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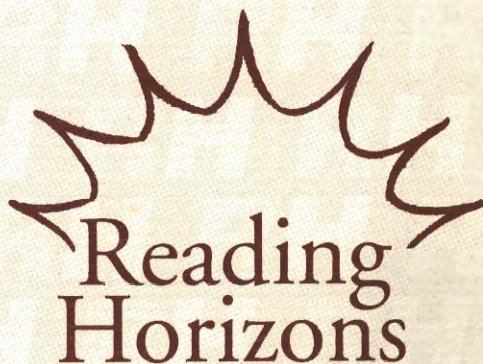
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Reading
Horizons

Dorothy J. McGinnis Reading Center and Clinic
College of Education
Western Michigan University



READING HORIZONS:
A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts

Editors: Paul T. Wilson & Karen F. Thomas
Executive Assistant: Susan Standish

Begun in 1960 as a local newsletter, *Reading Horizons* has developed into an international journal read across the United States and Canada, and world wide. Devoted to literacy instruction and research at all levels, the *Reading Horizons* tradition is to serve as a forum of ideas from many schools of thought. Through original articles and research reports, theoretical essays, opinion pieces, policy studies and syntheses of best practices, *Reading Horizons* seeks to bring together school professionals, literacy researchers, teacher educators, parents and community leaders as they work collaboratively in the ever widening horizons of reading and the language arts.

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There is no more crucial or basic skill in all of education than reading.

READING HORIZONS

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“Aren’t we going to write today?”: Using parody in grade three

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ABSTRACT

Parody dates back to ancient Greece. It has proven useful in teaching higher education, high school and intermediate grade students. This article relates how parody is useful with third grade children. Children composed personal and meaningful stories based on selected literature. This article defines the parody process and includes comparing parody to other strategies, listening to literature stories, examining picture books, parody procedure, peer editing and learning language. Included are comments or thoughts from students and teacher, one child’s story and two lists of parody story starters.

To encourage literacy in a diverse and inclusive grade three classroom of 31 students, one teacher embarked on writing parodies. The teacher recognized that students needed motivation and encouragement to write. The children also needed to expand language and the facility to use language. Earlier, the teacher became aware of parody through instruction at a local university, and enjoyed the process. The teacher felt students at the elementary level could enjoy and benefit from parody.

As applied in this classroom and as defined in the literature, a parody is “a work, often humorous, that imitates another, usually serious, work by burlesque or satire” (Harris and Hodges, 1995, p. 179). In the first phase of the parody process, children frequently created comedic or humorous compositions after reading literature selected by the teacher. Children also chose to write more serious compositions as they gained

skills and creativity. A critical point of the process was active participation in writing.

Ms. Wyant spent several months reading patterned literature to and with children, instructing them in story language in preparation for writing personal parodies. One day, she deviated from the usual plan of parody. All the children looked up with question. One child inquisitively remarked, "Aren't we going to write today? Why aren't we going to write?" At this point, Ms. Wyant reasoned that reading literature and developing a parody created a positive attitude toward writing!

This includes a description of how Ms. Wyant used parody in a Midwestern third grade classroom. Activities addressed include: comparing parody to other writing strategies, listening to literature stories, examining picture books, learning parody procedure, using peer editing and learning language. The article contains children's and teacher comments. There are two book lists helpful to initiating parody, a list for beginners and a list for more advanced parody.

Since ancient Greece (Stott, 1990; Zahlan, 1987), teachers used parody or the imitation of sentence pattern or writing style as a technique to teach rhetoric to adults and students in higher education (Reeves, 1996), high school (Huitt, 1991; Tensen, 1997) and intermediate elementary school (Schlichter, 1992). Parody is also applicable with early grades. In this grade three classroom, students developed creative writing skills, an outcome of using the technique. It is a method that teachers should consider to teach and motivate students.

As teachers search for ideas and practices, parting from a teacher-dominated and/or a content-centered curriculum, parody is beneficial (Graesser, Golding & Long, 1991). Students learn of the conventions of language and story from parody (Stott, 1990). Parody facilitates understanding, develops new plot patterns and heightens an appreciation for diversity (Graesser et al., 1991). Similarly, learners identify story meanings and refine literacy skills through the parody process.

Comparing parody and other writing strategies

Parody is similar to copy change (Rasinski & Padak, 1996), copycat stories (Walker, 1992) and transformations of traditional stories (Sipe, 1993). Essentially, parody writing or represents a blend of each of these established strategies.

