
4. Rhetorical Models of Understanding

Claire Kramersch

Making sense of written texts is embedded in the myriad of activities, other texts, and experiences which readers bring to the task. Meaning is a rhetorical and not just a cognitive process. This paper briefly describes seven principles of a rhetorical approach to text interpretation, focussing on macro and micro-level analysis. Student summaries of a work of fiction are examined and compared, and implications for a pedagogy of interpretive practice in the teaching of English as a Second Language are described.

Introduction

There was a time when teachers and learners believed that the meaning of texts was in the texts themselves, to be decoded together with the lexical and grammatical structures on the page. Thanks to reader-response and reception theories, and to psycholinguistic theories of reading, this myth has long since been replaced by the idea that meaning is constructed by the interaction of the reader and the text. Based on the signs on the page, readers construct a mental model or knowledge representation of the text, also called schema, that they then try to match with the ongoing text. Schemata are adjusted, revised, or rejected and replaced, as further reading confirms or invalidates readers' hypotheses (for a review of schema theory, see Cook, 1994).

It is often believed, however, that these schemata, or cognitive structures, emerge directly in the mind from reading the written text and that they are in turn simply put into words, when the teacher, for example, asks learners to display their comprehension of the text. This neo-platonic fallacy has been dispelled by researchers in such fields as ethnomethodology, discourse analysis and stylistics, who explore the constitution and interpretation of socially situated knowledge. They show that mental models of reality are not only the result of social interaction, but that they are rhetorically constructed as well. In the classroom, making sense of written texts is embedded in a flow of discursive activities, both oral and written, that construct and shape students' mental representations of these texts. The model of reality that emerges from these interactions is inseparable from the rhetorical procedures that accompany it.

As the philosopher Paul Ricoeur writes:

Understanding has nothing to do with an **immediate** grasping of a foreign psychic life or with an **emotional** identification with a mental intention. Understanding is entirely **mediated** by the whole of explanatory procedures which precede it and accompany it. (Ricoeur, 1981:164)

This paper deals specifically with the mediation of learners' emergent models of understanding through spoken and written language. The way teacher and students talk to one another about the text, and about each others' interpretations of the text, what each one chooses to say and to leave unsaid, are among the many interpretive procedures that help co-construct learners' representations of the world disclosed by the text. Even in the individual silent reading outside the classroom, the readers' ability to imagine the worlds evoked by the text is mediated by their interactions with prior texts, prior conversations on texts, by the schooled and unschooled ways in which they have learned to take knowledge from written texts and to make sense of that knowledge.

In order to make these processes of mediation visible, I will briefly propose seven principles of a rhetorical approach to text interpretation based on work done in discourse analysis (Brown and Yule, 1983; Kress, 1988; Fairclough, 1989; Hatch, 1992); and the general field of stylistics (Widdowson, 1984; Fowler, 1986; Carter and Simpson, 1989; Kramersch, 1993; Simpson, 1993; Short, 1994). I will illustrate these principles on a concrete example taken from two ESL writing classes in California and will then reflect on the implications for a pedagogy of interpretive practice in the teaching of English as a Second Language.

Principles of a Rhetorical Approach to Text Interpretation

Seeing the construction of meaning as a rhetorical and not just as a cognitive process, requires some clarification that discourse analysis can provide. It can be summarized under the following seven postulates:

1. The language of a "text" - be it spoken, visual or written - both **refers** to a reality beyond the text and **represents** a certain relationship of the text to its context, e.g., how the text positions itself vis-a-vis its

readers, vis-a-vis established genres, what it considers important to say and not to say. (Widdowson, 1984:150).

