

2 Ways of Knowing: Metaphor and Learning

Midway between the unintelligible and the commonplace, it is a metaphor which most produces knowledge.

Aristotle, *Rhetoric III*

How do we “know” or learn our world? How do we construct knowledge? At one time, academicians might have replied that we discover knowledge only through empirical means—“hypothesis plus test equals proof.” Specialists in more and more fields, however, are finding that alternative perspectives may be useful in the discovery of knowledge. Objective facts can be sterile or even meaningless when divorced from their subjective contexts. True understanding often depends on the “invisibles” of “the internal world of experience: emotion, sensation, hunch, belief, and dream” (Wolf 1992, 954).

In the public health field, for instance, there is recognition that untrained but interested private citizens have ways of knowing that may be superior to trained experts’ abilities in documenting environmental hazards and diseases (P. Brown 1993). In college education classes, students are sometimes given fictional texts in order to make pedagogical abstractions real. Fictional situations become representations or metaphors for theory and practice (Borman and O'Reilly 1992). Metaphor is finding its way into descriptions of research results as researchers call for increased attention to and valuing of different ways of knowing and move from objective measurement tools to more intuitive ways of interpreting observations.

Western Europeans may value scientific knowing, but other cultural groups value other ways of knowing. For example, Native American ways of knowing include the intuitive, the spiritual, and the personal (Barden and Boyer 1993). They also include story and the use of language. “The combination of song, prayer, and poetry is a natural form of expression for many Navajo people. A person who is able to ‘talk beautifully’ is well thought of and considered wealthy. To know stories, remember stories, and to retell them well is to have been ‘raised right’” (Tapahonso 1993, 107).

There is also growing support for the notion that gender plays a role in the ways that we learn. In their widely acclaimed book *Women's Ways of Knowing*, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberg, and Tarule (1986) identified five basic ways of knowing among women: silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge. These descriptions both rely on metaphor and provide new metaphors for understanding different kinds of learners. Women in *silence* fear the consequences of their words and therefore remain quiet. They don't trust language. *Received knowers* want the authority (teacher or text) to provide them with the answer; they haven't developed a voice of their own. As writers, they are likely to string quotes together rather than to state their own opinions. Women who are *subjective knowers* put their faith in their own experiences; they accept or reject what authorities say based on their own personal knowledge. They often make global generalizations and may become angry when faced with opinions different from their own. *Procedural knowing*, on the other hand, is objective and involves looking beyond intuition for evidence to support opinions. Some procedural knowers focus on learning procedures for developing an understanding of a subject. Others try to develop procedures for getting at other people's knowledge. Women who *construct knowledge* believe that all knowledge is created and that the knower is part of that knowledge. They synthesize knowledge and experiences using appropriate procedures, often transferring their classroom learning to their own lives (Ortman 1993; Nugent 1993).

The concept of "ways of knowing" as developed by Belenky and her colleagues has proved invaluable to educators who find limitations in "stage" theories yet seek a vocabulary for expressing the many variations in how humans learn and come to know. "Ways of knowing," moreover, is as conducive to synthesis as to analysis: one can employ different ways of knowing at different times and use them in relation to each other. This powerful concept emphasizes the complexity of human thought and steers away from the oversimplification that is often the result of strict categorizing. The educational community in general (and the authors of this book in particular) acknowledges the great service provided by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberg, and Tarule in establishing "ways of knowing" as an alternative to hierarchical conceptions of thought and development.

The ways of knowing that Belenky and her colleagues propose provide a sort of map for understanding our students, whether female or male, as do the various learning styles inventories that have been developed to help students understand their own ways of learning as well as to help teachers devise experiences that will meet learners' needs.¹ In another ground-breaking book, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*

(1983), Howard Gardner identifies seven different ways of knowing: linguistic, logical-mathematic, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, intrapersonal, and interpersonal.

Expanding the ways of knowing that we value may be reflected in the adoption of performance-based assessment in some school systems. Rather than measure all student learning through multiple-choice questions on standardized tests, schools are asking students to demonstrate, for example, that they can write for real purposes and to real audiences, that they can solve authentic problems using a variety of disciplinary tools, and that they can work cooperatively in groups to accomplish a task.