Rasinski and Padak (1996) described copy change as a method to help children compose imaginative stories. Children create either a real or make-believe story. The technique begins with a teacher reading a fairy tale, tall tale or telling a story, followed by discussion of text

elements or characteristics, and completing a dictation. With the dictation as a guide, children create a fairy or tall tale. A book, too, is useful as a guide. Children may work individually or in groups as they compose from a copy of a story. Children change elements or characteristics of a story to fit with their ideas. Hence, the name copy-change. Copy-change is very helpful in supporting hesitant writers.

Walker (1992) recommended predictable and patterned literature for copy-cat stories to ease children into literacy and language learning. Composing copy-cat stories combines with other methods like shared reading and teacher modeling of story making. In the latter, the teacher explains how changes in settings or characters lead to a new story. Copy-cat stories help children feel more comfortable taking risks. Children learn form and word pattern from familiar story structure according to Walker.

Sipe (1993) delineated transformations of traditional stories, a technique beneficial to intermediate grade students in making reading and writing connections. Using comparison/contrast charts, children can compare traditional tales and modern variants and then compose their stories. Children revisit picture books of familiar tales as they begin to develop transformations of at least one form or another. Transformations may be parallel and very similar to the original tale such as "The Principals New Clothes" versus *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Similarly, they might compose stories loosely based on original tales as those found in *The Stinky Cheese Man*. Children may engender conscious and playful language manipulations extending an original tale like *Chicken Little*. Likewise, illustrations, solely, can be the focus of a transformation as in Anthony Browne's *Hansel and Gretel*.

Through comparison charting, whole class discussion, small group and individual work, children benefit from the transformation process (Sipe, 1993). They develop understandings of reading and writing. They relive the enjoyment of a familiar story, often with a humorous result. They learn about the significance of story elements like setting, plot, characters, point of view and sequel. Students develop writing fluency and greater understanding of such elements as talking, drafting, revising, editing and publishing, all important to the writing process.

Parody is similar to the aforementioned strategies due to blending parts of each of these strategies. Essentially, our technique began by listening to patterned literature as in Walker's copy-cat stories. Next, children examined the elements or characteristics of stories, an idea akin to Rasinski and Padak's copy change. An author's copy formed the foundation for a new story. Children examined story and picture content of

favorite books to discover inherent patterns like language, pictures, and five elements of writing (who, what, when, where and why). Using five writing elements with parody is an idea different from the other strategies. Next, the teacher modeled prewriting processes such as brainstorming and semantic webbing. This idea is similar to Walker's notion of modeling writing and story developments. Children then engaged in prewriting, drafting and reading favorite patterned literature selections. Children also participated in peer or cooperative editing throughout the parody process, followed by sharing refined, polished stories with the total class. Parody does involve total class participation, cooperative learning and individual learning, ideas similar to Sipe's transformation of stories. Likewise, children integrated other language arts with writing. See Figure 1.

Figure 1.

Parody Writing Steps

Children listen to patterned literature stories.
 Children examine literature stories.
 Class discusses five elements common to story.
 Children read a patterned literature story.
 Teacher models semantic webbing from a patterned story theme.
 Children brainstorm ideas related to a theme as teacher records.
 Children design and share a semantic web of a story.
 Children write a new story from a patterned story theme.
 Children create pictures to accompany their stories.
 Children share and edit stories cooperatively.
 Children revise stories cooperatively or individually.
 Children publish/share stories with the total class.

Listening to patterned literature stories

Listening to patterned literature stories is very helpful in developing children's language (Rhodes, 1981) as they prepare for parody writing. In this classroom, children listened to stories with song-like patterns of repetition, rhythm and rhyme. The teacher selected an easy and enjoyable story to begin the process. A good story to start with is Maurice Sendak's *Chicken Soup With Rice*.

Children immersed themselves in this story. The teacher kept other patterned literature stories readily available for scheduled and impromptu readings during the school day. Readings from patterned literature stories occurred during classroom transitions, after recess, or as needed to capture the attention of the students. Children enjoyed Sendak's patterned style of writing that served as a language model for composing a simple parody story.

Parody writing naturally extends learning and may motivate children to write other stories in following with a patterned literature theme. One such extension of *Chicken Soup With Rice* was to write a parody for upcoming months. [For example, if the children chose and read the *December* story, they would compose a parody for January.] The children created what they thought would happen in January. They asked themselves, "What would Sendak say about January?" After constructing a predictable and personal story, children compared their stories to Sendak's story. Such procedure has potential to advance calendar concepts, higher-ordered thinking, language development and literacy refinement.