2. The meaning of texts is inseparable from surrounding texts, be they illustrations, footnotes, conversations or teacher or student talk. The resonances that texts have to one another, both those that are close and those that are distant in time and space, have generated what the French philosopher Kristeva calls "intertextuality." We are often not aware of the extent to which our discourse is filled with the words and voices of others and how texts echo other texts.
3. Texts attempt to position their readers in quite specific ways by evoking worlds, mental representations, or schemata that they assume are shared between them and their readers (Kress, 1988:107). They do this through a range of textual and discursive devices that have been analyzed by discourse analysts such as Halliday and Hasan (1985), Fowler (1986), Fairclough (1989), Simpson (1993), Short (1994), and others.
4. Schemata are relational. They are created by relating one text, one event, one fact to another through such semiotic links as contiguity, similarity or metaphor, and through such logical links as causality, concession, comparison, and contrast.
5. Schemata are culturally sensitive. Because they are, by nature, highly selective, they reflect the ways of thinking and judging of the discourse communities to which readers and writers belong (Steffensen, 1986).
6. Schemata are co-constructed. We know from Soviet psychology and from child language studies that mental models are interactionally constructed in dialogue with others. The concept of co-construction, which refers to the way social interaction creates reality through language, draws on a number of disciplinary perspectives, including applied linguistics, conversational analysis and linguistic anthropology (Jacoby and Ochs, forthcoming). The identities and subjective states of learners in a classroom are jointly constructed

through the talk that surrounds the interpretation of texts.

7. Schemata are rhetorical constructions. The rhetorical procedures used by teachers and learners to make meaning out of texts help constitute the meaning of these texts. They represent the choices made by speakers and writers from among the many potential meanings that could be actualized through language, both on the macrolevel of text structure, and on the microlevel of the word and the clause.

The following section shows how these postulates can inform our understanding of what goes on in classrooms when teacher and students try to make sense of texts.

Mental Models of "Crickets" by Robert O. Butler

The text

Twenty-six students in two intermediate-level ESL writing classes at UC Berkeley read the short story "Crickets" by Robert O. Butler (1992). The narrator is a Vietnamese man, called Thieu in Vietnam and Ted in the US, who came to Louisiana 10 years ago with his newly married wife. They have a son whom they gave the American name Bill. Seeing that his son is often bored, Ted tries to interest him in a game he used to play with his friends when he was a boy in Vietnam. They would search for crickets, the big and slow charcoal crickets and the small and smart fire crickets, and they would have them fight each other in teams. At first the son is interested and father and son go searching for crickets. Unfortunately, they can find only one kind, the charcoal crickets. The father thinks his son shares in his disappointment, only to realize the boy is only furious at having stained his brand-new Reeboks. The story ends with the father calling after his son, "See you later, Bill."

The assignment

The 13 students in each class came from a variety of East-Asian and Latin-American countries. In class A, all but one were foreign born, most having emigrated to the U.S. 3 to 5 years ago. In class B, by contrast, all but three were American-born from parents who had themselves emigrated to the U.S., mostly from Asian or Latin-American countries.

The students were asked to summarize the story in their own words in

4-5 sentences. Six or seven students rewrote their summaries on the blackboard for general comparison and discussion. Student narrators in turn read their summaries aloud, explaining any changes they might have made in the second writing, and each was to say what they thought were common and divergent features between their own and others' summaries. The purpose was to jointly construct a meaning for the story, based on the individual versions of the original, and to make sense of the conscious or unconscious "choices" made by the students.

The analysis

An analysis of the students' summaries was guided by the textual features of narratives identified by Fowler (1986), Simpson (1993), and Short (1994) on the macro- and the microlevels of analysis.

<i>Macrolevel</i>	<i>Microlevel</i>
1. Genre	7. Point of departure
2. Theme	8. Sequencing: tenses
3. General organization	9. Spatiotemporal markers
4. Text time vs. story time	10. Syntactic choices
5. Evaluation vs. description	11. Lexical choices
6. Silences	12. Cohesive devices

These features in themselves do not explain student comprehension of the story, but because they represent choices which writers have to make, they can be meaningful for readers, especially when compared with those made by other writers along these same dimensions. The following discusses what some of these choices were and how they were discussed in class.