Expanding the ways of knowing should also help meet the needs of students who are not comfortable with or adept at learning verbally. By legitimizing other sign systems as tools of exploring, building, and demonstrating knowledge, we open new doors for students who may have been marginalized in the classroom. May (1993) suggests that we employ such diverse activities as painting, poetry, dancing, singing, computer graphics, drawing, playing musical instruments, composing on synthesizers, writing dialogue, acting in plays, architecture, sculpture, photography, and pottery. She raises a number of questions about what might happen to the students who typically are on the dropout track if

we expanded the role of the arts in the teaching of reading or science in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades . . . just when the famous reading slump begins for many students . . . [or in] the middle school years, when many students so dramatically lose interest in classroom activities? Would students attain new conceptual languages to organize and express their learning? Would their interest and commitment to learning increase by association? Would they feel immediately involved in their own learning activities and find instructional activities they can share with their peers? What would happen if the arts were a part of every high school class from English to science? Would students become more actively engaged in creative learning? (433–34)

Trousdale and Harris (1993) also argue that the literature classroom must provide an environment that is conducive to all learners and all ways of knowing. They suggest ways of going beyond verbal modes of written response and oral sharing to create opportunities for students to respond to literature, using Gardner's Seven Intelligences model. In particular, they studied the use of choral reading and reader's theater. They concluded that reader's theater is an "effective vehicle for aesthetic involvement in literature. As with choral reading, students are interpreting character, action, motivation,

mood, and tone by doing and experiencing them, rather than by talking about them” (205). Staging, lighting, costumes, props, sets, and background music provide students with opportunities to use visual, aural, and spatial ways of knowing. Gestures and movement relate to bodily-kinesthetic ways of knowing. The lines themselves can be correlated with what Gardner calls linguistic intelligence, while writing and acting in the chorus as narrators or as characters relate to interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences.

NCTE’s October 1994 *Notes Plus* presents ideas for using other ways of knowing through transmediation. Students are asked to create multisign texts by “imaginatively translating one’s understanding from one medium, often a written text, into another one” (7). In these activities, students use sounds, shapes, colors, and images to express their understandings of and responses to literature. High school students created a visual essay addressing the theme of war and peace to commemorate Memorial Day at their school after reading Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Slagle 1994). Middle school students transformed printed words into aural form using a radio-script format (Reissman 1994). And elementary students created a mood museum to show colors and abstract shapes that reflected the moods of different chapters in L’Engle’s *A Wrinkle in Time* (Rosengarten 1994).

In the remaining sections in this chapter, we present additional discussion and activity ideas that explore ways of knowing. We examine the nature of learning, defining it as a *change in conceptualization*, and invite you and your students to consider the metaphors for learning that help or hinder your intellectual growth. Using an example from the popular *Star Trek* series, we then consider metaphor as a way of knowing and learning that can lead us to alternative conceptualizations. We further explore learning through other ways of knowing—experience, observation, reflection, and research—in a cross-disciplinary activity.

Experience as a Way of Knowing: Learning for Conceptual Change

All of us have a base of knowledge that we carry around with us, metaphorically speaking, in our heads. That background knowledge is part of us and consists of experiences and learned information that we use to filter new experiences and information. Consider, for example, what you know about games. Your background knowledge of games probably includes ones that you’ve played at different stages of your life—peek-a-boo, Candyland™, baseball, poker, and so on. You know that games have players, rules, and outcomes. You may also know that games can be enjoyable or tedious, depending on how they are played and with whom. Because of your experience, you also have a schema, or framework, that you can use when learning new games.

As children, some of us initially had the experience of playing games with someone older—a parent or grandparent—who always let us win. This may have given us a false notion about games—that is, that we would always win them. When this false notion was finally tested and we came upon an opponent who outplayed us, it may have been frustrating and disillusioning. It may have taken us a long time to accept this new knowledge about games—and about ourselves. People who never accept this information are labeled as “poor sports.” Even in the face of the evidence that they cannot always win, they refuse to adjust their background knowledge about games. They don’t learn how to lose.

You can use this explanation of winning and losing games to help students understand what is going on in their minds when they learn new information in school. While experience is an excellent teacher, experience is not all-encompassing. It is one way of knowing. The following example reinforces the value—the necessity—of using multiple perspectives or ways of knowing in order to learn. This is true whether we wish to learn why the soup tastes funny or whether gravity exists in a vacuum. The account is based on the notion of teaching for conceptual change (C. Anderson 1987).

