9	7	6	12
6- Was the story touching to you in any personal way? Explain.	8	6	7	12

A lack of response to the question indicates the participant's inability to respond aesthetically to the texts. There might be other reasons that need to be explored i.e. fear or lack of confidence in how the data is going to be used given the political climate.

#### 4.4.2 Qualitative Analysis

This section presents the qualitative analysis of the participants' responses to the four texts. It identifies the main themes that emerged while analyzing the participants' written responses. Besides the response types used for analyzing, the researcher has identified

four themes in the participants' responses: 1) connecting with personal attitudes, 2) conflicting perceptions of characters, 3) associating with current events, and 4) identifying recurring themes. From these four themes emerges a picture of the dimensions, structure, and points of engagement of the participants' responses.

#### **4.4.2.1 Connecting with personal attitudes:**

Most of the participants' attempted to respond to the texts through their own unique personal schemata. In doing so they tended to connect with their beliefs, backgrounds and attitudes. They indicated a comment on the events of the text and a judgment of personal approval or disapproval with it which was drawn from their personal attitudes towards American literature and American culture. They also indicated personal assumptions about the culture of the texts. These response sentences included a word like "they" or "us" in referring to a specific culture. The participants also attributed certain traits as being the traits of the American culture (i.e. success, cowardice and friendliness). The theme of connecting with personal attitudes was clear through the four texts. In "My Son the Murderer":

"He (Harry) seems depressed. Maybe he can't find a job. Oh, I forgot he is American, so, there is no way."

"He is afraid of going to the war; he thinks that if he went to the war he'll die because, as most Americans, he is afraid to face death."

"The story is about another American broken family where there is no respect between the son and the father."

“The story takes place in America. I don’t think that this story could have happened in my country because sons and daughters are expected to show more respect to their parents.”

“His son is 22. Why is he that worried, and why is his son still living with him? That’s a little weird for Americans who through (sic) their kids in the street by 18.”

In “Gerald’s Song”:

“I don’t know why Americans don’t appreciate their parents and their worry about them.”

“The character is another weird character, which still lives with his parents.”

“I’m not worried about Gerald and I’m sure he’ll find a way to turn his failure into success.”

“Unlike most Americans Gerald is not very smart when it comes to taking business decisions, and also unlike most Americans he is a very compassionate person. However, he seems like the kind of guy you want as a friend.”

In “Notes from a Bunker along Highway 8”:

“It is hard to believe that this soldier actually has a heart.”

“The author makes it sound like G.D. is out of his mind just because he deserted a war that he doesn’t believe in and felt compassion for another human being.”

“I feel for this soldier and for his search for the truth. Is he a coward or a brave person?”

“Why are we always depicted as the ignorant person who can’t take care of a wound and the American hero is the one who has to do everything to us even cleaning our wounds?”

“I have not been in the US in the first gulf war, and it is refreshing to see the human side of the American soldier, a side I didn’t know that it existed.”

In “When the Skyline Crumbles”:

“The poem is about 9/11 the day that will go down in history as the day we became the enemy.”

“As painful this day is, it is more painful that forever we’ll be associated with it and that forever we’ll feel accused of doing it even though who did it, didn’t really ask any of us if they can do that in our name or not.”

This kind of response also revealed some of the participants’ assumptions and attitudes towards the American culture. It appears that the participants’ responses indicated that they viewed the American culture as a symbol of success where everyone should find a job and where anyone can turn their failures into success. They also focused on the assumption that the American family is a disintegrated family where sons don’t have respect to their parents and where parents do not really care about their children. The participants also viewed the American culture as a culture that is materialistic and lacks traits like compassion and humanity.

#### **4.4.2.2 Conflicting perceptions of characters:**

In this kind of response the participants have sympathized and associated with the characters in a manner different from what the author intended. This kind of response was characterized by identifying with the character that the author does not intend for the reader to identify with. It was also characterized by rejecting the character that the author intended for the reader to sympathize with. This response was categorized as an aesthetic response; however, the conflicting nature of the participants' perceptions of the characters is what made this kind of response stand out. For example, in "My Son the Murderer" some of the participants sympathized with Harry (the son) and blamed the father for not understanding his son.

"I really feel for Harry. He is lost in an unjust world where even his own father doesn't understand him."

"I don't understand this father. He is worried that his son might kill himself. Why isn't he worried about his son going to the war?"

"This father should be proud of his son instead of giving him a hard time. His son simply doesn't want to go to a war that he doesn't believe in."

Another example, in "Gerald's Song" some of the participants expressed their concern about the mother who might suffer as a result of her son's bad financial decisions. For example:

"I don't really feel bad for Gerald. He seemed brainless and I don't like that. His mother seems more realistic and smarter than him."

"I don't know what this mother will do after her son has lost her savings."

In “Notes from a Bunker Along Highway 8” even though G.D. was the only main character some of the participants did not sympathize with him and expressed that they should be more sympathetic with the Iraqis in general and more specifically with the wounded Iraqi woman. For example:

“This story made me feel sorry for the Iraqis and the many wars they had to go through.”

“I really felt sorry for the poor Iraqi woman who is wounded in the middle of the desert and the only help came from an American soldier. It is ironic.”

#### **4.4.2.3 Associating with current events:**

In this kind of response the participants, instead of focusing on the events of the story, linked the events of the story to the current events. They also commented on the current events instead of commenting on the events of the story. For example, in “My Son the Murderer” which takes place during the Vietnam War the participants linked the feelings of Harry (the son) to the feelings of the current generation about the Second Gulf War. For example:

“He is similar to this generation who were also forced by their government to fight a war that they didn’t believe in.”

“The young men who fought in the war on Iraq must have also felt the same way. I just hope that the outcome of the war in Iraq and the Vietnam War are different.”

In the second story “Gerald’s Song”, which doesn’t necessarily refer to a specific era, the participants linked Gerald’s dilemma to how the current events affected the stock

market. They also linked the country that is mentioned in the story to countries like Afghanistan or Iraq. Some of the participants commented on parts of the story by using Arabic proverbs that can be translated as “How similar is today to yesterday!” or “History repeats itself.” Other examples of their responses include:

“Gerald has probably lost his money in the stock market that went down after a war. I think there are a lot of Gerald's these days.”

“I hope there aren't a lot of people who bought stocks from a company who imports from countries like Iraq or Afghanistan or they'll face Gerald's fate!!!”

In the third text “Notes from a Bunker along Highway 8” even though the events take place in the First Gulf War, the participants tended to link the feelings, actions, and personality of G.D. to those of the American soldiers who are currently in Iraq. They also highlighted the similarities and differences between the two situations. For example:

“I don't understand why G.D. feels so bad. He is fighting in the First Gulf War which in my opinion was a justified war. I would understand his feelings if he were fighting in the Second Gulf War in Iraq.”

“G.D. represents a picture of how some of the American soldiers in Iraq right now must think and act. He also shows some of the things they go through.”

In the last text, “When the Skyline Crumbles” which is about a relatively recent event, it was expected that the participants would associate the poem with the current war on terror instead of focusing on the events of 9/11 itself. For example:

“I don’t think that the war in Iraq or Afghanistan is the right response to 9/11. Violence causes more violence.”

“I’ve supported the war on Taliban, but the current war in Iraq is not what this country should have done.”

#### **4.4.2.4 Identifying recurring themes:**

Even though the texts were given to the participants in a random order all the participants seemed to be able to identify the recurring themes in the texts. The four texts have political and social themes and contain issues of significance and concern to the participants. The main theme that the participants identified through the four texts is the influence of war and political events on the average individual. All of the characters in the three stories, each in a different way, seemed to be war victims. All the participants were aware of the recurring themes in the texts. They expressed this awareness in their response in phrases like “another war story”, “another war victim”, “the same idea of...”, and “this story has a similar message”.

### **4.5 THE RELATION BETWEEN THE PARTICIPANTS’ ATTITUDES AND THEIR RESPONSES TO LITERATURE**

This section will focus on answering the third question: “What is the relation between the participants’ attitudes and their responses to literature?” To answer this question the researcher will analyze the case of each participant to see if there is a relation between their attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture and



the way they responded to the literary texts. This section will discuss who each participant is, without revealing their identities, how did he/she respond to the attitude measure, and how did he/she respond to the literary texts. The sources of data will be the attitude measure, the responses to the literary texts, and the researcher’s field notes. The texts are going to be referred to as text 1 “My Son the Murderer”, text 2 “Gerald’s Song”, text 3 “Notes from a Bunker along Highway 8”, and text 4 “When the Skyline Crumbles”.

#### 4.5.1 Participant 1

The first participant is a thirty-one years old male; he is an engineer who moved to the states eight years ago. He states that he moved to the US because as many of his generation his dream was to move to the land of opportunity. He has a great respect for the American culture especially for its achievements in its relatively short age. He also feels that he shares its values. After 9/11 he wasn’t sure if he should move or not, he decided to stay. He does like to read literature in general and he does appreciate American literature. He reads literature if it is something that interests him and if he has the time. In summary, participant 1 had positive attitudes towards reading American literature and a more positive attitude towards the American culture. The statistical data obtained from his attitude measure are presented in the following table:

**Table 23: Participant 1 Attitudes towards American Culture and American Literature**

Attitude Measure Sections	Attitudes towards American Literature		Attitudes towards American Culture	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
The semantic scale	5.66	1.35	5.45	1.37
The attitude items	2.55	1.21	2.89	1.23

Participant 1 responses to the reading texts were mostly aesthetic throughout the four texts. The text that he responded aesthetically to the most was “When the Skyline Crumbles”. The following table represents his aesthetic versus efferent responses to the four reading texts:

**Table 24: Participant 1 Aesthetic vs. Efferent Responses**

Response types	Text 1		Text 2		Text 3		Text 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Most efferent	6	33.3	4	25	3	17.5	4	26.7
Primarily efferent	1	5.5	2	12.5	3	17.5	1	6.7
Primarily aesthetic	5	27.8	1	6.25	3	17.5	0	0
Most aesthetic	6	33.3	9	56.25	8	47.5	10	66.6

In responding to the first text he sympathized with the father and he felt sorry for the way he is treated by his son. The father in the story also reminded him of his own father and how much he misses him. In the second text participant 1 felt bad for Gerald and he could identify with his situation because he himself has lost an amount of money in a failed investment. He also commented that Gerald is a naïve person who knows nothing about business. In the third text the participant was able to understand the feelings of the soldier and how he is in a stressful situation that anyone can melt under. The story also reminded him of the Gulf War and of all the Kuwaitis who came to his country as refugees during the war and how he made some friends during that period. The last text evoked in him memories of September 11, and he retold where he was and what he did and how he felt.

Participant 1 data indicates that his positive attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture were reflected in his responses to the reading texts. He was able to respond in an aesthetic manner to the reading texts.

#### 4.5.2 Participant 2

The second participant is a physician in his forties who moved to the states six years ago. He also has a great respect for the American culture, and he feels that he shares most of its values. He likes to see some of the American values in his country. He does not read literature that much because of his tight schedule, but he does appreciate literature in general and American literature. He used to read literature when he had the time. In summary, participant 2 had positive attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture. The statistical data obtained from his attitude measure are presented in the following table:

**Table 25: Participant 2 Attitudes towards American Culture and American Literature**

Attitude Measure Sections	Attitudes towards American literature		Attitudes towards American culture	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
The semantic scale	5.75	0.62	5.45	1.27
The attitude items	2.67	1.19	2.52	1.23

Participant 2 responses to the reading texts were mostly aesthetic throughout the four texts. The text that he responded aesthetically to the most was “When the Skyline Crumbles”. He also responded aesthetically to “My Son the Murderer”. The following table represents his aesthetic versus efferent responses to the four reading texts:

**Table 26: Participant 2 Aesthetic vs. Efferent Responses**

Response types	Text 1		Text 2		Text 3		Text 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Most efferent	0	0	4	22.2	2	9.5	3	23.1
Primarily efferent	0	0	1	5.6	3	14.3	0	0
Primarily aesthetic	7	35	4	22.2	6	28.6	0	0
Most aesthetic	13	65	9	50	10	47.6	10	76.9

In responding to the first text he blamed the son for being an unappreciative son who lacks respect and gratitude to his father. He also states that the story made him think how he would react if his children behaved in the same manner. In responding to the second text he stated that Gerald seems to be a passionate person, who has great respect for this mother. He also mentioned that Gerald should have behaved in a smarter way. The third text made him retrieve his memories of the First Gulf War which were not very pleasant memories. However, he felt pity for G.D., but he didn't like the fact that G.D. decided to escape from his problems instead of facing them. The last text also evoked in him memories of September 11 and how that day changed the history.