Macrolevel

Genre

We can begin by considering the following three summaries:

1. This is a story about the transitional phase that a typical immigrant goes through. It talks about how a Vietnamese man adapts to the new

environment; his observations and comments. It deals with the gap in his relation with his son; how his son has grown to have very different interests. (Jeong Mi, born in Korea, 9 years in U.S.)

2. When Ted first immigrated to the States, his American name, Ted, was the only disturbance of his life. As time moves on, he found Louisiana is very much like Vietnam. However because of the incident he shared with his America born son, he realized the difference between United States & Vietnam. He said there are only "charcoal crickets" here in the States. (Sung, born in Korea, 3 years in U.S.)

3. Ted, Vietnamese, had a son name Bill with his wife when he fled to the states. Bill, growing up in Louisiana, adapted to the American culture. Ted, fearful that his son would lose touch with their original culture, wanted to show what their culture was like. Therefore, Ted attempted to show his son a game that he used to play with crickets. However, Bill showed no interest and Ted realized that like the land, the two cultures are different and require a different lifestyle. (Jose, US-born of Latin-American parents)

These three students seem to be operating according to three different conceptions of what a "summary" is. For Jeong Mi a summary should render the main idea. She says, "Names are of no interest. The main thing is the larger issue. I tried to capture the essential of what the story means." For Sung, a summary should recapitulate the main facts and events in the order in which they occur in the story; a summary should not contain any explicit opinion or interpretation. Sung put the word "charcoal crickets" in quotation marks, because, he said, "They are only a symbol for the things and the people that you find in the United States," but he avoided saying that explicitly in his summary. Jose's summary is both factual and interpretive, and he keeps to the original order of events. Although each has its own idiosyncratic twist, all three narrations seem to follow a text type the students have learned in school. However, the schooled genre "summary" does have different rules in different educational cultures (Kramsch, forthcoming). These summaries show evidence of these differences.

Theme

Even though students have read the same original text, their summaries pick up on different potential themes enclosed in the text. Compare the following two summaries:

4. This story is about an immigrant from Vietnam. He struggled in his native country and now he struggles in the U.S. However these struggles are very much different. In Vietnam he struggled for his life, for his freedom. Now in the U.S. he struggles to try to find a balance between cultural values. Perhaps his resentment to the VN gov't causes him to stop practicing his culture (VN) and hesitate to pass it along to his children. He's confused and continues to struggle (Tuyen, U.S. born of Vietnamese parents).

5. The short story, Cricket, by Robert Butler examines the clash of cultures experienced by immigrants. The main character, whom is Vietnamese, feels out of place in America. His son, Bill, has adopted a completely American ideology and has lost touch with his Vietnamese culture. In the story the father tries to introduce his son to an old pastime; however, the son's American attitudes take over and he ends up caring more about his shoes than the culture. (Laurent, US-born of French parents).

Summary 4 clearly focusses on the notion of **personal struggle**, experienced by the father in Vietnam and in the U.S., a theme illustrated in the story by the metaphor of the fighting crickets. Summary 5, by contrast, picks up on the theme of **ideological clash** between American attitudes and Vietnamese culture, a theme illustrated in the story by the metaphor of the spoiled Reeboks and the Vietnamese crickets.

General organization

The students had to choose how they were going to organize the information contained in the original text. They would first state the theme as in summaries 1 and 5 or state it in the conclusion as in summary 3. From the 4-5 sentences allotted, the middle sentence often seemed to play a central role for the meaning of their summary. In summary 4, for example, the sentence "He struggles to

find a balance between cultural values," not only expresses the central theme of the summary, but is also placed in a central position in the text.

