

There are many features of Paley's inquiry that influence her research. One of the most important features of her inquiry is her unique approach of recording and transcribing portions of the interactions in her classroom. Through these recordings and reflections on the happenings in her classroom, Paley gains wonderful insights into her students and herself that she would not otherwise have discovered. The writing/reflection portion of her inquiry provides Paley with accounts of her surroundings that allow her to question her approach and what is going on in her classroom. Another important feature of her inquiry is the conversations she has with her students.

Through her conversations with the students Paley learns not only about them but about herself as a person and a teacher. For example in *The Girl with the Brown Crayon*, from pages 41-47, we learn about the conversation regarding *Little Blue and Little Yellow*. Paley admits she thought it a story of "racial harmony," through her conversation with her students she realizes the circles represent people, because as Reeny says, "the colors *hug*" therefore they are people. Paley herself says on page 43, "Apparently I needed classroom after classroom of young children demanding to be heard before I could identify my own voice and imagine my questions." She learns through her students the questioning and wondering process. She learns through this class and the characters they encounter, the human dynamic that goes with being yourself in a world where you are responsible to/for others. That it is acceptable to be yourself, but it is also acceptable to give up some of yourself for the benefit of the group. Perhaps one of the most eye opening moments in this book comes on page 45 when Bruce says, "Like when I don't want to do that picture-writing and you tell me 'Try it maybe it'll be fun' but it *never* is. And it always spoils my picture and I can't keep thinking about my picture." Paley discovers that actually making a child do something when they are not ready causes unnecessary anxiety, and further blocks them from accomplishing a task. She discounts her own observations, she realizes they may not be ready, but still decides to go along with what others are expecting. She realizes that it goes back to doing what is right for the child, not what is expected from somewhere else.

It is clear from the resources provided in the unit, that a characteristic of Paley's work is the belief that teachers must also be writers. The recurring theme in *Must Teachers also be Writers?* is that teachers that write, allow themselves to reflect on what is going on in their classrooms in regard to their students, themselves and their relationship in the classroom. She says, "...but the tangled web of interconnections would quickly fade were I not also in the habit of writing down what Jason says and Katie says and I say before the dialogues are forgotten and their meaning obscured." She goes on to say, "It has become for me a developing narrative that offers the same intense preoccupation with tiny details found in a good novel, but without the manipulated certainties of fiction." As Paley herself says, she is able to observe that the children know things about each other that she would have never known, should she not have been in the habit of recording and transcribing their interactions. She states, "The children keep track of each other's footprints in a way no magnifying

instrument of mine can ever accomplish. Perhaps, all along, it has been I who needed Leo Lionni to help me know the children and myself within a consistent and continual context." (*The Girl with the Brown Crayon* page 96). In other words, classrooms are so rich with the varying perspectives of the students that a teacher learns way beyond what they would expect too, yet it is vital to keep records of such things for self improvement. When we write we go into a reflective space, a space that allows us to be honest with ourselves. We question ourselves without judgments or fears, she states, "Never will we fully discover the essential issues for each child or for ourselves, but what we do, as we write, is continually demonstrate the process of searching for solutions as we ask ourselves the questions no one else will ask." The process of writing allows for personal growth, that otherwise would not happen, if one skips over the reflection process. As teachers we know that our writing perhaps will never be published, but it aides in the process of editing our greatest work, or work in the classroom with our students.