Participant 2 data indicates that his positive attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture were reflected in his responses to the reading texts. He was able to respond in an aesthetic manner to the reading texts.

### **4.5.3 Participant 3**

The third participant is a thirty year old female; she is a stay at home mom who moved to the states seven years ago. She likes to read American literature and enjoys reading

stories that were converted into movies. She believes that the American culture is a great culture but that the only thing that it needs is respect and understanding of other cultures. In summary, participant 3 also had positive attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture. The statistical data obtained from her attitude measure are presented in the following table:

**Table 27: Participant 3 Attitudes towards American Culture and American Literature**

Attitude Measure Sections	Attitudes towards American literature		Attitudes towards American culture	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
The semantic scale	4	1.53	3.54	1.86
The attitude items	2.65	0.91	2.89	0.90

Participant 3 responses to the reading texts were mostly aesthetic throughout the four texts. However, the lowest number of aesthetic responses was to text 4. The following table represents her aesthetic versus efferent responses to the four reading texts:

**Table 28: Participant 3 Aesthetic vs. Efferent Responses**

Response types	Text 1		Text 2		Text 3		Text 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Most efferent	5	25	3	18.7	4	22.2	1	16.7
Primarily efferent	3	15	2	12.5	2	11.1	0	0.0
Primarily aesthetic	8	40	3	18.7	0	0.0	1	16.7
Most aesthetic	4	20	8	50	12	66.7	4	66.6

In responding to the first text she did sympathize with Harry who refuses to fight a war he doesn't believe in, but she also thinks that the way he feels doesn't give him the

right to treat his father in this manner. She also viewed both of them as victims of the circumstances. In responding to the second text the participant viewed Gerald as a passionate person who hates wars like herself. She also saw him as a good obedient son. As for the third text she was worried about G.D. and what he will do after he deserted his army since he will be treated as a traitor. She did believe that he should not have deserted his army because by doing so he is endangering his life and not saving anyone else's. As for the last text she did not really respond in so many words and expressed that she does not feel comfortable writing any more responses but she did express her sympathy with the victims of September 11.

Participant 3 data indicates that her positive attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture were reflected in her responses to the reading texts. She was able to respond in an aesthetic manner to the reading texts.

#### **4.5.4 Participant 4**

The fourth participant is a female pharmacist in her thirties; currently she is a stay at home mom and she has immigrated to the states more than seven years ago. She does not like to read literature in general or American literature in specific. The only kind of books she reads are scientific books and she only watches literature as a movie or on television. She believes that the American culture is a great culture and she has a great respect to it. However, she feels that she does not share some of its values. In summary, participant 4 had negative attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture. The statistical data obtained from her attitude measure are presented in the following table:

**Table 29: Participant 4 Attitudes towards American Culture and American Literature**

Attitude Measure Sections	Attitudes towards American literature		Attitudes towards American culture	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
The semantic scale	3.40	1.24	2.85	2.08
The attitude items	2.45	1.23	2.41	1.08

Participant 4 responses to the reading texts were mostly efferent throughout the four texts. The text that she responded efferently to the most was “My Son the Murderer”. The following table represents her aesthetic versus efferent responses to the four reading texts:

**Table 30: Participant 4 Aesthetic vs. Efferent Responses**

Response types	Text 1		Text 2		Text 3		Text 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Most efferent	14	53.8	9	39.2	3	20	8	38.1
Primarily efferent	4	15.4	5	21.7	6	40	3	14.3
Primarily aesthetic	4	15.4	2	8.7	4	26.7	3	14.3
Most aesthetic	4	15.4	7	30.4	2	13.3	7	33.3

In responding to the first text she failed to associate or sympathize with any of the characters. The story did not evoke in her any emotions good or bad. She basically attempted to retell the story in her own words. She also made some comments about the style of writing and the era in which the story was written. As for the second text she did have some aesthetic responses which were mostly expressions of pity and sympathy towards Gerald’s situation. However, she did resort to retelling and making literary judgments about the text. In the third text she did associate the events of the story to events that she has experienced during that era, however, most of her responses to this

text were also of a narrative nature. The same can be said about the fourth text in which she also had some associational responses but in general she attempted to criticize the poem and its style which she found strange and hard to understand.

Participant 4 data indicates that her negative attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture were reflected in an efferent reading of the four texts. She was unable to respond in an aesthetic manner to any of the reading texts and most of her responses were of an efferent nature.

#### 4.5.5 Participant 5

The fifth participant is a medical male student in his late twenties who moved to the States to study medicine more than seven years ago. Even with his busy schedule he likes to read literature in general and appreciates and loves American literature. He does prefer to spend his free time reading a book over watching television. He believes that the American culture is a great culture and considers America his second homeland. He also feels that America is the best model for democracy in the world. In summary, participant 4 had positive attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture. The statistical data obtained from his attitude measure are presented in the following table:

**Table 31: Participant 5 Attitudes towards American Culture and American Literature**

Attitude Measure Sections	Attitudes towards American literature		Attitudes towards American culture	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
The semantic scale	5.92	1.38	6.35	1.46
The attitude items	3	0.85	2.52	1.45



Participant 5 responses to the reading texts were mostly aesthetic throughout the four texts. The text that he responded aesthetically to the most was “When the Skyline Crumbles”. He also responded aesthetically to “My Son the Murderer” and “Gerald’s Song”. The following table represents his aesthetic versus efferent responses to the four reading texts:

**Table 32: Participant 5 Aesthetic vs. Efferent Responses**

Response types	Text 1		Text 2		Text 3		Text 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Most efferent	7	31.8	1	5.9	5	27.8	6	33.3
Primarily efferent	3	13.6	2	11.7	2	11.1	1	5.6
Primarily aesthetic	1	4.6	7	41.2	2	11.1	1	5.6
Most aesthetic	11	50	7	41.2	9	50	10	55.5

In responding to the first text he described the father as a loving caring father who is deeply worried about his son. In describing him he associated him with his own father and to the way his father would react in a similar situation. He also expressed his frustration and dissatisfaction with the behavior of the son. He even tried to address the son and reason with him to make him appreciate his father and his concern about him. In responding to the second text he expressed his admiration of Gerald and he saw him as a nice person who he would like to “hang out” with. He also commented that people like Gerald always suffer because they are always victims of circumstances. As for the third text, he expressed that the text represents a different point of view to the First Gulf War. To him it felt like “sitting on the other side of the fence” which he found very refreshing and sad at the same time because it made him feel that in wars there are no winners or losers there are only human beings on both sides. The fourth text evoked in him

memories of September 11 and also feelings of disappointment and sadness from being associated as a Muslim to the events of September 11 even though those who committed this act did not ask for his permission.

Participant 5 data indicates that his positive attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture were reflected in his responses to the reading texts. He was able to respond in an aesthetic manner to the reading texts.

#### 4.5.6 Participant 6

Participant 6 is a fifty years old female who moved to the states more than ten years ago. She does not like to read literature at all and she never reads American literature unless she has to. Participant 6 has stated that she has chosen to live in America because she believed in its values and principles. However, she believes that the American culture does not stand up for the values and principles it helped create. She has also expressed her disappointment in many aspects of the American culture. In summary, participant 6 had negative attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture. The statistical data obtained from her attitude measure are presented in the following table:

**Table 33: Participant 6 Attitudes towards American Culture and American Literature**

Attitude Measure Sections	Attitudes towards American literature		Attitudes towards American culture	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
The semantic scale	1.75	1.86	1.15	0.67
The attitude items	2.38	1.25	2.34	1.26

Participant 6 responses to the reading texts were mostly efferent throughout the four texts. The text that she responded aesthetically to the most was “When the Skyline Crumbles”, and the text that she responded efferently to the most is “My Son the Murderer”. The following table represents her aesthetic versus efferent responses to the four reading texts:

**Table 34: Participant 6 Aesthetic vs. Efferent Responses**

Response types	Text 1		Text 2		Text 3		Text 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Most efferent	11	78.6	12	63.2	6	50	7	41.2
Primarily efferent	1	7.1	5	26.3	4	33.3	2	11.7
Primarily aesthetic	0	0.0	2	10.5	0	0.0	1	5.9
Most aesthetic	2	14.3	0	0.0	2	16.7	7	41.2

In responding to “My Son the Murderer” she tended to retell the story in her own words and to comment on the literary aspects of it. She also seemed to adopt the point view of the son and look to his actions as justifiable actions. In responding to the second text she also resorted to analyzing the text and trying to understand it. She also made some character judgments (he “Gerald” is a very weak, passive character, who is controlled by his broker). As for the third text she also attempted to retell the story and to make literary judgments. She was questioning the motives of the author in depicting the main character. She said:

“Why did the author made (sic) G.D. look like an insane man when he deserted his unit? Whereas, this is probably the only sane thing he did”

As for the last text she did have some aesthetic responses mostly in associations and self involvement. However, she mostly was commenting on that style of poetry and how she does not understand it or appreciate it.

Participant 6 data indicates that her negative attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture were reflected in her responses to the reading texts. She was unable to respond in an aesthetic manner to the reading texts and most of her responses were efferent in nature.

#### 4.5.7 Participant 7

Participant 7 is a male engineer in his late thirties. This participant had the most worries about being a participant in the current study. He expressed his fears from misrepresenting his data and he was trying to state in his attitude measure what he thought would be a safe attitude. Therefore, his attitudes towards American literature and American culture came as a maximum positive response. Whereas, in the researcher’s point of view he was trying to look politically correct. The statistical data obtained from his attitude measure are presented in the following table:

**Table 35: Participant 7 Attitudes towards American Culture and American Literature**

Attitude Measure Sections	Attitudes towards American literature		Attitudes towards American culture	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
The semantic scale	7	0.0	7	0.0
The attitude items	3.80	0.75	3.89	0.55

Participant 7 responses to the reading texts were mostly efferent throughout the four texts. The text that he responded most efferently to was “My Son the Murderer”. He

also had the fewest number of responses in comparison to the other participants. The following table represents his aesthetic versus efferent responses to the four reading texts:

**Table 36: Participant 7 Aesthetic vs. Efferent Responses**

Response types	Text 1		Text 2		Text 3		Text 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Most efferent	11	84.6	13	81.3	7	38.9	6	60
Primarily efferent	2	15.4	2	12.5	7	38.9	2	20
Primarily aesthetic	0	0.0	1	6.2	2	11.1	0	0.0
Most aesthetic	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	11.1	2	20

Throughout the four texts he only attempted to interpret the texts. He also resorted to criticizing the author’s style of writing and to retelling the texts. Even though the stated attitudes of the participant were highly positive, his responses to the texts were highly efferent.