Text time vs. story time

To appreciate how the students re-worked the meaning of the original text in their summaries, one has to look at the amount of text the narrator devotes to which part of the story. In the original story, for example, roughly 1/6 is devoted to Ted's life in Vietnam, his fight against the North Vietnamese and his emigration to the US. And yet only one of the 26 summaries (summary 4 by Tuyen, of Vietnamese parents) makes any mention of Ted's life prior to immigration. There may be several reasons for this, of course, including the constraints of the assignment. Nevertheless, this one summary can be used to discuss various impressions each version makes and consider reasons for the location of the majority of summaries exclusively in America.

Evaluation vs. description/narration

A narrative summary, as we have seen, cannot but contain some authorial evaluation, even when it contains no explicit interpretation. This evaluation can be expressed either indirectly from within the story as in summary 4 ("he's **confused**") or in 12 (below): "after leading a **tough** childhood... Bill was **very proud** of his American identity." Alternatively, evaluation can be expressed directly from outside the story as in the following two summaries:

6. ...It turned out that the two never played the game because there was only one kind of crickets, the big, slow, charcoal crickets **which symbolize the American people**. The smaller, but smarter "fire" cricket, were nowhere to be found **which symbolized a detachment from Ted's country and people**. (Tim, born in Australia of American parents, 16 years in US)
7. ...it was hard for Bill to attain the values and attitude from his father's culture. **I was glad that Ted realized it, because I've seen a lot of foreigner parents who don't**. (Naveed, U.S. born of Pakistani parents)

The relative distribution of evaluative vs. descriptive-durative propositions in

summaries (Polanyi, 1989) can signify the stance the narrator takes vis-a-vis the story. It may also simply indicate a desire to complete the assignment, indicate a reluctance to "take sides," or as in 7, it may reflect personal experiences that affect a student's reading of the story.

Silences

Given the constraints of the assignment, the students had to exercise a great deal of judgment as to what to say and leave out. We have already seen how most of the summaries did not include Ted's life before he came to the US. It may also be significant that none of the summaries mention the future possibilities alluded to in the last sentence of the story, "See you later, Bill." This statement, in its double meaning of "good-bye" and "you might come back to your Vietnamese roots later," finishes the story on an open-ended note that none of the students reported.

Students in class A, who were almost all new immigrants themselves, felt the story fizzled off, that the author should have made a much stronger case for the trauma of immigration. In fact, they said, "You cannot understand this story if you are not an immigrant yourself." This statement was violently contested by U.S.-born Jose, "Wait a minute, I was born in this country and I understand this story perfectly well!" Students in class B, who were almost all US-born of foreign parents, understood the statement as meaning that Ted was at last acting as an American by saying good-bye "the American way" - a sentiment that was reflected in many of their summaries (see e.g., summary 7).

In both cases the silence of the summaries regarding the possibilities for the future might be indicative of the present situation of these foreign and U.S.-born students currently studying at UC Berkeley (see Appendix).

Microlevel

Point of departure

The first sentence in such short summaries can be of paramount importance to set the scene and establish a shared universe of discourse with the reader. Compare, for example:

8. Ted, who has a strong Vietnam background and history, has a child, Bill, born in the U.S.

9. Mr. Thieu was an immigrant who escaped from Vietnam.
10. Ted is a Vietnamese refugee from the Vietnam war, who had immigrated to Louisiana.

Each of these beginnings prepares the reader for a different perspective on the story, in particular through the use of names and the choice of verbs (see below).

Sequencing: Use of tenses

Besides the general organization of the information, students have to choose the sequence they are going to give the events. As we have seen, this decision is linked to issues of genre. First, students have to decide on the tense. Some of the summaries are written exclusively in the present tense, giving the summary a descriptive-static flavor, e.g.:

11. This story tells us that once a person has been in a place for too long she gets used to the customs and forgets about the old customs from her motherland. In this case ted's son bill can not even distinguish himself as a Vietnamese because he is totally Americanized. There are only one kind of crickets in Louisiana although the weather condition and rice paddies look pretty much the same but things are different. (Pamela, born in Taiwan 4 1/2 years in U.S.)