Examining picture books: The roles of authors and writers

The children, as a class, explored several picture books in a variety of genres, using known stories to acquaint them with the process that authors and writers use as they compose. The texts examined patterned picture books, fairy tales and books of favorite and familiar authors like Mercer Mayer, William Steig and Mike Thaler. The children also thought about what authors and illustrators might do as they write picture books. They questioned each other about what authors do to get the attention of readers. They examined picture clues in the books with specific questions guiding their inspection. For example: How do authors place their pictures on a page?; How do authors design their pictures for the greatest effect?; How do pictures relate to the written story?; and What do authors talk about in the story? The class, then, revisited common story elements. Essentially, children looked for the critical elements *who, what, when, where, and why* as they analyzed books. The teacher focused on these elements to help children prepare and organize their compositions.

Parody procedure

Parody writing in this classroom began with the children reading *Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe* by Vera Williams. The teacher selected this story because the children enjoyed it and because it is a good story to stimulate thinking and planning. After reading the story,

the children then created fictional accounts of their trips. In some cases, children created a nonfictional story. They imitated the basic story of Vera Williams, while fashioning language to fit with a new story.

The teacher used several activities to guide the students into creative writing. She modeled a semantic web, conducted class brainstorming sessions, established individual and cooperative writing activities, initiated class discussion, and concluded with more independent writing. The teacher modeled a semantic web of a trip to another state to demonstrate how to complete a web about a literature theme because semantic webs are helpful for vocabulary, comprehension and writing (Heimlich & Pitelman, 1986).

Next, the teacher guided the class as children brainstormed their travel experiences. The teacher recorded the ideas on the chalkboard for everyone to view. Children used sensory words to describe things seen, tasted, smelled and enjoyed during their travels. They created a semantic web of their travels. Later, the children shared their semantic webs in cooperative groups.

Writing parody with certain elements in mind and following the theme of a patterned story, helped children as readers to think like writers, and writers to think like readers (Tierney & Pearson, 1983). There were natural opportunities for children to recognize the parallels of reading and writing through this process. Students learned that writing and reading share common features like planning, constructing, revising, and monitoring (Kucer, 1985).

Peer editing and parody

Peer editing was helpful in the early stages of parody writing and throughout the preparation of stories for public display. A special kind of sensitivity and relationship existed among the children as they edited stories. If the children detected a word misspelled, it was not uncommon to hear the comments, "You better check this. I am not sure that is right." In other cases, children wrapped themselves in the process. The teacher had to remind them to go to recess. During editing, children checked other mechanics like capitalization and punctuation.

Children shared parodies in cooperative groups as they continued to polish their stories. In groups of three to five students, children took turns reading their stories to one another. While reading stories in small groups, the children continued to refine their writings. They penciled in modifications during the readings. After sharing parody stories in cooperative groups, children continued to edit their stories before sharing their final compositions with the class.

As a process, parody writing accents the importance of learning from others and the importance of socialization (Vygotsky, 1962/1986). Learning is first social; only after working and learning with and from others and performing meaningful activities does a learner develop inner speech to understand and apply learning processes independently. Parody is a perfect vehicle for learning about literacy cooperatively. Children explore language and literacy in a classroom context whereby the teacher and children who are proficient about parody model the process. Children with language and writing needs learn with and from others as they continue to grow and refine language and literacy.

Comments from the children: Writing, discovery and picture development

The children made a number of comments about writing, discovery and the picture development process after reading books like *Magic School Bus*, *Lost in the Christmas Tree*, *Principal From the Black Lagoon*, *Strega Nona* and *Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe*. See Figure 2

Figure 2.

Comments from the Children

Writing Process

I came up with my character because the character in the story (Strega Nona) reminds me of my cousin.

I wrote the chocolate monster because my whole family likes chocolate, except my Dad . I used my Mom's first and middle name because she always makes me laugh. I included my next door neighbor in the story because we fight outdoors a lot.

It's difficult to make stories. In stories, you should tell how you feel. I think stories should be read by other people.

You should include a moral in your story.

I wrote about the magic snowman because I like to play in the snow. I like to ride in a snowmobile. I like to have snowball fights with my brother.

Discovery

I learned people should give people a second chance and forgive them so they can try their job again and again.

I learned you should always judge people on the inside and even if they do something wrong you should give them one more chance.

If people do something bad, you should have the punishment fit the crime.

I learned you shouldn't touch things that don't belong to you.

I learned to do what your boss tells you to do.