#### **4.5.8 Participant 8**

Participant 8 is a female graduate student in her mid thirties. She came to the United States more than 10 years ago with her family. At the time of the study she was a graduate student at a local university. Her field of study is English literature. Therefore, she has a passion for literature in general and she has a great appreciation for American literature. In responding to the Attitude Measure she expressed that it is hard to generalize because she does not believe in stereotyping and commented that in her responses she is referring to “certain people” that she knows. She also thinks that she does not share all the American values and that the American culture sees itself as the

only right and valid culture, something that she does not believe to be true or acceptable. In summary, participant 8 had positive attitudes towards reading American literature whereas she had negative attitudes towards the American culture. The statistical data obtained from her attitude measure are presented in the following table:

**Table 37: Participant 8 Attitudes towards American Culture and American Literature**

Attitude Measure Sections	Attitudes towards American literature		Attitudes towards American culture	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
The semantic scale	6.75	0.45	1.6	1.42
The attitude items	2.72	1.13	2.06	1.24

Participant 8 responses to the reading texts were mostly efferent responses throughout the four texts. The text that she responded most efferently to was “Notes from a Bunker along Highway 8”. She also responded efferently to “When the Skyline Crumbles”. The following table represents her aesthetic versus efferent responses to the four reading texts:

**Table 38: Participant 8 Aesthetic vs. Efferent Responses**

Response types	Text 1		Text 2		Text 3		Text 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Most efferent	10	55.5	11	55	11	68.7	10	62.5
Primarily efferent	5	27.8	6	30	4	25	2	12.5
Primarily aesthetic	1	5.6	2	10	0	0.0	2	12.5
Most aesthetic	2	11.1	1	5	1	6.3	2	12.5

In responding to “My Son the Murderer” she resorted to retelling and analyzing the literary aspects of the text. Even when responding to the questions that were supposed to illicit a more aesthetic response, she responded in an efferent manner. For example, when responding to “what did you like or dislike in the story?” she wrote that she liked

the style of the author whose other stories she has read and that she liked the way he emphasized the contrast between his characters. In responding to texts 2, 3 and 4 she also responded by retelling the text and by analyzing the characters and the author's style of writing. She made several comments about the different literary elements in the texts i.e., the plot, the theme and the author's use of satire or symbol.

Participant 8 data indicates that even though she had positive attitudes towards reading American literature she did not respond in an aesthetic manner to the literary texts. Her data also indicates that her negative attitudes towards American culture did manifest itself in an efferent response to the selected texts.

#### **4.5.9 Participant 9**

Participant 9 is a male teacher in his forties who moved to the states over ten years ago to establish his own business. Even though he is not an American citizen he considers America his second home. He has great respect for the American culture and sees it as a model that should be followed by all countries to make the world a better place. He does not read American literature only because he does not have the time, but he used to when he was younger. In summary, participant 9 had positive attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture. The statistical data obtained from his attitude measure are presented in the following table:

**Table 39: Participant 9 Attitudes towards American Culture and American Literature**

Attitude Measure Sections	Attitudes towards American literature		Attitudes towards American culture	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
The semantic scale	5.5	0.90	6.25	0.71
The attitude items	2.71	1.29	2.55	0.68

Participant 9 responses to the reading texts were mostly aesthetic for all of the four texts. The text that he responded aesthetically to the most was “Notes from a Bunker along Highway 8”. He also responded aesthetically to “When the Skyline Crumbles”. The following table represents his aesthetic versus efferent responses to the four reading texts:

**Table 40: Participant 9 Aesthetic vs. Efferent Responses**

Response types	Text 1		Text 2		Text 3		Text 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Most efferent	6	31.6	5	29.5	2	14.3	4	26.7
Primarily efferent	2	10.5	3	17.6	1	7.1	0	0.0
Primarily aesthetic	5	26.3	3	17.6	1	7.1	3	20
Most aesthetic	6	31.6	6	35.3	10	71.5	8	53.3

In responding to the four texts participant 9 was able to respond aesthetically. In responding to the first text his responses were almost evenly distributed between efferent and aesthetic responses. However, he was able to connect with the father’s character in a clear evidence of the lived through experience. In the second text, his responses were also distributed between efferent and aesthetic responses, and he was also able to sympathize with the main character. As for the third and the fourth texts both texts evoked in him memories of important events in his life, and he was able to associate the texts to events, characters, and feelings in his life.

Participant 9 data indicates that his positive attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture were reflected in his responses to the reading texts. He was able to respond in an aesthetic manner to the reading texts.



#### 4.5.10 Participant 10

Participant 10 is a female stay at home mom who also moved to the United States over ten years ago with her family. She considers America her second home as well, and she has great respect and appreciation for the American culture and for what it stands for. However, she made a distinction between the American society and the American government with whom she tends to disagree. She likes to read literature in general and she likes to read American literature especially mystery and romance novels. In summary, participant10 had positive attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture. The statistical data obtained from her attitude measure are presented in the following table:

**Table 41: Participant 10 Attitudes towards American Culture and American Literature**

Attitude Measure Sections	Attitudes towards American literature		Attitudes towards American culture	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
The semantic scale	5.33	1.07	4.7	1.08
The attitude items	2.67	1.01	2.55	1.05

Participant 10 responses to the reading texts were mostly aesthetic throughout the four texts. The text that she responded aesthetically to the most was “My Son the Murderer”. The following table represents her aesthetic versus efferent responses to the four reading texts:

**Table 42: Participant 10 Aesthetic vs. Efferent Responses**

Response types	Text 1		Text 2		Text 3		Text 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Most efferent	0	0.0	2	15.4	2	9.1	4	21.1
Primarily efferent	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	18.2	2	10.5
Primarily aesthetic	0	0.0	4	30.8	5	22.7	4	21.1
Most aesthetic	11	100	7	53.8	11	50	9	47.3

In responding to “My Son the Murderer” all her responses were aesthetic in nature. From the very beginning she was able to associate the feelings of the father to her own feelings. The text seemed to evoke in her feelings of sympathy and deep appreciation to the position of the father towards his son. She impersonated the character of the father and addressed the son in an attempt to bring him back to his senses. She wrote “My dear son, why is it so hard for you to see how much I love you?”

In responding to “Gerald’s Song” she also associated the feelings of the character especially the mother to her own. She also resorted to passing judgments on the characters and their actions. As for text three and four both texts evoked in her memories of the events that took place in those texts.

Participant 10 data indicates that her positive attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture were reflected in her responses to the reading texts. She was able to respond in an aesthetic manner to the reading texts.

#### 4.5.11 Participant 11

Participant 11 is a male teacher in his mid thirties. He came to the United States over five years ago and he left his job as a teacher to work in the retail business. He studied English for less than three years in his native country, and he rates his overall language ability at the intermediate low level. He does not like to read literature in his first language and he definitely does not like to read American literature even if it was translated. He thinks that reading literature is a waste of time, and he would rather read scientific or political books. However, he has great respect for the American culture and he sees it as the land of opportunity where personal achievement is more important than inheritance, which is something he misses in his country of origin. In summary, participant 11 had negative attitudes towards reading American literature and a more positive attitude towards the American culture. The statistical data obtained from his attitude measure are presented in the following table:

**Table 43: Participant 11 Attitudes towards American Culture and American Literature**

Attitude Measure Sections	Attitudes towards American literature		Attitudes towards American culture	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
The semantic scale	3	1.41	4.7	2.20
The attitude items	1.65	0.87	2.89	1.35

In responding to the literary texts participant 11 responded aesthetically to the four reading texts. The text he responded aesthetically to the most was “When the Skyline Crumbles”. The following table represents his aesthetic versus efferent responses to the four reading texts:

**Table 44: Participant 11 Aesthetic vs. Efferent Responses**

Response types	Text 1		Text 2		Text 3		Text 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Most efferent	9	40.9	4	25	5	25	4	23.5
Primarily efferent	0	0.0	2	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Primarily aesthetic	5	22.7	1	6.2	6	30	3	17.7
Most aesthetic	8	36.4	9	56.3	9	45	10	58.8

In responding to “My Son the Murderer” participant 11 did tend to focus on the structure of the work and on the moral of the text. He also made judgmental responses on the characters behaviors, i.e. “the only thing that Leo should not do is invading his son’s privacy by opening his letters”. He was also able to involve himself and associate the feelings of Leo “the father” to his own. In responding to “Gerald’s Song” he was able to involve himself even more and he felt he shares the values and ethics of Gerald. He also tended to address Gerald in an attempt to advise him to make better investment decisions:

“You ‘Gerald’ remind me of myself. You are trying to do the right thing but sometimes you have to be selfish. I wish we could meet to discuss things together.”

In responding to “Notes from a Bunker along Highway 8” participant 11 was able to associate the feelings of G.D. “the soldier” to his own feelings and to the events that he witnessed during the First Gulf War. As for “When the Skyline Crumbles” he was also able to involve himself in the poem; and even though he had difficulty understanding it, he was able to grasp the main ideas of the poem and feel personally connected to the events of the poem.

Participant 11 data indicates that his positive attitudes towards the American culture were reflected in his responses to the reading texts. Even though he had negative attitudes towards reading American literature, he was able to respond in an aesthetic manner to the reading texts.

#### 4.5.12 Participant 12

Participant 12 is a male engineer in his mid thirties who moved to the United States over five years ago to study for his graduate studies. He moved back to his country shortly after the collection of this data. He feels that he does not share some of the values of the American culture. He feels that the American culture in spite of its achievements is not the ideal model that needs to be followed by the rest of the world. In general he has unfavorable attitudes towards the American culture. As for reading American literature he states that he does not read literature in general and American literature in specific. He reads it only when it was part of his study. He also thinks that literature is for people who have plenty of time on their hands and he is not one of those people. In summary, participant 12 had negative attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture. The statistical data obtained from his attitude measure are presented in the following table:

**Table 45: Participant 12 Attitudes towards American Culture and American Literature**

Attitude Measure Sections	Attitudes towards American literature		Attitudes towards American culture	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
The semantic scale	2.85	1.44	3.40	1.63
The attitude items	2.34	0.87	2.43	0.68

Participant 12 responses to the reading texts were mostly efferent responses throughout the four texts. The text that he responded most efferently to was “My Son the Murderer”. He also responded efferently to “Notes from a Bunker along Highway 8”. The following table represents his aesthetic versus efferent responses to the four reading texts:

**Table 46: Participant 12 Aesthetic vs. Efferent Responses**

Response types	Text 1		Text 2		Text 3		Text 4	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Most efferent	11	73.4	5	29.4	15	83.3	10	52.6
Primarily efferent	2	13.3	6	35.3	2	11.1	3	15.8
Primarily aesthetic	2	13.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Most aesthetic	0	0.0	6	35.3	1	5.6	6	31.6

In responding to “My Son the Murderer” participant 12 chose to analyze the text and comment on the genre of the text. His responses focused on examining the plot and the setting of the story. As for “Gerald’s Song” he did sympathize with Gerald for the way he lost his life savings and he also blamed Gerald’s mother for “making things harder for him.” However, he also tended to analyze the plot of the text. In responding to “Gerald’s Song” he responded by commenting on the historical background of the text and on analyzing the political atmosphere in which the text was written. His aesthetic responses in this text focused on blaming G.D. ‘the soldier’ for trying to feel better about his “demonic actions” by deserting his army. As for “When the Skyline Crumbles” he responded by analyzing the poem and trying to understand what he considered a hard genre for him. However, he also associated the events of the poem to the events he witnessed during the same time.

Participant 12 data indicates that his negative attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture were reflected in his responses to the reading texts. He was unable to respond in an aesthetic manner to the reading texts and most of his responses were efferent in nature.