Most summaries are, however, written in the past tense. But some make use of flashbacks, with a gerund as in 12 or a pluperfect and a dependent clause as in 13, either because some events are deemed less important, or because the narrator wants to anchor the perspective of the reader in the main event. The following example describes the move to the United States:

12. A man neme Ted (Thieu) moved to United States as a chemical Engineer **after leading a tough childhood in Vitname.** (Ming born in China, 3 years in US)
13. Ted is a Vietnamese refugee from the Vietnam war, **who had immigrated to Louisiana** (Allan, born in Taiwan, 3 years in US).

Deixis

In addition to the use of tenses, one may want to look at how a summary anchors the reader in the perspective of its narrator through markers of time, place, and personal stance, called "deictics." This is done first through the presence or absence of temporal or spatial markers. A summary can attempt to render a universally valid story of immigration, in which case one will find no particular temporal or spatial sequencing. An example would be summary 1, where the sequencing is purely argumentative. This style of summary is generally accompanied by a number of nominalizations. For example, in 1 nominal phrases like *transitional phase, observations and comment, gap in his relation* serve to make the text abstract, i.e., typical and therefore generalizable to other immigration situations.

A summary can also describe the specific events in their chronological order, as do summaries 2, 3 and 7. In such summaries, the temporal markers (e.g., *one day, as time moves on, in the end, finally*) and spatial markers (e.g., *the States, America, Louisiana*) punctuate the telling, establishing the same sequence of events as the original story.

Deictic devices can also indicate the personal stance or point of view of the narrator. For example, the phrases *In Vietnam he struggled... Now in the US he struggles...* situate the narrator in the American here-and-now. Similarly, calling Ted an *immigrant* (rather than an *emigrant*) who *comes* or *immigrates* (rather than *goes* or *flees* or *emigrates*) to America, are all indications of a deictic perspective of a narrator living in the United States. (Note that the perspective in the original text shifts from Vietnam to the United States when Thieu and his wife decide to leave Saigon.)

Syntactic choices

The meanings developed through the use of tenses and deictics are reinforced on the level of the syntax. In summary 3, for example, the use of conjunctions *therefore, however*, and of appositional phrases to express causality gives this text a tightly argued flavor of cause-and-effect relationships and of inevitable logic. The summary first takes the Vietnamese perspective (*he fled to the states*) then the American one (*their original culture*). Contrast it with the beginning of summary 13 below, where the logical link between sentences is mostly left up to the reader.

Lexical choices

Meanings are also apparent in the choice of vocabulary, most interestingly in this case in the naming of the character. Note in the opening sentences 8, 9, and 12 the name given to the main character: Ted, Thieu, Ted (Thieu), Mr. Thieu. Naming practices can signify the narrator's perspective on the story. Also relevant can be the choice of verb used to depict the main character's coming to America. There is a difference whether he is said to have *a strong Vietnam background*, or to have *escaped* or *fled* from Vietnam, to be *a refugee from Vietnam*, or whether he is said to have *moved* or *immigrated* to the United States. Again, the question is not what the student **intended** to mean by choosing any of these terms, but what effect these terms now have on the reader as compared to other choices that could have been made.

For example, the class was asked what significance might be attributed to Allan's opening sentence:

13. Ted is a Vietnamese refugee from the Vietnam war, who had immigrated to Louisiana. He is the most intelligent of his whole company. He has a son called Bill. Ted tried to share his childhood experience with Bill... (Allan born in Taiwan, 3 years in U.S.)

The following dialogue ensued:

Suman (*from Korea*):

It shows that he didn't come here for economic reasons and that he was a highly qualified immigrant.

Freddy (*from Guatemala*):

He is a fighter.

Ming (*referring to his summary 12*):

He is not just any immigrant with a menial job; he is a successful chemical engineer!