I think you should learn something.

Picture Development

I thought about magic at Christmas. It makes things come alive. I tried to make good pictures.

I had to develop pictures with my story. I had to think what I wrote down and draw my pictures. I had to read the story again and think about what I wanted to draw.

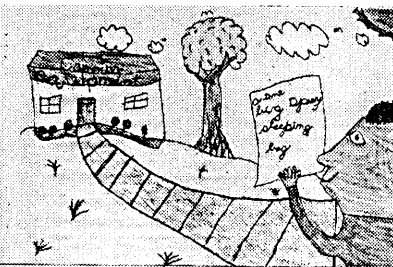
As I did my illustrations, I had to read the story. I read the story three or four times, so I would know what pictures to draw with it. This is a picture of my friends. They got buried and didn't have any hiking gear. I chose this picture cause it looks kinda funny. This picture is my best picture. It is the neatest.

The children were delighted with *Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe* by Vera Williams, and created a variety of titles suggesting active involvement. The titles comprised *Three Days in Chicago in a Semi Truck*, *Three Days in a Bus to COSI (Center of Science Industry)* and *Three Days to Grandma's on Christmas*. They composed parodies drawing from personal experience, backgrounds and the inherent literature theme and pattern of the story by Vera Williams. One story entitled, *Three Days in a Bug Infested and Animal Infested Tent* demonstrated a

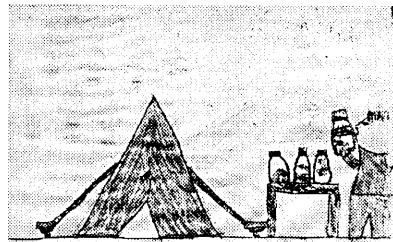
student's involvement, bringing parody to life through illustrations and text. See Figure 3.

Figure 3.

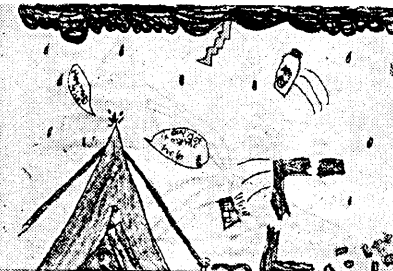
Three days in a Bug Infested and Animal Infested Tent



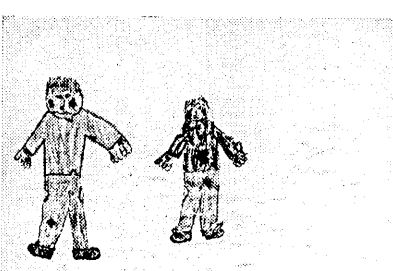
Tomorrow was the big day! we were going to go camping we were going today but we did not know what we needed we needed a can of bug spray a couple of sleeping bags a tent



Our first day in the forest was fun for the best thing was that we went out and caught frogs and snakes and bugs!



That night a big storm came all the jars fell off the shelf and broke the animals and bugs went into the tent!



When we went home we were all cut up and bruised

Children created parody compositions from personally relevant experiences. Clearly, parody writing connects with what the children know both in and out of school. Children's comments revealed that they made rather cerebral interpretations of the writing process. Their comments suggest awareness of functions, features and forms of writing. In this classroom, the teacher guided the children through the exercises that allowed them to experience what writers and readers do as they compose. The children also drew connections about the importance of reading, writing and the pictures presented in text. The instruction provided throughout the parody process allowed children to use their imaginations to create pictures complementing their meaningful stories. Furthermore, the teacher let some children draw pictures first to motivate those who were initially hesitating, resisting or lacking writing fluency.

Teacher's comments about parody

In offering thoughts about parody and how this procedure benefits students, the teacher stated that parody writing is a strategy that empowers children to feel like writers. The teacher treated the children as if they were writers, and through the parody process they began to believe they were good writers. Their prior knowledge served as basis for the construction of meaningful stories. The children used language arts together with patterned stories to learn the writing process. They learned to fine-tune story meanings and writing mechanics through parody.

The teacher made the room comfortable during story time as the children sat cross-legged on blue carpet scraps, happily sharing stories. They talked about illustrations and critical elements of story writing. They were often their own best critics, stating what they would do differently if they were to write the story again or compose a new story. The teacher concluded that for many of the students, parody validated them as writers.

Children's comments about continuing the process

All the children stated that they would like to continue parody writing. Many of them wanted to expand the "Meet the Author" section by adding ideas about enjoyment and "things liked." They also wanted to make additional pictures and add more color to the pictures. The children became sensitive to pictures and the effect of pictures on readers, another positive outcome of parody.