#### **4.5.13 Summary**

The following section summarizes the data presented in the previous section which attempted to answer the third question: “What is the relation between the participants’ attitudes and their responses to literature?” The following table summarizes this data:

**Table 47: Summary of Data**

Participant #	Attitudes towards American		Responses
	Literature	Culture	
Participant 1	Positive	Positive	Aesthetic
Participant 2	Positive	Positive	Aesthetic
Participant 3	Positive	Positive	Aesthetic
Participant 4	Negative	Negative	Efferent
Participant 5	Positive	Positive	Aesthetic
Participant 6	Negative	Negative	Efferent
Participant 7	Positive	Positive	Efferent
Participant 8	Positive	Negative	Efferent
Participant 9	Positive	Positive	Aesthetic
Participant 10	Positive	Positive	Aesthetic
Participant 11	Negative	Positive	Aesthetic
Participant 12	Negative	Negative	Efferent



It appears that participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, and 10 who had positive attitudes towards reading the American literature and towards the American culture responded aesthetically to the four reading texts. The only participant who had positive attitudes towards reading the American literature and towards the American culture but responded efferently to the four reading texts is participant 7. However, this can be due to the fact that he had the most worries about participating in the current study and in the researcher's opinion his written attitudes might not be a true representation of his real attitudes. Therefore, his responses might have been influenced by his real attitudes not by his stated ones.

It also appears that participants 4, 6, and 12 who had negative attitudes towards the American culture and towards reading the American literature responded efferently to the four reading texts. As for participant 8 even though she had positive attitudes towards reading the American literature her reading to the four texts was an efferent reading. As has been mentioned before her field of study is English literature and this might have affected her attitudes as well as the nature of her response. Her data also indicates that the negative attitudes towards the American culture might have a greater impact on the responses than the positive attitudes towards the American literature. On the other hand, participant 11 who had negative attitudes towards reading the American literature was still able to respond in an aesthetic manner to the four reading texts. His negative attitudes towards the American literature might be due to the fact that he rates his overall language ability at the intermediate low level and to the fact that he does not read or like to read literature at all. However, his data is another indication that attitudes towards American culture seems to have a greater impact on the responses than the attitudes

towards the American literature. The patterns of the participants' responses can be further conceptualized in the following table:

**Table 48: Patterns of Participants' Responses and Attitudes**

Patterns	Responses	Attitudes towards American	
		Literature	Culture
Pattern 1	Aesthetic	Positive	Positive
Pattern 2	Efferent	Negative	Negative
Pattern 3	Aesthetic	Negative	Positive
Pattern 4	Efferent	Positive	Negative
Pattern 5	Efferent	Positive	Positive

#### **4.6 THE MISINTERPRETATIONS**

The previous analysis of the participants' responses to the literary texts excluded the misinterpretations or the errors in interpretation which affected the participants' perception of the texts. This section will attempt to analyze these misinterpretations and to reveal its sources to answer the fourth question of the study which is: "What are the sources of the participants' misinterpretations?"

The misinterpretations which were excluded from the initial analysis of the responses were distributed among the four texts. The following table shows the distribution of these misinterpretations among the texts:

**Table 49: Distribution of Misinterpretations among the Four Literary Texts**

Texts	# of misinterpretations	% of misinterpretations
Text 1	25	10.2
Text 2	19	8.4
Text 3	18	7.9
Text 4	31	14.3

The above table shows that the participants' misinterpretations constituted a relatively large percentage of their overall responses. The misinterpretations were almost equally distributed among the four texts. However, "When the Skyline Crumbles" had the highest percentage of misinterpretations. This might be attributed to the fact that this is the only poem among the four texts. So, it seems that the genre of the text might have been a contributing factor. The relatively high level of misinterpretations also reveals that the participants tended to overrate their language proficiency.

A study of these misinterpretations reveals the sources of misinterpretations that were particularly prevalent among the participants and throughout the four texts. The main source of misinterpretation was comprehension problems or what Squire (1964) refers to as failure to grasp the meaning of the text. Comprehension problems are attributed to the inability of the readers to activate their background knowledge or their schemata. In order to interpret a certain text readers need to activate an appropriate schema. However, if the reader activates an inappropriate schematic knowledge or does not possess the appropriate schemata needed to comprehend the text the reader may misinterpret the text. In other words, the participants were unable to apply a schema that gives the text coherence. Comprehension problems of the texts involved problems in two

basic modes of information processing, which are usually referred to as bottom-up and top-down processing. The following section discusses misinterpretations of the texts which were caused by problems in these two modes of processing:

#### **4.6.1 Knowledge-based Schemata as a Source of Misinterpretation**

Knowledge based schemata is the bottom-up processing of the incoming data. The bottom-up processing of data involves processing information at the word level first, the phrases or clauses, and then sentences. Linguistic knowledge is essential to processing the text at the bottom-up level. Even though the participants were mostly advanced ESL readers they had gaps in their linguistic knowledge. The gaps in their linguistic knowledge were mostly manifested in misunderstanding key vocabulary, figurative speech or idioms. When the participants were encountered with a gap in their linguistic knowledge they misinterpreted the text.

##### **4.6.1.1 Vocabulary:**

Misunderstanding key words lead to failure in comprehension. Examples of this source of misinterpretations are clear throughout the texts. For example, the word “drafted” in “My Son the Murderer” was not understood and therefore some of the participants were not sure of why the son in the story was that worried about the war. They attributed his behavior to being a bad son or because it is acceptable to behave in this manner in an American family and not to the fact that he is going to be forced to go to a war that he does not believe in. Also in “My son the Murderer” the word “reciprocate” in “a person who won’t reciprocate” was misinterpreted as a “person who doesn’t show respect”.

An additional example is the word “infuriated” in “he was still infuriated” as “he was still drunk.”

Another example is in “Gerald’s Song” the word “pottery” was also not understood. As a result most of the participants could not decide what kind of stock Gerald invested his money in and therefore were unable to see the passionate side of his personality. Another misunderstood word is the word “desert” the army” in “Notes from a Bunker along Highway 8”. Most of the participants were not sure what G.D. is doing and their interpretations showed their confusion. One of the participants wrote “G.D. is a soldier who is in the desert...” The participant confused the verb “desert” with the noun “desert”. Also in “When the Skyline Crumbles” the word “candlelit” in “3000 New Yorkers, mostly young, candlelit Union Square” was misunderstood by a participant and he wrote “Young men in New York cleaned Union Square after the demonstrations”. However, it is important to mention that the participants who may be considered advanced ESL readers were able to guess the meaning of most unfamiliar words from context.

#### **4.6.1.2 Grammar:**

When the participants encountered figurative language and idioms they had a difficult time making meaning of the text. For example the idiom “hostages to fortune” in “My Son the Murderer” was misinterpreted by a participant as “the father is afraid that his son may go to the war and be taken hostage.”

Also the figurative speech in “When the Skyline Crumbles” made it difficult for them to understand the texts. For example, “with surreal gaping hole blowing dark smoke out a new mouth” and “smoke that torched bodies now tangibly coating tongue &

nostrils, dust burning all 3 eyes” made the participants respond by comments like “I don’t understand” or “that doesn’t make sense to me.”

#### **4.6.2 Textual-based Schemata as a Source of Misinterpretation**

A Textual-based schema is the top-down processing of the incoming data. The top-down processing of data involves “knowledge relevant to the formal, rhetorical organizational structures of different types of texts” (Carrell, 1987). It also involves knowledge relevant to the content of the text. It is important to distinguish between these two kinds of textual-based schemata and which were considered a source of misinterpretation. The following section discusses the two kinds of text-based schemata:

##### **4.6.2.1 Formal schemata:**

Formal schema is the background knowledge of the structures of different types of texts. Therefore, texts with unfamiliar genre were a source of misinterpretations. The participants were told that they are going to read four texts; three short stories and a poem. However, they were not told that the poem that they will read is actually a blank verse poem. Almost all of the participants did not recognize “When the Skyline Crumbles” as a poem. It was mostly viewed as a badly written short story and one participant thought it was a newspaper article. The reason is that Arabic poetry is a very distinct type of writing that uses a different and more extensive form of rhyme. Therefore, this poem which followed an unfamiliar genre to them was viewed as a hard text that can not be easily understood. On the other hand, in “Gerald’s Song” some of the participants thought that it is a poem because of the couplet:

*O Gerald.*  
*O Mother.*

Also, when the structural organization of the text was unfamiliar the participants misinterpreted the texts. Participants were particularly confused when they were not sure who the speaker is. For example in “My Son the Murderer” the participants were particularly confused when the story was told by the father and then by the son without a clear indication of the speaker.

#### **4.6.2.2 Culture-specific content schemata:**

Content schema is background knowledge of the content area of a text. One of the obvious reasons a schema may fail to exist for an ESL reader is that the schema is specific to a particular culture and is not a part of the readers’ background knowledge. Realizing the historical era in which a certain text is written is key to interpreting the text. Therefore, in “My Son the Murderer” most of the participants tended to misinterpret and were not able to relate the events of the text to the Vietnam War. On the other hand, in “Gerald’s Song” in which the war is an imaginary war most of the participants assumed that the war mentioned in the story is actually the current war on terror and that the country mentioned in the story is Afghanistan. The reason is that the participants were more familiar with the cultural background of the current war and linked it to the events of the story. The same misinterpretation was present in “Notes from a Bunker along Highway 8”. The participants were under the assumption that the events of the story took place during the current Iraq War.

Also, in “When the Skyline Crumbles” cultural references like “vote mayoral primary”, “Soho’s Spring Street”, “I subway’d into Manhattan”, “my Queens

neighborhood”, and “Thursday I sat half hour Union Square with a Tibetan group meditating for peace”, to mention a few, were a source of misinterpretation. The participants did not fully understand the poem and made comments like “it has many hard words” or “I’m not sure what he means by...” Clearly themes and scenes that contained highly culturally specific information were difficult to grasp.

Lack of background knowledge of the content area of the text forced the participants to rely on their own assumptions about the American culture. In other words they used stereotyping as an alternative method for interpreting the texts in order to compensate for their lack of knowledge about the content of the texts. When the participants relied on what they viewed or knew about the American culture they misinterpreted the text. They brought to the text interpretations that are not included in it and not intended by the author. For example, in “My Son the Murderer” participants’ perception about the American culture were that kids leave home by the age of eighteen; however, Harry (the son) was living with his parents until the age of twenty-four; therefore some participants assumed that Harry is either sick or spoiled.

#### **4.7 SUMMARY**

This chapter has presented the answer for the four research questions. The first section attempted to answer the first research question. Results discussed indicate that the participants had in general a positive attitude towards the American culture and towards reading its literature. The second section of this chapter attempted to answer the second research question. The responses of the participants were analyzed qualitatively and



quantitatively. The results indicated that the interpretational response was the predominant response in the four literary texts. However, the aesthetic and efferent responses were almost equally distributed among the four texts. The qualitative analysis of the responses identified four themes. From these four themes emerged a picture of the points of engagement of the participants' responses.

The third section of the chapter attempted to answer the third question of the study. The case of each participant was analyzed to see if there is a relation between their attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture and the way they responded to the literary texts. The results indicated that the participants who had a positive attitude towards the American culture and towards reading the American literature responded aesthetically to the four reading texts. On the other hand, the participants who had a negative attitude towards the American culture and towards reading the American literature responded efferently to the four reading texts.

The fourth section of the chapter attempted to answer the fourth question of the study and to analyze the participants' misinterpretations. The results indicated that the misinterpretations involved problems in the two basic modes of information processing, which are bottom-up and top-down processing.

## 5.0 SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSIONS

**It (the reading of a literary work) is a kind of experience valuable and for itself, and yet-or perhaps, therefore-it can also have a liberating and fortifying effect in the ongoing life of the reader. (Rosenblatt, 1995: 277)**

### 5.1 SUMMARY

The main objective of the current study is to investigate how the Arab ESL readers read and respond to American literature. It attempts to determine the role of the Arab readers' attitudes in responding to ESL literature. The study also aims to acknowledge the special place that the aesthetic aspect should hold in current ESL classes. This study also seeks to analyze the readers' misinterpretations in order to determine its sources.