We all have background knowledge about many different subjects even before we begin our formal education, based on things that we have observed and learned informally. One example is the concept of day and night. We’ve all heard the words *sunset* and *sunrise*. For most of us, there was a time when we thought the sun actually moved through the sky, and that when it “set” in the west, it moved around to the other side of the earth. There finally came a time, however, when our incorrect assumption was challenged and we came to understand that the earth rotates on its axis, turning away from the sun (to create night) and turning toward the sun (to create day). As Anderson would say, we experienced *conceptual change*. In other words, we changed the way we understood a concept. That, in a nutshell, is learning.

The danger comes when we don’t actively recognize the conflict between the old knowledge and the new knowledge. Then our brains are not really going to be able to use that new knowledge. Oh, we may remember enough of the wording from a text or a lecture to recognize key words and pass a test, but we won’t be able to retain or use that new information.

Charles W. Anderson describes just such a situation in a science class about photosynthesis (Roth 1985a, 1985b; Roth and Anderson 1987; C. Anderson 1987). Students could read the chapter, answer the questions, and pass the test on the unit. Right afterward, however, when questioned in layman’s terms rather than with technical

terminology, they couldn't tell someone else how plants get their food. Many reverted to false or incomplete explanations, such as "they suck it up from water in the soil." They hadn't really *learned* the information after all. Because they hadn't tried to see how the new information might conflict with their previous assumptions, that new information remained unconnected—and was quickly lost. Students relied instead on their background knowledge, even though it was not an accurate explanation for how plants produced food. In effect, they completely ignored the information that they had been "taught" during this science unit.

In diagnosing our students' learning strengths and problems (and in helping them to do the same), it may be useful to see what kinds of things the science students above did instead of learning the new material. Students will probably recognize themselves in one or more of these scenarios (based on C. Anderson 1987):

- Students read to find a familiar idea and then filled in the explanation from their own background knowledge, never getting far enough to realize that they had selected the right answer, but for the wrong reason.
- They answered questions at the end of the chapter by finding boldfaced words, never really considering the definitions and information being given about those terms.
- They memorized isolated facts for a test, never trying to connect those facts to see the total picture, and therefore missing the key concept entirely.
- They expected new information to confirm their prior assumptions, never realizing that instead the information negated their prior assumptions.

On the other hand, students who *did* learn the new material were aware of the conflict between the text and their own assumptions and were willing to abandon misconceptions in favor of the new explanations.

The following questions may be used with students as journal prompts or as small-group discussion topics to further explore their own experiences with learning and conceptual change.

- When do you remember being aware of a conflict between your belief about something and its true explanation—like the idea of the sun's rising and setting versus the fact that the earth actually rotates? What caused you to change your understanding of the concept?
- Have you ever experienced such a conflict that did not lead to your changing your understanding? Why did you stick with your old beliefs?
- Have you ever had an experience like the science students who could pass a test about a subject but couldn't describe the concept correctly—even right after the test? How did that make you feel? Why did you think that happened?

- What is your understanding of the meaning of “learning as change”? What other metaphors have you heard used for learning? How do you view learning? For example, is it an adventure in uncharted territory, or is it forced labor? Do you talk about your brain as being “full” or “switched off”? Are your metaphors positive or negative? What effect might that have on your growth as a learner?
- How can you make sure your teachers are aware of your background knowledge about a given topic? How can you try to relate new knowledge to “old” knowledge?
- Judith A. Best (1984) says that “metaphor is sneaky; it creeps into the mind and grabs hold of something that is there. It stretches that thing, applying it to something new, pulling the mind along with it. Metaphor is like the Pied Piper or the Siren’s song. It is difficult to resist” (166). Try to think of an example of a misconception you or others have had about a concept in math, social studies, or one of your other classes. How might you use metaphor to help someone else recognize the difference between his or her assumptions and the way the concept really works?