Learning, language and parody

While all children can benefit from parody writing, it is important to use parody with children who have limited language learning opportunities or ostensible needs to refine language. The technique of reading patterned literature and composing a parody story is helpful to children from backgrounds with limited conversation, where television is the main exposure to language, or where there are few or no reading materials available.

Children today frequently have a full schedule of daily activities which could detract from time available to read literature (Stott, 1990). Children can discover language, grammar and vocabulary from literature. However, instead of reading, children spend their time on activities like working on computers, playing video games or participating in organized sports. Parody writing can increase children's engagement in literature and thus support their language development.

Parody writing reinforces language because it involves hearing, speaking, reading and writing about a patterned story (Rhodes, 1981). Children benefited from writing parody stories, especially, when the teacher drew from their personal experiences with language, literature and life events. The teacher played a vital role as a guide in the parody writing by suggesting possibilities and encouraging thoughts. The teacher assisted the children each step in the writing process including planning, drafting, revising, editing, publishing and sharing. The teacher directed the children in refining content involving details, word choices, clarity, organization and quality of ideas. Mechanics were part of the focus of this teacher's direct instruction, including capitalization, grammar usage, spellings, punctuation and handwriting. This teacher used mini-lessons covering one writing aspect at a time and added a new aspect as refinements occurred. During refinements, the teacher directed the students with questions such as:

"How can you say that in another way?"

"How can you say that to interest your readers?"

"How can you find out about that?"

Conclusions

There are no predetermined or fixed books for parody writing. All books, genres, fiction and nonfiction are useful. An important issue in parody writing is to align literature book selections and instructional goals. Possible goals might relate to enjoyment, author familiarity, comprehension, language learning, writing from pattern books, knowing story structure or scheme, understanding the writing process and learning

writing conventions. The teacher needs to carefully select developmentally appropriate and captivating books.

In selecting books, a teacher must consider each child's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1962/1986), the point at which children can function effectively with instruction. Gradually, as children learn to write parodies, teachers increase the zone and children perform independently. Books that help to introduce children to parody writing in the primary grades are those with a discernible pattern of rhyme, rhythm or repetition. It is important to begin parody using literature with simple patterns and progress to literature with more complex patterns. Examples of simple predictable literature with few sentences per page comprise easy parody story starters. See Appendix A. Later, as children gain fluency and confidence about writing, they can write parodies using more complex literature. Examples of literature with more sentences per page and more complex story lines include complex parody story starters. See Appendix B.

Using parody in this classroom, motivated the children to design and compose personal stories. The children learned from listening, analyzing, reading patterned literature and writing a new story. Children learned from editing and helping one another compose new stories and using language arts together. Parody proved useful for learning about writing, making discoveries, and understanding pictorial aspects of story. Children not only learned language conventions from literature; they also learned of the structure of story and how story elements fit together (Stott, 1990). Parody used in this third grade classroom was a pleasurable process-oriented literacy alternative for children in grade three.

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Appendix A

Easy Parody Story Starters

Adams, P. (1974). *This old man*. NY: Grossett and Dunlap.

Aliki (1974). *Go tell Aunt Rhody*. NY: Macmillan.

Aliki (1989). *My five senses*. NY: Crowell.

Astley, J. (1990). *When one cat woke up*. NY: Dial.

Baer, G. (1989). *Thump, thump, rat-a-tat-tat*. NY: Harper & Row.

Barton, B. (1973.) *Buzz buzz buzz*. NY: Macmillan.

Brown, R. (1981). *A dark, dark tale*. NY: Dial.

Carle, E. (1969). *The very hungry caterpillar*. NY: Philomel.

Carle, E. (1977). *The grouchy ladybug*. NY: Crowell.

Hutchins, P. (1968). *Rosie's Walk*. NY: Macmillan.

Hutchins, P. (1986). *The doorbell rang*. NY: Greenwillow.

Martin, B. (1983). *Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see?* NY: Holt.

Martin, B. (1991). *Polar bear, polar bear, what do you hear?* NY Holt.

Numeroff, L. J. (1985). *If you give a mouse a cookie*. NY: Scholastic.

Shaw, N. (1989a). *Sheep in a jeep*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Shaw, N. (1989b). *Sheep in a ship*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Sendak, M. (1963). *Where the wild things are*. New York: Scholastic.

