successful consumers of literacy and identifying themselves as literacy "winners," because they have the most awards and prizes to show for their work. Still other students adopted the identity that through application and diligence they will better themselves.

On the other hand, not all the identities students adopt in literacy narratives are empowering or positive. Paterson (2003) also found students who wrote about being stigmatized through their literacy experiences, particularly in school where the student is the victim of bad or insensitive teaching. (Examples of this identity are in two stories from my students, the ones who had their work destroyed—either physically or psychologically—by their teachers.) Such students, Paterson noted, often wrote about themselves as being invisible or used metaphors about being unclean or outcast from the world of literacy.

There are some students who rebel against the established hierarchy or values of literacy. They portray themselves as bucking conventions or resisting the consumer-oriented approach to literacy that other students embrace. Yet they refuse to portray themselves as helpless victims. Instead, they choose to dismiss the values and assignments of the mainstream education, while often displaying what they consider their true literacy talents (Paterson, 2003).

It is also intriguing to consider the identities students construct for teachers in such narratives. These cover a great range and include heroes, martinets, nurturers, and buffoons—to name only a few. Such constructions are interesting enough in themselves, but when placed beside narratives teachers write about their experiences with students (Goodson, 1992, 2000; Haswell & Lu) they present fascinating connections and conflicts.

Considering the identities students adopt when writing literacy narratives allows for some intriguing possibilities in the reading and writing classroom. If we begin to make students aware of the kinds of identities they adopt when writing these narratives and of how they might be able to change them in print as well as in their lives, we offer several important opportunities for student writers.

Useful exercises

For example, simply asking students to characterize the people in their narratives can be an eye-opener for them. Who is the hero, the villain, the most powerful person, and the least powerful person? Do these roles shift, and, if they do, when and how? When writing literacy narratives, most students are primarily conscious of relating events and emotions, and they do not focus on portraying the people involved—they certainly do not characterize themselves. In even this simple exercise, students can begin to see how they construct identities when they write. To push it a bit further, we can ask students to list the characteristics of the people involved who do not show up in this narrative. Afterward, some students find they want to revise their writing—they begin to see that writing about people always involves choices that create incomplete versions of identities. More important is that we can begin to show students how they (in the way of all writers) construct and portray particular identities in their writing and that such portrayals are under their control.

Another exercise is to ask students (after they describe the characteristics of the people) to describe the effect of each person on the events in their narratives. What role did this person play and why? How did other people respond to that person's actions? What other effects and actions have been left out of the narrative and why? Asking students to do these things helps them see how the identities they are constructing and portraying exist in relationships with other people and that those relationships influence and shape our sense of identity and how others perceive us. This exercise can be extended or adapted to the other kinds of literacy narratives students might read in memoirs by authors such as Maya