Metaphor as a Way of Knowing: Learning from *Star Trek*

Trying It Out

One type of learning involves cultural awareness—seeing beyond our own ways to understand ideas and attitudes that are foreign to us. “Darmok,” an episode of the TV series *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, illustrates how learning about others can lead to change in perceptions and feelings (Lazebnik and Menosky 1991). If you are a *Star Trek* fan, the word *Darmok* may be enough to make you recall the episode in which Captain Jean-Luc Picard met the Tamarians. If it does, then you have just experienced the way words can be packed with images and thus become metaphors. When those metaphors are ones that are known by our audience, we are understood. When the metaphors are not shared, however, communication is blocked, as it often is when we ask our students to read classic works of literature full of unfamiliar allusions—and as it was when Dathon used metaphors that were unfamiliar to Picard. If you aren’t a *Star Trek* aficionado, you may be feeling a communication block now, too, but please bear with us as we share the background of the story.

In the “Darmok” episode, the starship *Enterprise* crew finds that the Tamarian language is impossible for the computerized Universal Translator to decipher. It seems to be nothing but a string of proper names. (If English were similarly structured, we would be speaking only in phrases such as “Nixon at Peking,” “Liberace, his suit gleaming,” and “Grant and Lee at Appomattox.”) Suddenly, Picard finds himself on El Adrel with

the Tamarian captain, Dathon. Dathon seems to have planned this meeting, but Picard cannot determine why. It finally appears that they are to fight a luminous beast, although Picard had first assumed Dathon was his adversary instead.

To communicate, Dathon teaches Picard his language through concrete demonstrations. For example, Picard can't keep a fire going; Dathon throws him a burning stick and says, "Timba, his arms wide." Although he first thinks "timba" means "timber" or piece of wood, Picard finally realizes that "arms wide" indicates generosity. Picard truly sees the light now, realizing that his adversary-turned companion is speaking in metaphor. He understands that the Tamarians have held him against his will so that the basis for an alliance can be formed. The message Dathon is trying to impart is that two strangers become comrades when faced with a common foe. Sharing a common experience is the basis for understanding.

Picard shares a metaphor of his own, telling the story of Gilgamesh and Enkido, who also became friends while battling a common enemy.² Enkido dies in battle. As the wounded Dathon closes his eyes, we realize the Gilgamesh metaphor is an apt one for what Picard and Dathon have experienced as well. Later, Picard averts war, now able to use Tamarian metaphors meaningfully to communicate with the Tamarians. The Tamarians mourn their leader's death and now have a new metaphor: Picard and Dathon at El Adrel—a leader sacrifices his life in exchange for peace.

Students may enjoy watching the episode and pausing to debate the meaning of various Tamarian metaphors, such as *Shaka, when the walls fell* (failure); *Darmok on the ocean* (alone); *Uzani, his army at Lashmere with fists open* (to lure enemy); *Uzani, his army at Lashmere with fists closed* (to fight); and *Kiasi's children, their faces wet* (grief, mourning).

Near the end of the episode, the crew members talk about metaphors based on Western literature, such as Romeo and Juliet. Ask students to consider "Juliet on the balcony." Proponents of cultural literacy such as E. D. Hirsch (1987) would call familiarity with this image a requirement for educated Americans. How important is it for the members of a particular culture to share a body of literary metaphors? In what ways is the concept of cultural literacy inclusive? exclusive? If we decide that there are pieces of information that all members of our cultural group should know, then who should decide what that information is?

In the closing scene of "Darmok," Picard is reading some of Homer's works. He says they contain some of the "root metaphors of our culture." Students may be invited to

consider what that means and to read excerpts from *The Iliad* or other classics. Can they find metaphors that have become everyday expressions (and may not seem metaphorical at all now)? Are there expressions that resemble metaphors but carry no meaning for the students? If metaphors are no longer meaningful to readers, their enjoyment of the literature may be diminished. Most English teachers have had experience with this phenomenon. When the study of literature becomes the study of an artifact, our students' interest and response may sag. Perhaps the experience of dealing with unintelligible metaphors in "Darmok" can give us a perspective for examining the issue of which pieces of literature secondary students should be required to read.

Multiple Ways of Knowing: Experience, Observation, Reflection, and Research

Trying It Out

Literature is a way of knowing. Literature teaches us about ourselves, about our lives. It is an active process, one that requires us to construct knowledge: "[R]eading becomes an 'encounter' because it involves interpreting, and in the process of interpreting we find our own preoccupations addressed within the text. We are not passive in this process, for we read the text with a selective foregrounding of our own concerns and even make it address questions that were not present to its author" (Perkins 1988, 116).