The theoretical framework of this study is built on theories of literary criticism, theories of reader-response and the relatively small body of information about reading literature in L2 context. The major component of the theoretical framework of the current study is the transactional theory of reading which stresses the equal importance of the text and the reader in the formation of meaning. Another main component of the theoretical framework of the study is Louise Rosenblatt's efferent vs. aesthetic reading concept. The theoretical framework of the study also included the different components that are crucial

for reading i.e. the role of schema, vocabulary knowledge and metacognition which were central concepts to the study.

A pilot study was conducted prior to the actual application of the study. The pilot study was conducted on three subjects who were excluded from the participants of the study. The pilot study aimed at determining the functionality of the questionnaire that was developed by the researcher. It also aimed at providing insights into the data collection and analysis process. As a result of the pilot study some of the questionnaire items were rephrased. It was also determined that the linguistic level of the texts is suitable to the participants.

Participants of this study were twelve adult Arab Moslem ESL learners. There were five females and seven males whose ages ranged between twenty-six to fifty-five. All of the participants read and spoke Arabic as their first language. They all witnessed the events of September 11, 2001 in the United States. All of the participants considered themselves advanced ESL learners.

To achieve these objectives the study used a mixed methods research design. The study first examined the attitudes of Arab readers towards the American culture and towards reading the American literature. The *Attitude Measure* developed by the researcher mainly aimed at assessing the feelings and attitudes of the participants towards the host culture (the American culture) and towards what they perceived as its personal characteristics. It also aimed at assessing the feelings and attitudes of the participants towards American literature. The study also examined the responses of those readers towards four literary texts. The texts are “Notes from a Bunker Along Highway 8” by Gabe Hudson; “My Son the Murderer” by Bernard Malamud; “Gerald’s Song” by Philip

O'Connor, and "When the Skyline Crumbles" by Eliot Katz. The four texts had political and social themes and contained issues of significance and concern to the readers, especially to Arab readers. To elicit the participants' responses they were asked to record any initial thoughts they might have during reading. They were also given a response prompt to get their final responses. The prompt was in the form of an open-ended question. They were also asked to answer six questions that aimed to get more specific information about their responses to the texts. Their responses and the stance they used when responding to the selected readings were analyzed. In order to analyze the participants' responses their responses were categorized according to Rosenblatt's distinction between aesthetic and efferent or nonaesthetic reading. Cox and Many's (1992) *Measure of Reader Stance Towards a Literary Work on an Efferent to Aesthetic Continuum* was used as a guide in analyzing the participants' literary responses. Their measure is a five-point continuum with responses at one end indicating the most efferent stance and at the opposing end the most aesthetic stance. The measure used in the study was reduced to a four-point continuum and a sub-classification of these categories emerged from the data analysis of participants' responses. The sub-classification of the categories was guided by Squire's (1964) classification of responses.

The study also investigated the relation between each of the participants' attitudes and the way they responded to the selected readings. Finally, the study aimed at investigating the misinterpretations of the participants of the literary texts and understanding the sources behind it.

To conduct the study the researcher met with the participants to inform them about the nature and purpose of the study. After securing consent from the participants,

they were grouped in four groups. The first data collection tool to be administered was the *Attitude Measure* which was administered by the researcher. The attitude measure consists of seventy-one items and took about forty to fifty minutes to complete. The *Attitude Measure* was used to assess the participants' attitudes toward the American culture and toward reading its literature. The participants were allowed to comment on the items included in the measure whether orally or by adding some written comments. All the responses and the comments made by the participants were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively.

After responding to the questionnaire the participants were presented with the literary texts. They were allowed to read the text as many times as they want, however, most of the participants read it once. Most of them added comments on the margins as they read. They were asked to respond to each text immediately after reading it. They responded using the response prompt described earlier. Their responses were categorized and analyzed using the proposed continuum of aesthetic and efferent responses.

To further analyze the data the ongoing themes on the responses were identified and analyzed. The researcher has identified four themes in the participants' responses: a) connecting with personal attitudes, b) conflicting perceptions of characters, c) associating with current events, and d) identifying recurring themes. These four themes aided in depicting a picture of the dimensions, structure, and points of engagement of the participants' responses.

To see if there is a relation between the participants' attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture and the way they responded to the literary texts the case of each participant was analyzed. It appeared that the participants

who had positive attitudes towards reading the American literature and towards the American culture responded aesthetically to the four reading texts. It also appears that the participants who had negative attitudes towards the American culture and towards reading the American literature responded efferently to the four reading texts.

The misinterpretations of the participants which were excluded from the initial analysis of responses were analyzed to determine its sources. The analysis revealed that the sources of misinterpretations that were particularly prevalent among the participants and throughout the four texts were comprehension problems of the texts. The comprehension problems involved problems in two basic modes of information processing. The first mode of data processing is knowledge based schemata which is also referred to as the bottom-up processing of the incoming data. Problems in this mode of information processing were mostly manifested in misunderstanding key vocabulary, figurative speech or idioms. The second mode of data processing is textual-based schema which is the top-down processing of the incoming data. Problems in this mode were manifested in two forms. The first was caused by the lack of formal schema which is the background knowledge of the structures of different types of texts. The second was caused by lack of culture-specific content schema. Culture-specific content schema is background knowledge of the content area of a text which is specific to a particular culture and is not a part of the readers' culture.

## 5.2 DISCUSSION

The following section will discuss the findings of the study and the answer to the four research questions:

### 5.2.1 The Attitudes of the Participants

The study sought to identify and examine the attitudes of the ESL Arab learners towards the American culture and towards reading American literature. First, participants had in general a positive attitude towards American literature and they agreed that American literature is important and that it represents the highest form of writing in any culture. However, they agreed that it is complicated and putting it into their own words “hard to read and understand”. They also agreed that grammatical knowledge is essential to reading American literature whereas vocabulary knowledge is not. The reason might be due to the fact that the ESL class in the Arab world is widely influenced by the grammar-translation methods which focus on the elaborate explanation of grammar.

As for their attitudes towards American culture the participants had in the overall positive attitudes. They believed that the most important attribute of the American culture is its success and achievements. They also indicated that they would like to know more about the American people and have more American friends. However, they indicated that the American people are generally prejudiced and in general have a negative attitude towards the Arabic culture.

It is important to highlight few issues here the first is that the limited number of the participants indicated that the results can not be generalized and that these

participants only represent themselves. Second, the participants were concerned about being socially and politically correct. This means that their responses to the attitude measure items might have been affected by the current political climate. What also can be taken from the results and the researcher's field notes is that the majority of the participants do have what can be considered positive attitudes towards the American culture but they differentiate between the American culture and the American government. They view them as two distinct entities and most of the participants had made this distinction clear in their responses. As for reading the American literature it seemed that the majority of the participants had positive attitudes towards reading the American literature with certain restrictions. First, they have to have the time to read and most of them indicated that they simply do not have the time. Second, it has to be something that interests them personally and that they consider easy to understand.

The last issue that has to be highlighted is that the analysis of the attitude measure items was not a factor analysis. Future studies could examine the reliability and validity of the attitude measure with a factor analysis. Factor analysis of the attitude measure could reveal patterns of response that were otherwise concealed.

The attitudes towards reading American literature as reflected in this study are actually less positive than the attitudes of the participants towards American culture. It is possible that the participants felt less threatened in expressing their attitudes towards reading American literature than in expressing their attitudes towards American culture. It might also be due to the fact that the majority of the participants were not interested in reading literature in general nor reading American literature in particular.



### **5.2.2 The Participants Responses to the Literary Texts**

The responses of the participants were analyzed on the aesthetic vs. efferent continuum that was previously discussed. The responses of the participants to the four texts did vary in range between aesthetic and efferent. Responses to “Notes from a Bunker along Highway 8” and to “When the Skylines Crumbles” had the most number of aesthetic responses. This is probably due to the fact that these two texts had two issues that touched the readers on a more personal level. The first issue was the Gulf War and the second was September 11.

The type of response that prevailed throughout the four texts was the interpretational response. This is possibly due to the tendency of the subjects to detach themselves from the texts and also to give what they considered a safe response. As has been mentioned before the subjects did not feel secure enough to express their true attitudes and responses, therefore they resorted to giving a safe response, and interpreting the text seemed to be the response they felt they can write without fearing it will be looked at with scrutiny.

Besides the response types used for analyzing, the researcher has identified four themes in the participants’ responses: a) connecting with personal attitudes, b) conflicting perceptions of characters, c) associating with current events, and d) identifying recurring themes. It is clear from the recurring themes in their responses that the participants drew heavily from their own culture when they responded and that they also engaged their personal attitudes and perceptions about the culture of the literary texts. Therefore, the meaning they constructed through the reading became different. The findings of the study are in agreement with the findings of other studies (i.e. Arshad, 1998; Carter-Jones, 1999;

Al-Mahrooqi, 2003) that suggest that the responses of the readers are considerably affected by their cultural background.

It also has to be noted that all the selected texts had a theme that has significance to the Arab reader, especially after September 11. Therefore, the relation between their attitudes and their responses might be different if the texts were thematically different. The attitudes of the participants' affected their responses in a text-specific way rather than a uniformly consistent way. This means that if the texts had different themes the results might have been different.

### **5.2.3 The Relation between the Participants' Responses and their Attitudes**

To determine the relation between the participants' attitudes and their responses the researcher analyzed the case of each participant to see if there is a relation between their attitudes towards reading American literature and towards the American culture and the way they responded to the literary texts. The reason the analysis was done on a case by case basis is the limited number of subjects which did not allow for an accurate correlational statistical analysis.

It appeared from the analysis that the participants who had negative attitudes towards the American culture and towards reading the American literature responded efferently to the four reading texts. It also appeared that the participants who had positive attitudes towards reading the American literature and towards the American culture responded aesthetically to the four reading texts. Another interesting finding of the study is that in general, women were more open about their attitudes and their responses than

men. This might be due to the fact the Arab males feel that they are targeted and viewed as a potential risk to the United States national security.

The findings of the study highlight the importance of attitudes when learning and using a second language. The findings are in agreement with the findings of other studies (i.e. Abu-Rabia, 1993; Barringer, 1999; Middleton, 2000; Yao, 2002).

The findings of the study also highlight the importance of attitudes in a new aspect of ESL education which is response to literature. To the knowledge of the researcher there were no studies in ESL that linked attitudes to response to literature. Moreover, it is one of the important findings of this study that possessing negative attitudes toward the target culture and to reading its literature can affect responses to literature and make reading more efferent. On the other hand, positive attitudes are manifested in more aesthetic reading. This can be explained by the fact that the stance the reader adopts may be “efferent” or “aesthetic” depending on the reader’s focus of attention, his/her purpose for reading, and his/her attitude toward the culture and the literature. Therefore, if his/her purpose is to be engaged in a literary work and to have that lived through experience, the stance is aesthetic; but if the purpose is to extract and retain information from the text, the stance is efferent.

#### **5.2.4 The Sources of the Participants’ Misinterpretations**

The misinterpretations of the participants were analyzed to reveal its sources. The misinterpretations were attributed to the inability of the readers to activate the appropriate schemata that gives the text coherence. In general, the misinterpretations were in the two modes of processing: bottom-up and top-down processing.

Problems at the bottom-up processing or the knowledge-based schemata were manifested in misunderstanding key vocabulary, figurative speech or idioms. When the participants misunderstood key vocabulary or when they were faced with a figurative speech or idiom they misinterpreted the text.

Problems at the top-down processing or the textual-based schemata were caused by lack of knowledge relevant to the formal structures of different types of texts. When the participants were faced with a text that has a structure that they were not familiar with they had more misinterpretations. That was particularly evident in the participants' interpretations of "When the Skyline Crumbles" which represented an unfamiliar genre. It was also caused by lack of knowledge relevant to the content of the text. When the readers were encountered with a schema that is specific to the American culture and is not a part of their schemata they misinterpreted the text. They also compensated their lack of background knowledge of the content schemata by relying on their own attitudes and assumptions about the American culture.