Freddy:

Yeah, but it's more significant that he is intelligent than what job he has!

Ss:

(in violent disagreement with one another)

Cohesive devices

Even such short texts as summaries are held together through rhetorical devices like repetitions and parallelisms (e.g. repetition of the word *struggle* in 4), conjunctions (e.g. *however* in 3), pronouns, and adverbs that establish textual cohesion and thus make the meaning clearer. The sudden lack of cohesive tie from one sentence to the next can have a dramatic effect, such as in the following:

14. ...However he realized that the game is not just boring for the son but also that he lost a lot more than just his Vietnamese name. His cultural identity. (Barbara, born in Taiwan, 5 years in US).

Toward a Pedagogy of Interpretive Practice

The processes observed here can form the basis for a pedagogy of interpretive practice that engages teacher and students in the rhetorical co-construction of meaning. The authorial dynamics triggered by the process of re-casting a common text into multiple summaries have the advantage of making students personally interested in the relationship of words to meaning because they produced these words themselves. At the same time, it serves to shed multiple perspectives on the original text. In this process, it becomes clear that authorial intention is not the primary source of meaning, and that what is at stake is not whether students' summaries are good or bad, but how rich an interpretation the readers are able to construct. The following gives a flavor of this joint rhetorical construction of understanding.

Jeff (*born in Burma, 2 years in U.S.*) reads his summary on the board:

Mr. Thieu was an immigrant who escaped from Vietnam. He and his wife and American-born child, Bill lived in La., where Mr. Thieu was called Ted as he worked in a refinery. When Ted saw that his son was bored, he tried to introduce the idea of fighting crickets but as he and his son searched for crickets, they only found one type which made the whole game uninteresting and Ted was sorry that he had introduced the idea to his son.

Teacher:

How does your summary compare to the others?

Jeff:

mine doesn't include attitudes... mine is pretty shallow... I think... You asked us to summarize, so I just summarized, I really didn't think about it.

Teacher:

anyone else wants to comment on Jeff's summary?

Edmond (*reading Jeff's summary*):

he ends with Ted being, "sorry that he had introduced the idea to his son" even though he wanted it... I see there the idea of pain. I was just wondering... Although he claimed he didn't intend to put any attitudes in there he **did** end his summary in a pretty sad way... sort of open-ended, like the story itself.

(Note that it takes a while for students to break away from the usual normative attitudes towards their work. But when they do, it is fascinating to see how they create the meaning of their texts as **they talk**.)

Teacher (*to Jeff*):

Your summary says he worked in a refinery. The others didn't mention where he worked. Is that important?

Jeff:

The people at work respect him.

Teacher:

Is it significant that he works **in a refinery**?

Jeff:

hm...yeah...because he is smarter, like the crickets.

Tim (*reads his summary*):

The short story, 'Crickets' is about a man's transformation into the United States. Ted, (Mr.Thieu) is from Vietnam and fled to America because of all the problems in his country...

Teacher (to Tim):

What distinguishes your summary from that of others?

Tim:

I'm interested in the transformation of an immigrant to another country =

Teacher:

= that you represent in your text by keeping the two names, Ted and Thieu, transformed one into the other?

Tim (smiles):

Yeah, it's the transformation that you see playing a symbolic role.

Teacher:

Why did you feel it was important to tell in detail the story of the crickets?

Tim:

Well... I noticed that he was really disappointed that his son couldn't understand, just because his son is an American. I thought his disappointment was the very thing... not just the fact that they couldn't play the game...it was deeper than that...this was a very important part of the story, because the fire crickets were the ones that were better armed, and the fact that he was smarter and smaller, ahead of his people, like the fire crickets...

The teacher's role in this approach is not to correct or praise, but simply to probe, draw possible analogies and contrasts, suggest possible interpretations, reflect on choice of words. To activate the process, the teacher may ask the students to give titles to each other's summaries, or to rewrite a given summary from another character's perspective. But the purpose is always to relate the

text to the meaning proposed, not to elicit random creativity.