Because we read through the filter of our own concerns, we relate to certain authors and characters who help us understand ourselves. And we hope that most of our students have had the experience of seeing themselves in the books that they read and learning about themselves in the pieces they write. Such readings and writings teach us. They lead us to discoveries, as readers and writers, that come from the process we undertake.

Other readings and writings are designed to teach others, to inform or persuade them. Editorials, brochures, letters of recommendation or complaint, and reports are typical vehicles for teaching others, but they are not the only ones. All of us are familiar with fables and stories with morals. Such pieces of literature clearly teach us as they entertain us. A genre such as poetry also can be used to teach. Writers who have messages to share need not limit themselves to the traditional expository forms, but students often do that, unaware that the possibilities are as wide as their imaginations.

In the example that follows, the writer has used multiple ways of knowing to explore a topic and develop a poem. Because we make discoveries through our senses, through the physical act of being somewhere and seeing, hearing, and feeling what goes on there, the writer began with an experience, a trip to the zoo. There she recorded

observations. Later she reflected on them, recording emotions and opinions about the experience and attempting to make sense of them. Finally, she consulted reference materials to help give her needed background and a factual or intellectual perspective to complement the physical and emotional perspectives she had already developed.

By sharing the journal entries below with students, you can show them how a writer might blend these multiple ways of knowing to develop a piece of writing. We encourage students to start all writing this way—with an experience or an observation and a reflection on it, followed by further investigation or research inspired by the reflection. The writer's ownership in the topic will be much greater, and the resulting combination of image, thought, and fact can lead to new insights. This is an especially helpful strategy in getting students away from the “report mode” in content-area writing.

To return to our opening statement in this section, the piece of writing developed through this process does indeed reflect a way of knowing, of discovering a new understanding of the world, as does the process of reading the piece. In the finished poem, which reflects what the writer has learned about her experience, there is an expectation that the reader will learn, too. While evoking an emotion, the poem informs and may even persuade.

Zoo Trip Entry

Five baboons living together in zoo—four stay 15–20 ft. apart from oldest and biggest male, whose appearance is somewhat different because of the shaggy mane of hair on his head and shoulders. Have bright, dark coral-colored skin on upper chest, with coarse brown fur on most of body. Really muscular chests. Ugly but cute face. Eyes seem dull and listless. Attendant throws fresh fruit and vegetables, they catch it easily in their hands; fingers seem long and bony. Sweet potatoes, corn on the cob and apples are clear favorites. Oldest female eats corn like a human would; oldest male does remove husk, but then eats it like a banana, cob and all. Seems to pick out seeds from apple as it eats. Smaller baboons eat further away, against the rocks or in small nooks, but dominant male and female remain in open for best choice of food. Dominant female has piles of food near her, but if others approach—especially the barbary sheep that share the compound—a quick gesture sends them back. (Hicks 1994)

This entry was made during a fifteen- or twenty-minute observation of the baboons at a metropolitan zoo. As you will see momentarily, the writer later selected several phrases from those notes to use in a piece of writing. Other images that found their way into her later poem were not inscribed but were recalled in rereading the entry. This is a valuable function of journaling to share with our students. Even when we do not

get everything down, the words we do record help us recreate the memories as we develop pieces of writing from our notes.

In a second entry, the writer tried to capture feelings and thoughts about the experience of observing the animal. While this might have been done in conjunction with the observation itself, recording observations alone tends to consume one's focus. These notes helped the writer explore her point of view. Some of these feelings later found their way into the poem:

Reflection on Zoo Entry

At first I thought they were cute and clever. There was a clear pecking order in the group. The male seemed a bit self-centered, seeming to expect that all the choice items would be his. The smaller ones, possibly all females, although I couldn't be sure, showed him deference. The longer I watched, the less cute it became. There was a mechanistic quality to the way they moved. No real energy. Just another performance. Why did the attendant throw their food? Demeaning. It was a strange show which the performers didn't seem to be enjoying at all. It was curious to see how the baboons looked past the spectators, as if we weren't there. There was no place to hide, no privacy, no way to escape the stares, so they seemed to just ignore us. I began to feel sad and sorry for them. Even pained. I tried to imagine what they would be like in the wild . . . surely not this listless and detached. Might they have a sense of pride? These animals seemed spiritless.