Another source of misinterpretation is when the participants relied on what Squire (1964) calls stock response. Although this source was not as evident as the other sources it still constituted an important source of misinterpretation. The reason behind this type of response is probably because the participants dealt with the research with suspicion. So, they relied on "stock responses" as an easy way out.

### 5.3 IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The study brought several implications to the teaching of second language learners. The first implication is about the expectations of teachers of ESL learners. Teachers must expect different readings from different individuals based on their personal experiences as well as their personal attitudes. Second, it is important to understand that the teacher and the student in the ESL classroom must have positive attitudes towards the target culture. Having negative attitudes can be a reason for not achieving an aesthetic reading and engaging with the literary work.

Third, teachers should also try to help their students understand their own personal attitudes and biases. By doing so, they will help the student arrive at a more balanced sense of the work. As Rosenblatt states:

Yet such general social attitudes will ultimately condition the whole texture of the student's experience of life as well as of literature. In the interplay between the book and the personality, failures in sensitivity, misinterpretations, and distorted reactions often have their roots in such influences. (1995, p. 91)

Finally, realizing the importance of the attitudes of the ESL readers is of great importance. Teachers should realize that they need to incorporate as many aspects as possible of the students' attitudes and to let the students know that their attitudes are valid.

As for the implications for future research, the study added to the very limited information available concerning the specific ways in which the individual's attitudes influence the responses to literature. Literature concerning Arab ESL readers is also

limited and the study sought to expand the existing pool of knowledge regarding the responses and attitudes of Arab readers to ESL literature. However, because the study was done with a limited sample from one area of the world, the researcher suggests replicating the study on a larger sample. Comparative studies can also compare the attitudes of different cultures towards the same literature. The same study could be replicated to study the different countries of the Arab world. The study tried to study the attitudes of the ESL Arab readers but as a matter of fact the Arab world is not a single entity. It represents different cultures and each culture might have different attitudes.

The study also implies that ESL readers should be aware of the two reading stances. They should also be encouraged to explore their own personal attitudes and how it influences the stance they adopt when they read. This will help them realize that reading literature provides them with a level of personal connection that might not be available in other disciplines. In addition, they should realize that understanding literature involves more than understanding the words and that understanding the literary work can not be truly achieved until it is related to their own personal experience. Rosenblatt (1995) stated that understanding and interpreting the literary work implies the full impact of a word. She also stated that literature can not be understood in isolation it must be related to our own personal experience. This means that literature can be truly understood when it is related to other feelings, patterns, and attitudes. The world is becoming smaller and smaller and positive attitudes, tolerance, and open-mindedness are all vital elements in the ESL classroom and certainly should be recognized as such.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE**

You have been invited to participate in a study regarding the relationship between readers' attitudes and the way they respond to literature. Participation is limited to Arab readers. This study is the final phase of the researcher's doctoral dissertation research. The materials you will be given include a survey and four literary texts which you will be asked to read and respond to. This study will result in a better understanding of the way ESL readers read and respond to literature.

There are no specific risks or discomforts expected as a result of your participation. Your participation is completely voluntary. The results of your participation in this study will be completely confidential. Your responses will be referenced only by the unique identification code assigned to you on your copy of the questionnaire. The identification code has been used to ensure the security of submitted data. The researcher will control the master list of names and identification codes. When all information has been collected and coded, the master list will be destroyed. Any publication or presentation of the results of this research will include only information about group performances and not individual performance. You are encouraged to ask any questions that you might have before, during or after the administration of the materials.

Thank you for your time.

Hala Ismail Hassan Ismail

Doctoral Candidate

School of Education, University of Pittsburgh

## APPENDIX B

### ATTITUDE MEASURE

#### I. Demographic information:

The goal of this section is simply to know you better.

Please answer the following questions by circling the answer that best describes you:

- 1- Age:
- |       |       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 20-25 | 26-30 | 31-35 | 36-40 |
| 41-45 | 46-50 | 51-55 | 56-60 |
- 2- Sex:            Female            Male
- 3- How long have you been living in the US?
- |                   |           |           |                   |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|
| Less than 2 years | 2-3 years | 4-5 years | more than 5 years |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|
- 4- Your education level is:
- |             |         |          |
|-------------|---------|----------|
| High school | College | Graduate |
|-------------|---------|----------|



5- How many years did you study English in your country of origin?  
Less than 3 years                      3-5 years              6-10 years              More than 10 years

6- What is your most recent TOEFL score, if any:

7- Rate your overall English level:

Beginner	Intermediate low	Intermediate
Intermediate high	High	Superior

8- Rate your knowledge of English:

- My knowledge of English grammar is:  
poor                      good                      very good              excellent

- My vocabulary knowledge is:  
poor                      good                      very good              excellent

- My ability to write in English is:  
poor                      good                      very good              excellent

- My ability to read English is:  
poor                      good                      very good              excellent

- My ability to speak English is:  
poor                      good                      very good              excellent

- My listening comprehension is:  
poor                      good                      very good              excellent

- My knowledge of the American culture is:  
 poor                    good                    very good                    excellent

9- I think literature includes (circle all that apply):  
 Short stories          poems                  plays          science fiction          romance novels  
 Songs          movies                  cartoons          fairy tales          newspaper articles

**II. Semantic scale:**

The purpose of this section is to determine your initial impression about Americans and American literature. Mark your answer in the column as follows (circle only one):

7 or 1: If the word at either side of the scale describes your impression very strongly.

6 or 2: If the word at either side of the scale somewhat describes your impression.

5 or 3: If the word at either side of the scale slightly describes your impression.

4: If the word at either side of the scale doesn't seem to be related to your impression.

1- In my opinion Americans are:

good	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	evil
sensitive	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	insensitive
approachable	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	hostile
fair	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	unfair
reliable	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	unreliable
patient	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	impatient
modest	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	arrogant
considerate	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	inconsiderate

moral	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	immoral
unprejudiced	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	prejudiced
brave	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	cowardly
friendly	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	unfriendly
honest	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	dishonest
smart	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	stupid
kind	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	cruel
polite	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	impolite
sincere	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	insincere
successful	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	unsuccessful
hard-working	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	lazy
ambitious	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	not ambitious

2- In my opinion American literature is:

easy	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	difficult
useful	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	useless
fascinating	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	tedious
interesting	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	boring
appealing	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	unappealing
complicated	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	simple
important	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	unimportant
good	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	bad
valuable	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	worthless

necessary	7	6	5	4	3	2	1 unnecessary
enjoyable	7	6	5	4	3	2	1 unenjoyable
clear	7	6	5	4	3	2	1 confusing

**III. Attitude items:**

Indicate your opinion about each statement by placing an X in the column that best represents your view about the statement. Indicate your personal feelings as:

4 = Strongly agree

3 = Agree

2 = Disagree

1 = Strongly disagree

ITEMS	4	3	2	1
<i><u>I. Attitudes towards Reading American Literature:</u></i>				
2- I really enjoy reading American literature.				
3- I read American literature to know more about the American culture.				
4- I try to read as much American literature as possible.				
5- American literature expresses my personal opinions as much as Arabic literature does.				
6- Arabic literature is distinguished from American literature by its better use of language.				
7- Reading literature is frustrating when you don't know the vocabulary.				
8- I read American stories all the time.				
9- Reading American literature is a waste of time.				
10- I find reading American literature personally rewarding.				

ITEMS	4	3	2	1
11- Literature is useful outside the classroom.				
12- Literature helps to increase cultural awareness between cultures.				
13- I enjoy reading American literature if I can choose what I want to read.				
14- I don't like to read American literature.				
15- I find American literature very difficult to comprehend.				
16- If I had the time I would read more American literature.				
17- I might enjoy reading American literature only if it addresses people and experiences similar to my own.				
18- I'm not interested in reading American literature.				
19- I read American literature for enjoyment.				
20- My only reason for reading American literature is to improve my English language.				
21- Reading American literature isn't really important.				
22- I'd rather read American literature when it is translated into Arabic.				
23- I read American literature only as a part of my study.				
24- I never read an American poem just to enjoy it.				
25- I would rather spend my free time watching TV than reading a piece of literature.				
26- I would rather spend my time reading an Arabic story rather than an American one.				
27- Reading American literature provides me with a clear perspective of the American people and the way they perceive things.				
28- English is a beautiful language.				
29- Literature is the highest form of writing in a culture.				

ITEM	4	3	2	1
30- Reading American literature provides me with a clear perspective of the American people and the way they perceive things.				
31- English is a beautiful language.				
32- Literature is the highest form of writing in a culture.				
33- You must understand English grammar to be able to read American literature.				
34- People who read American literature are those who teach it or have to read it for course work (their study).				
35- I find reading American literature very boring.				
<i><u>II. Attitudes towards American Culture:</u></i>				
36- I have always admired the American people.				
37- I dislike American ideas about democracy.				
38- I would like to know more about Americans.				
39- I try to know more about American customs and traditions.				
40- Having lived this long in America, I'd be happier moving to some other country now.				
41- Americans are cold because they ignore and walk away from situations in which other people were injured or in need of help.				
42- I would like to know the American people better.				
43- The more I get to know the American people, the more I get to like them.				
44- I don't think the spread of American ideas and customs is a bad thing.				

ITEMS	4	3	2	1
45- There are few exceptions, but in general Americans are pretty much alike.				
46- I have a lot of American friends.				
47- Americans believe that Arabs are not democratic in their political and philosophic views.				
48- I feel comfortable dealing with Americans on the social level.				
49- I would like to know more Americans.				
50- I prefer to live in a neighborhood that is predominately Arabs.				
51- The more I learn about the American people, the less I like them.				
52- If I have to choose a roommate I don't mind having an American one.				
53- As much as possible I attend American celebrations and cultural festivities.				
54- I don't have any American friends.				
55- Prejudice, racism, discrimination are not the true traits of American people.				
56- In gatherings I interact mostly with people who speak Arabic.				
57- I always find Americans to be impatient, arrogant, and intolerant.				
58- I feel hesitant to start any relation with Americans.				
59- America is the best model for democracy in the world.				
60- Most Americans are so friendly and easy to get along with.				
61- Americans deserve no respect because of the way they treat minority groups.				

## APPENDIX C

### RESPONSE PROMPT

A. In this study I'm interested in understanding your thoughts and feelings when you read American literature. Please write your impressions of the story/poem you just read. Talk about your ideas and/or feelings in any way that makes sense to you. You might want to retell the story in your own words, comment on the characters or the theme, comment on the literary techniques, the experiences the story might have reminded you of, or your own feelings towards the story. You might want to write on all or any of the above. In any rate, make your response represent the thoughts and feelings that you had after reading the story.

B. Answer the following questions:

1. What feelings did the story evoke in you?

-----  
-----

2. What did you like or dislike in the story?

-----  
-----



3. Did you feel emotionally involved in the story? Explain.

-----  
-----

4. Which one of the characters did you sympathize the most with? Why?

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-----

5. What personal memories did the story evoke in you?

-----  
-----

6. Was the story touching to you in any personal way? Explain.

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**APPENDIX D**

**LITERARY TEXTS**

## D.1 MY SON THE MURDERER

BY: BERNARD MALAMUD

He wakes to a feeling his father is in the hallway, listening. Listening to what? Listening to him sleep and dream. To him get up and fumble for his pants. To him not going to the kitchen to eat. Staring with shut eyes in the mirror. Sitting an hour on the toilet. Flipping the pages of a book he can't read. To his rage, anguish, loneliness. The father stands in the hall. The son hears him listen.

My son the stranger, he tells me nothing.