Teachers and students can derive great benefit from becoming conscious of the way they co-construct models of understanding through talk. Not only can it de-mystify the interpretive process and make visible its interactive and rhetorical nature; but it can model for the students a process of mediation that is the source of both power and pleasure.

Claire Kramersch is Professor of German and Foreign Language Acquisition at the University of California at Berkeley, where she also holds an appointment in the Graduate School of Education. She has been the President of the American Association of Applied Linguistics and has been on the editorial board of the *TESOL Quarterly*. She has published extensively on communication and culture in language teaching. Her latest book is *Context and Culture in Language Teaching* (Oxford University Press, 1993).

Notes:

- * I wish to thank Maggi Sokolik, Melinda Erickson and their students for inviting me to their classes and graciously participating in this activity.

Appendix

The following are sample summaries by students from class A (foreign-born students, recent immigrants to the US) and class B (US-born students of foreign parents).

Class A

1. The story dealt with different cultures and centered on an American. It used nature to help relay symbolism and this was done by the use of crickets. Ted wants to show his son his roots in the Vietnamese culture because of American assimilation who is indifferent.
2. Ted is a Vietnamese refugee, who had immigrated to Louisiana. He has a son called Bill. Ted tried to share his childhood experience, (i.e., cricket fighting) with Bill, when he was bored during the holiday. However, Bill does not realize the importance of Cricket fighting to his father and cares more about material goods.

3. Ted tried to give his son, Bill, information about their traditional culture back in Vietnam. Since Bill was born in America and became a typical American, he didn't seem to interest in the cricket fight which was popular back in Vietnam. Although Bill was interested for a while, the enthusiasm about learning cultures didn't interest him long enough due to the distractions of other things. Today's people are busily looking forward for new things and pay more attention to the real world instead of learning the traditional culture.
4. The story, Cricket is about the generation gap between the first generation of immigrants and the second generation, their children. The story explains why the first generation, that is represented by the father, Ted, cannot share its identities as Vietnamese with the second generation. The story ends as the father gives up trying to communicate with his son after he realizes that the difference between them is so great that it cannot be overcome.

Class B

5. The story was about a man named Thieu who had come to the U.S. from Vietnam. In the story Thieu tries to make a connection with his "American" son Bill by telling him what he used to do as a child - fight with crickets. Much to Thieu's disappointment though, Bill does not get too involved with the fighting crickets and he becomes more concerned with his stained Reeboks. In the end Thieu finally realizes the generation gap and admits to the fact that his son is truly American.
6. Ted of the former nation of South Vietnam reflects on his time and experiences in America. He begins by describing his participation in the resistance movement. The second half of the story was to teach that even if geographics change, some things will not be the same. In Ted's and his son's pursuit of the crickets, he discovers the differences in his son but little change in himself.
7. The short story "Cricket" is about an immigrant from Vietnam

called Ted who finds America to be different from his homeland. Although he lives in a place that is very similar in environment to his homeland, he finds the two places to be very dissimilar in many ways. Even his son Bill, who is born in Louisiana, is different from him when he was a child.

8. An excerpt about a man from a different culture and a son from a contrasting culture. It talks about the difficulties in communication between the two because of the generation gap and the cultural gap that lies between them. It is also about the father's concern for his son's lack of knowledge of his own cultural ancestry. However, the father comes to the realization that this is a different place (U.S.) and a different experience for his son.

A discussion of the striking differences between the immigrants' and the non-immigrants' texts is beyond the scope of this paper. However, note the themes of cultural loss and father's disappointment that give a sense of tragic to class A summaries vs. that of necessary change and inevitable generation gap featured in class B summaries. The closing sentence in each of these student texts nicely sums up the narrator's point of view and his/her social and cultural stance.