A final entry took the form of a list of facts gleaned from reading and research on baboons:

Research Entry

largest member of the monkey family
smaller than apes
two feet high
fifty pounds
found mostly in rocky hills of Africa
called dog-faced for their long snouts or muzzles
live in troops of 20–100
forage for birds' eggs, lizards, insects, fruits
even raid farms for crops
powerful jaws, sharp teeth
savage fighters; even lions fear to attack them
some types sacred to the ancient Egyptians
some types have startling colors on face and tail—red, blue, yellow, white

The poem, literally and figuratively constructed from the writings above, follows. The title is a play on the phrase “the signifying monkey.” Esu, a trickster in African American literary tradition, is the signifying monkey who “displaces and defers meaning through the ongoing play of differences” and embodies the ambiguities of language (Spurlin 1990).

The Dignifying Monkey

Largest of the monkeys
yet smaller than apes,
two feet high if they stand erect,
they carry their name uncertainly—
baboons.

A silly label and yet
far better than their epithet,
Dog-
face.

Clown-like colors,
startling shades—red, blue, yellow, white
on face and rump—
seem a joke
of which they don’t approve.

At fifty pounds, they’d make chubby toddlers
but their bodies are sleek,
their muscles are hard
like a body builder’s.

No nonsense there.
Their compound suggests
rocky hills of Africa;
but their listless eyes
say otherwise.

Troops of twenty to a hundred
would they form
if given a chance,
but zoo population control
keeps them to a lonely handful.

In the wild
they would forage
for birds’ eggs, lizards, insects, fruits—
even raid farms for crops.

Tamely here
they await the keeper’s visit,
catch sweet potatoes and apples
in long and bony fingers
with ease, yet disinterest,
like performers
long weary of the show.

Powerful jaws,
sharp teeth,
savage fighters;
even lions fear to attack them.
They guard the troop like soldiers.
But here
only barbary sheep
pay homage to their tempers.
They guard instead
the food that has been tossed them.
Sacred to ancient Egyptians,
curious to Western society,
enduring centuries
of captivity,
they stare into the distance,
avoiding eye contact
and bearing their indignity
with dignity.

What we hope students will discover is that the images and lines for this poem are found in the expressive writing of the author. By expressive, we mean writing that is primarily for one's self, that expresses thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Poetic writing grows out of those expressive roots. Words and phrases have been developed and transplanted into an art form that is meant to be shared with an audience. Too often we have asked students to start at the genre level, to write a poem or story or essay without the benefit of discovering first what it is they have to say. (Poetic writing, by the way, doesn't mean just poetry; all forms of literature fall into this category.) Transactional writing also grows out of those expressive roots but is intended instead to inform or persuade. Had the poet written a letter to the zoo's board of directors or the editor of the community newspaper to protest the conditions that the animals must bear, that writing would have been transactional—designed to get something done.

As students develop their own poems, they should be encouraged to read their work aloud in small groups and to solicit feedback. Readers' or listeners' questions may suggest areas for revision that require additional observation and research. A teacher conference also may be helpful at that point. After the piece has been developed as far as the author can take it, editing and publishing should follow. Students may wish to illustrate their work with art or photographs. Classroom displays, books for themselves or other classes, or even "bulletin-board anthologies" are possible ways to share student work.

Notes

1. For background on a number of learning theories, see *Perspectives on Learning* (Phillips and Solstis 1985).
2. Gilgamesh was a hero of Assyrian and Babylonian mythology and was known in Sumerian and Hittite writings as well. Gilgamesh was the harsh ruler of Erech, the capital of Shinar. To punish him, the gods sent Enkido. Gilgamesh won their battle, and the two became friends. The goddess Ishtar was impressed by Gilgamesh's prowess, but Gilgamesh rudely rejected her love. Ishtar was insulted and had her father, Anu, avenge her honor. Anu created a monstrous bull to attack the city of Erech, but Gilgamesh and Enkido killed it and further insulted Ishtar by throwing the bull's phallus in her face. Ishtar brought about Enkido's death and Gilgamesh's affliction with a leprosy-like disease. Gilgamesh sought help from Utnapishtim, who knew the secret of immortality. He eventually showed Gilgamesh the plant of life at the bottom of the ocean. When Gilgamesh dove for it, though, a serpent ate the plant. Later, the gods took pity on him and allowed Gilgamesh to visit Enkido in the underworld (Barnhart 1954, 1746).