I open the door and see my father in the hall.

Why are you standing there, why don't you go to work?

I took my vacation in the winter instead of the summer like I usually do.

What the hell for if you spend it in this dark smelly hallway watching my every move. Guessing what you don't see. Why are you spying on me?

My father goes to his room and after a while comes out in the hallway again, listening.

I hear him sometimes in his room but he don't talk to me and I don't

know what's what. It's a terrible feeling' for a father. Maybe someday he'll write me a nice letter, My dear father. . . .

My dear son Harry, open up your door.

My son the prisoner.

My wife leaves in the morning to be with my married daughter who is having her fourth child. The mother cooks and cleans for her and takes care of the children. My daughter is having a bad pregnancy, with high blood pressure, and is in bed most of the time. My wife is gone all day. She knows something is wrong with Harry. Since he graduated college last summer he is nervous, alone, in

his own thoughts. If you talk to him, half the time he yells. He reads the papers, smokes, stays in his room. Once in a while he goes for a walk.

How was the walk, Harry?

A walk.

My wife told him to go look for work and a few times he went, but when he got some kind of offer he didn't take the job.

It's not that I don't want to work. It's that I feel bad.

Why do you feel bad?

I feel what I feel. I feel what is.

Is it your health, sonny? Maybe you ought to go to a doctor?

Don't call me by that name. It's not my health. Whatever it is I don't want to talk about it. The work wasn't the kind I want.

So take something temporary in the meantime, she said.

He starts to yell. Everything is temporary. Why should I add more to what is already temporary? My guts feel temporary. The world is temporary. On top of that I don't want temporary work. I want the opposite of temporary, but where do you look for it? Where do you find it?

My father temporarily listens in the kitchen.

My temporary son.

She said I'd feel better if I work. I deny it. I'm twenty-two, since last December, a college graduate and you know where you can stick that. At night I watch the news broadcasts. I watch the war from day to day. It's a large war on a small screen. I sometimes lean over and touch the war with the flat of my hand. I'm waiting for my hand to die.

My son with the dead hand.

I expect to be drafted any day but it doesn't bother me so much anymore. I won't go. I'll go to Canada or somewhere, though the idea is a burden to me.

The way he is frightens my wife and she is glad to go off to my daughter's house in the morning to take care of the three children. I'm left alone, but he don't talk to me.

You ought to call up Harry and talk to him, my wife says to my daughter.

I will sometimes, but don't forget there's nine years' difference between our ages. I think he thinks of me as another mother around and one is enough. I used to like him, but it's hard to deal with a person who won't reciprocate.

She's got high blood pressure. I think she's afraid to call.

I took two weeks off from work. I'm a clerk at the stamps window in the Post Office. I told the superintendent I wasn't feeling so good, which is no lie, and he said I should take sick leave, but I said I wasn't

that sick. I told my friend Moe Berk I was staying out because Harry had me worried.

I know what you mean, Leo. I got my own worries and anxieties about my kids. If you have two girls growing up you got hostages to fortune. Still in all, we got to live. Will you come to poker Friday night? Don't deprive yourself of a good form of relaxation.

I'll see how I feel by then, how it's coming. I can't promise.

Try to come. These things all pass away. If it looks better to you, come on over. Even if it don't look so good, come on over anyway because it might relieve the tension and worry that you're under. It's not good for your heart at your age if you carry that much worry around.

This is the worst kind of worry. If I worry about myself I know what the worry is. What I mean, there's no mystery. I can say to myself, Leo, you're a fool, stop worrying over nothing—over what, a few bucks? Over my health that always stood up pretty good although I've had my ups and downs? Over that I'm now close to sixty and not getting any younger? Everybody that don't die by age fifty-nine gets to be sixty. You can't beat time if it's crawling alter you. But if the worry is about somebody else, that's the worst kind. That's the real worry because if he won't tell you, you can't get inside the other person and find out why. You don't know where's the switch to turn off. All you can do is worry more.

So I wait in the hallway.

Harry, don't worry about the war.

Don't tell me what to worry about.

Harry, your father loves you. When you were a little boy, every night when I came home you used to run to me. I picked you up and lifted you to the ceiling. You liked to touch it with your small hand.

I don't want to hear about that anymore. It's the very thing I don't want to hear about. I don't want to hear about when I was a child.

Harry, we live like strangers. All I'm saying is I remember better days. I remember when we weren't afraid to show we loved each other.

He says nothing.

Let me cook you an egg.

I don't want an egg. It's the last thing in the world I want.

So what do you want?

He put his coat on. He pulled his hat off the clothes tree and went downstairs into the street. Harry walked along Ocean Parkway in his long coat and creased brown hat. He knew his father was following him and it filled him with rage.

He didn't turn around. He walked at a fast pace up the broad avenue. In the old days there was a bridle path at the side of the walk where the concrete bicycle path

was now. And there were fewer trees now, their black branches cutting the sunless sky. At the corner of Avenue X, just about where you begin to smell Coney Island, he crossed over and began to walk home. He pretended not to see his father cross over, although he was still infuriated. The father crossed over and followed his son home. When he got to the house he figured Harry was already upstairs. He was in his room with the door shut. Whatever he did in his room he was already doing.

Leo took out his key and opened the mailbox. There were three letters. He looked to see if one of them was, by any chance, from his son to him. My dear father, let me explain myself. The reason I act as I do is. . . . But there was no such letter. One of the letters was from the Post Office Clerks Benevolent Society, which he put in his coat pocket. The other two letters were for his son. One was from the draft board. He brought it up to his son's room, knocked on the door and waited.

He waited for a while.

To the boy's grunt he said, There is a draft board letter for you. He turned the knob and entered the room. Harry was lying on the bed with his eyes shut.

You can leave it on the table.

Why don't you open it? Do you want me to open it for you"

No, I don't want you to open it. Leave it on the table. I know what's in it.

What's in it?

That's my business.

The father left it on the table.

The other letter to his son he took into the kitchen, shut the door and boiled up some water in a kettle. He thought he would read it quickly and then seal it carefully with a little paste so that none leaked over the edge of the flap, then go downstairs and put it back in the mailbox. His wife would take it out with her key when she returned from their daughter's house and bring it up to Harry.

The father read the letter. It was a short letter from a girl. The girl said Harry had borrowed two of her books more than six months ago and since she valued them highly she would like him to send them back to her. Could he do that as soon as possible so that she wouldn't have to write again?

As Leo was reading the girl's letter Harry came into the kitchen and when he saw the surprised and guilty look on his father's face, he tore the letter out of his hands.

I ought to kill you the way you spy on me.

Leo turned away, looking out of the small kitchen window into the dark apartment-house courtyard. His face was a mottled red, his eyes dull, and he felt sick.

Harry read the letter at a glance and tore it up. He then tore up the envelope marked personal.

If you do this again don't be surprised if I kill you. I'm sick of you spying on me.

Harry left the house.

Leo went into his room and looked around. He looked in the dresser drawers and found nothing unusual. On the desk by the window was a paper Harry had written on. It said: Dear Edith, why don't you go fuck yourself? If you write another such letter I'll murder you.

The father got his hat and coat and left the house. He ran for a while, running then walking, until he saw Harry on the other side of the street. He followed him a half block behind.

He followed Harry to Coney Island Avenue and was in time to see him board a trolleybus going toward the Island. Leo had to wait for the next bus. He thought of taking a taxi and following the bus, but no taxi came by. The next bus came by fifteen minutes later and he took it all the way to the Island. It was February and Coney Island was cold and deserted. There were few cars on Surf Avenue and few people on the streets. It looked like snow. Leo walked on the boardwalk, amid snow flurries, looking for his son. The gray sunless beaches were empty. The hot-dog stands, shooting galleries, and bathhouses were shuttered up. The gunmetal ocean, moving like melted lead, looked freezing. There was a wind of! the water and it worked its way into his clothes so that he shivered as he walked. The wind white-capped the leaden waves and the slow surf broke on the deserted beaches with a quiet roar.

He walked in the blow almost to Sea Gate, searching for his son, and then walked back. On his way toward Brighton lie saw a man on the beach standing in the foaming surf. Leo went down the boardwalk stairs and onto the ribbed-sand beach. The man on the shore was Harry standing in water up to his ankles.

Leo ran to his son. Harry, it was my mistake, excuse me. I'm sorry I opened your letter.

Harry did not turn. He stayed in the water, his eyes on the leaden waves.

Harry, I'm frightened. Tell me what's the matter. My son, have mercy on me.

It's not my kind of world, Harry thought. It fills me with terror.

He said nothing.

A blast of wind lifted his father's hat off his head and carried it away over the beach. It looked as if it were going to land in the surf but then the wind blew it toward the boardwalk, rolling like a wheel along the ground. Leo chased after his hat. Leo chased it one way, then another, then toward the water. The wind blew the hat against his legs and he caught it. He pulled the freezing

hat down tight on his head until it bent his ears. By now he was crying. Breathless, he wiped his eyes with icy fingers and returned to his son at the edge of the water.

He is a lonely man. This is the type he is, Leo thought. He will always be lonely.

My son who became a lonely man.

Harry, what can I say to you? All I can say to you is who says life is easy? Since when? It wasn't for me and it isn't for you. It's life, what more can I say? But if a person don't want to live what can he do if he's dead? If he doesn't want to live maybe he deserves to die.

Come home, Harry, he said. It's cold here. You'll catch a cold with your feet in the water.

Harry stood motionless and after a while his father left. As he was leaving, the wind plucked his hat off his head and sent it rolling along the sand.

My father stands in the hallway. I catch him reading my letter. He follows me at a distance in the street. We meet at the edge of the water. He is running after his hat.

My son stands with his feet in the ocean.



## D.2 GERALD'S SONG

BY: PHILIP O'CONOR

MY STOCKS HAVE DESCENDED, my stocks are in pottery and my stocks have descended. The soldiers destroy all the pottery where they are lighting, my stocks are in the company that imports that pottery, other things arc up but my stocks are down. Down because of the war in that country where there is pottery.

Once I said the boys are giving up their lives so I should not complain. I did not start the war, I did not like the war, I put my money in pottery not bullets, but I should not complain. The lighting boys have a right to complain but I should not complain. It didn't work.

I have my mother to think of. I live with her. I buy her things, she is tiny and pale and moves with a creak. She worries that I will have nothing when she dies. She says, *how is the pottery*. I say *down*, she bends and she whistles and she says, *O Gerald*.

The pottery looked good, the pottery had a future, the pottery was a sure thing. I put all of my money, the money my father left me, in the pottery. The pottery has gone down to a dollar, has nearly vanished.

*O Gerald.*

*O Mother.*

I have wanted (o do something, I have wanted to write to the stock exchange, I have wanted to write to the newspaper, I have wanted to write to the President. It is not good, this war, it is not good for any of us, but what can I do, what can I say, I can only fret and what does that change?

*O Mother.*

*O Gerald.*

People can love each other, it was in the hope of people loving each other that I picked pottery, pottery could let us know about other people, civilization is to be found in pottery. I was hopeful when I put my money into it, I thought of poor families eating better because of the market for their pottery. I did not invest solely to make a profit. He who does that would be sinful.

*O Gerald.*

*O Mother.*

We look in the shops on Sunday, my mother and I, we look in the windows and pick out things for each

other. My mother does not walk well, I stop with her for tea, she says, *Gerald, you will look divine in that cravat.* O, my heart is heavy. O, my soul is heavy. Soon there will be no more cravats. *It's the war, Mother, I have put everything in pottery and now there is the war.*

*The war the war.*

*O Mother.*

The war is taking everything away.

I did not want to be a soldier, I could never have been a soldier. Her cousin helped us, he was on the draft board, it was not unfair, she was getting old, I could not go to the Army with my mother getting old, I did not go. I stayed home and we played chess. She said, *what are you going to do with your father's money?* I said, *put it in pottery.* She said, *are you sure that's wise?* I said, *pottery can't lose.*

O the war the war. What am I to do?

The President said we have to be there, I believed him, then the Secretary of State said we have to stay there, and I believed him, then our congressman said we have to bring this to a successful conclusion or we can't show our faces anywhere in the world, and I believed him. I believed them all. But the pottery is down and my mother is getting older.

*Gerald, you must do something.*

*What can I do?*

*You must do something. I will worry myself sick if you don't.*

*What can I do?*

*Don't let me down now.*

*What can I do?*

*O Gerald.*

*O Mother.*

She threw her teacup. It struck me on the forehead. *Do something, you stupid boy,* she said, *do something.*

I called our congressman and wired the Secretary of State and wrote a letter to the President. They all told me in one way or another that the war can't be stopped. I said to her, *they can't stop it.* I said, *once in it's hard to get out. I know that from the pottery.*

*You are as stupid as the government, she said .*

*No one could have predicted.*

*As stupid as the government.*

*I'm sorry, Mother.*

*What did you want with pottery anyway?*

*I wanted to help the people in other countries.*

*Lei the sons-of-bitches help themselves.*

*I'm sorry, Mother.*

*In your father's day we let them help themselves. It was better*

*Yes, Mother.*

*O Gerald, why can't they stop the stupid war?*

*I wish they would.*

*We'll be poor if they don't stop the war.*

*Yes, Mother.*

I went to my broker I said, what can I do?  
He said, *you shouldn't have invested in pottery.*  
I said, *but you told me to.*  
He said, *brokers make mistakes too. We are only human.*

I said, *do you have money in pottery?*  
He said, *my money is in bullets. I was lucky.*  
I said, *what can I do?*  
He said, *wait and hope when the pottery goes up we'll sell and put the money in bullets.*

The pottery didn't go up.  
My mother kicked the coffee table. She said, *I have always lived well. I don't intend to live any other way now. I am old. My arthritis is acting up. How could you do this to me, Gerald?*

*I'm sorry, Mother.*

She spit at me. She wiggled her arms in the air. *How could anyone be so stupid?* She cursed and tried to get up. I think she was going to attack me. She fell back. She nearly fell to the floor.

*Take it easy, Mother.*

*Who can take it easy on the way to the poorhouse?*

*O Mother.*

*I am used to comfort, Gerald, and you are taking it from me.*

*O Mother.*

*O Gerald.*

They didn't stop the war, my pottery is down to thirty cent, I have taken to not coming straight home after my work at the library, I have taken to stopping for a drink, I have another drink and then another and then I worry that my mother has fallen off her chair and I go home. She is always awake, sitting, rigid, staring down my shirt front, saying *Gerald, you were always a dope.*

I can't bear the looks she gives me, that's why I drink, I didn't try to lose my money, I didn't ask for the war, it is too late to get my money out now, I feel I am going down, we are all going down, I don't want to go down, this is my life and I want to live it, I don't understand the war, politics bore me, speeches bore me, I want more interesting things, I like books, I read about pottery when it's not busy in the reference room, I used to enjoy reading about pottery, now it makes me sick, but it is my interest, I read about it, pottery is made all over the world, there are different kinds of pottery for different countries, pottery is one of the oldest things made, Mexican pottery is very pretty, my mother is old and dying, I didn't start this war, it was a happy country before the war, people could pursue their interests, pottery was mine, it still is, I don't enjoy it as much as I used to, the war makes it less interesting, the war makes my mother irritable, the war is taking my money away, we have a hard time getting

page boys at the library, they are all going into the Army, why must they go, why must we fight, who knows why we are fighting, who knows what's important about that little country, what has happened that we don't know, what has happened that the congressman and the senator and the president can't help us, why is there war, who are those people we are fighting, what do they want with us. I would have gone on investing in their pottery, they could have made lots of money selling their pottery in this country, did they sell it in another country, is that why we are fighting them.

There is a war and I don't understand it, there is a war and I don't understand it, there is a war and I don't understand it

*O Mother.*

*O Gerald.*

### D.3 NOTES FROM A BUNKER ALONG HIGHWAY 8

BY: GABE HUDSON

I know this is going to sound corny, at least to all the angry, cynical people in the world, but they can go to hell, because in the midst of everything that has happened with this screwy-ass war, yoga, and the deep concentration that I attain through yoga, has pretty much saved my life. I am probably a little addicted to it, but Dithers says that I'm a complete fruitcake, and that yoga isn't going to save my butt from getting caught and thrown in the brig. Dithers says it's my queer dad that's the reason I like yoga so much. Just recently Dithers shouted, "G.D., you know they're going to find us. You know Captain has men on us right now. It's just a matter of time. And when they find us, I'm going to be laughing my ass off at you."

I was crouched in the Wide Galaxy pose with my eyes closed, and pretended not to hear him.

"I know you hear me, G.D."

The Wide Galaxy is my favorite pose. It's the pose I like to finish with at the end of a sequence. I raise my palms to the sky, which is really just the concrete ceiling of this bunker, allowing "my hands to become my eyes," and victoriously breathe in 1-2-3-hold, and exhale 1-2-3-4-hold, and after fifteen minutes in the Wide Galaxy, my mind is right up into the void, and I feel truly shocked with bliss, grateful for the existence of every single atom in the universe.

"Hey, G.D. Hey, Zen Master. If you're looking for love, I'm your man. Come and get me."

I opened my eyes, blinked, and strolled over to the far end of the bunker, and, with my e-tool, banged on the wood slats of Dithers's cage very hard. The chimps erupted into a chorus of screeches and started shaking the slats of their cages, which pretty much sealed the deal for me: getting my head up into the void was obviously out of the question now. So, choosing to ignore Dithers's laughter, I ambled down the hall and flung back the hatch and hoisted myself out of the bunker. I went for a walk in

the cool desert night, where I mentally reprimanded myself for letting Dithers get the best of me.

But I should explain: I am not by nature a violent man, not anymore anyway. I believe in the sanctity of all people. And now my only allegiance is to Life, that golden kaleidoscope which turns always in circles, riddled as it is with its patchworked bits of magic and beauty. Here in my underground bunker, which is where I am writing this from, and which was abandoned by Iraqi soldiers well before I ever arrived on the scene, I salute Life every day to the fullest, and beyond the steel hatch of the bunker and moving fifty yards south, lies Highway 8, which is the main road that runs from Basra to Baghdad. And it is on this highway that the starving, the depraved, the war-weary Iraqi civilians, mothers currying their dead babies, one-legged orphans, whole caravans of families with shattered faces from witnessing the catastrophic demolition of their homes and villages, the fleeing Iraqi soldiers, not the demonic Republican Guard but the scared boys and old men forced into service by their vicious dictator, where hundreds of charred tanks and scorched cars line the highway and the ditches alongside the highway, still even tongues of flame reach out to lick the sky, and the noxious odor of burning human flesh chokes the air—like some land of permanent backyard barbecue smell—this apocalyptic highway, are making their pilgrimage on foot to the supposed safety of Baghdad, where they'll probably be blocked from the city's gates anyway.

Now some people might call me a criminal, a traitor, or worse even, because I deserted my Green Beret brothers and my country, but they are fools, because I know now that the heart is the highest law there is. And I find that if I turn an ear inward and pay very close attention, then my heart speaks to me louder and louder each day.

So there I was, strolling along that night and chewing myself out for the Dithers thing, when I stumbled upon a kindly old Iraqi woman crawling in the ditch along the highway. This was my first patient of the night and my heart quickened. I slid my ruck off and dug out my medical kit. I got down on my knees and set this woman's mangled leg in a splint. She started to speak, but I gestured shhhh. I cleaned the infected area on her calf and picked maggots out with tweezers. I rubbed the wound down with salve, which I knew must have burned. And it was then, as I was cleaning her leg and I saw the hot tears of gratitude in her eyes, it

was then that I found the peace of mind that had eluded me  
back in the bunker.

## D.4 WHEN THE SKYLINE CRUMBLES

BY: ELIOT KATZ

Was sitting Astoria kitchen chair about to vote mayoral primary,  
then would've hoped subway to work Soho's Spring Street –  
turned TV on for quick election check when CNN switched  
to picture of World Trade Center #1  
with surreal gaping hole blowing dark smoke out a new mouth.  
Witnesses still in shock were describing a plane flying  
directly into the building's side  
when a second plane suddenly crashed Twin Tower 2  
and orange flames & monstrous dust rolls began replacing  
the city's world renowned skyline.  
Soon the big city's tallest buildings crumbled, one at a time –  
with 50,000 individual heartbeats working in Twin Bodies,  
it was clear this horror going to be planetfelt.

I started stunned at TV another half hour, called Vivian working  
Canadian summer forest job to assure I was physically okay  
& mourn together, then wandered my Queens neighborhood –



almost everyone walking mouths open silent, eyes unblinking,  
two women & two men on 31<sup>st</sup> Street cried into cell phones,  
trying reach loved ones working the WTC,  
a mover moaned Age Old prophecy to his buddy loading the van:  
“The world has changed, bro.”

Wednesday I subway'd into Manhattan looking to volunteer  
with bad back,  
only found location to leave a donation check, all other slots  
remarkably filled for the moment –  
also wanted to sense the air fellow Applers were breathing,  
smoke that torched bodies now tangibly coating tongue &  
nostrils, dust burning all 3 eyes –  
7<sup>th</sup> Ave above 14<sup>th</sup> St almost empty rush hour so our dead  
could be counted, a clear road to the next realm,  
perhaps a friend's friend miraculously uncovered alive,  
given space to speed St. Vincent's Emergency Room.

Thursday I sat half hour Union Square with a Tibetan group  
meditating for peace  
as mainstream TV helped lubricate America's war machine  
hosting Flat earth hawks urging 80% toward retaliation  
against Bin Laden's cells –

even as academic analysts noted moments before those cells  
now spread to 30 countries including US.

Fox news had hosted a discussion between the far right  
& further right –

Newt Gingrich: the terrorists should be found & crushed –

Jeanne Kirkpatrick: we already know who they are, why wait –

a procession of military experts advocating carpet bombs & napalm.

On Friday night, 3000 New Yorkers, mostly young,  
candlelit Union Square

to mourn the victims & stand for peace with signs like:

“War is Not the Answer” &

“Honor the dead; Break the Cycle of Violence” –

CBS-TV covered the event as another cue show of

the city’s spirit of togetherness

sandwiched between two dozen stories of a flag waving public

meat-hungry to support Bush Jr’s rush to war.

After years of U.S. missiles flying into outward shores,

a decade after 100,000 Iraqis cruise missile’d to death

under Father George

The war has now come home, where it’s apparent to all

what a senseless random murderer

is the one-eyed giant Terror

how it eats its innocent victims screaming alive, feet flailing

how it breaks the strongest of backs, rips flesh wide open

how it tosses arms East, legs South, skull & genitals

North & West

how it forces hardened athletes to dive head first 99 floors

to a concrete death softer than its iron teeth

how it leaves no paperwork behind to comfort the living

how it answers pleading mothers & weeping babes

with a knife to the belly, glass shards to throat

how it burns a skyline of fresh bones to fragile white ash

Now, we walk memory's long marathon to honor our 5,000 dead

now we watch a million New Yorkers work courageously

to meet the initial test

daily tasks small to heroic, delivering socks, pulling two-to girders

off fallen firefighters atop creaky broken floors

ignoring fear everpresent, unknown particles filling the air –

now we see whether Americans can meet the next human challenge:

Protect the innocent & reject terror in all its disguises,

even strutting on TV in our own leaders' grab?

Or merely act a mirror of its latest highrise profile?

The sometimes bitter juices of justice, law, human rights, & peace?

Or shot after shot of eternal bloodthirst?

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