Wescott, N. B. (1980). *I know an old lady who swallowed a fly*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Appendix B

Complex Parody Story Starters

Aliki (1991). *Christmas tree memories*. NY: Harper Collins.

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The influence of perceived sibling position on reading perceptions: Implications for reading teacher education

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ABSTRACT

Teachers' critical examination of their perceived sibling positions in the family, particularly in relation to reading development, can provide them with valuable insights about their current perceptions and behaviors related to content area instruction. This paper explores the findings obtained from 188 elementary and secondary preservice teachers' responses to a questionnaire that focused on perceived sibling position as an influence on reading perceptions. Teachers' perceived sibling positions and reading abilities within their family constellations receive special attention. Further consideration centers on possibilities for practice for reading teacher education in the content areas as well as directions for future research.

Content area teachers, with their subject expertise, are in an instrumental position to bring meaning to numerous kinds of texts (e.g., maps, graphs, reports) while they enhance their own classroom practice. Specific examples of applications that would facilitate active participation in content reading instruction are reflective reading of historical novels (Smith, 1993), effective use of visuals (Rakes, Rakes & Smith, 1995), and development and implementation of knowledge models (Mosenthal & Kirsch, 1991). The application of such practices requires reflective teachers who are able to engage their students in the conscious construction of meaning. Kinney-Sedgwick and Yochum (1996) noted that "clearly, moving from traditional approaches to constructivist approaches in content area literacy learning requires changes in the thinking of teachers regarding their role and that of their students as well as the role of the text as the purveyor of the curriculum".

Teachers' acceptance and conscious use of content area instruction have varied. Investigations concerning many different factors such as workplace constraints and inservice support (O'Brien & Stewart, 1990; Rafferty, 1992-93; Sturtevant, 1991) have established a better understanding of teachers' reactions to content methodology. In order to contribute further to this body of knowledge, an exploration of the perceptual information that educators hold about themselves as readers as well as the reading process warrants serious consideration. In view of the transition to more constructivist methodologies where self-understanding is essential, the study of this factor is especially relevant. According to Morawski (1997) "individuals' perceptions, based on their subjective interpretations of life events, affect the choices they make. In the case of teachers, these perceptions have the potential to influence participation in teaching and learning" [including the area of content reading] (p. 246). Given the amount of content area reading children do in school, teachers' choices and self perceptions will play a very significant role in student participation.

From the theoretical perspective of Individual Psychology, the sibling position that an individual assumes in the family constellation offers significant information for understanding an individual's perceptions. It is not the child's number in the order of successive births that influences character. Rather, it is the personal interpretation of the situation into which each child is born that affects the formation of an individual's personality or pattern of behavior (Shulman, 1962). Teachers' critical examination of their perceived sibling positions in the family, particularly in relation to reading development, can provide them with valuable insights about their current perceptions and behaviors related to the reading process, including content area instruction.

This paper explores the findings obtained from 188 elementary and secondary preservice teachers' responses to a questionnaire that focused on sibling position in the family constellation as an influence on reading perceptions. Teachers' perceived sibling position and reading abilities within their family constellations receive special attention. Further consideration centers on possibilities for practice for reading teacher education in the content areas as well as directions for future research.

BACKGROUND

According to the theory of Individual Psychology, the "family constellation indicates the characteristic relationship of each member of the family to each other" (Dreikurs, 1964, p. 20) and "is actually a form of

life history study and personality inventory" (Shulman & Mosak, 1988, p. 75). More specifically, an investigation of an individual's family constellation discloses personal perspectives and attitudes about self and others as well as fundamental approaches to life tasks, including the teaching of reading. A major determinant in the development of an individual's frame of reference is the psychological position that one creates in the sibling context where each member strives to find a significant place of belonging.

The research literature recognizes the influential and varied dynamics of the sibling relationship. After studying the sibling patterns of 600 readers, Otto (1965a, 1965b) concluded that "samples of good readers tend to include more eldest and only children, and samples of poor readers tend to include more later-born children" (1965b, p. 57). He speculated that the literacy achievement of the eldest child is attributable to such factors as the desire to keep ahead of younger siblings, undivided parental attention, and a strong need for approval.

The notion of the eldest as the more proficient reader and the younger as the less able one has received additional support in the literature. Doake (1988) observed that it is not unusual to find the older child overpowering the younger during family reading time. Such control could persist to the point where the younger child regularly seeks alternative activities that parents often misinterpret as a lack of interest in reading. Beames (1992) noted that "as a consequence of their endeavors to find a place in the family, siblings tend to develop contrary personality traits and interests. Where one is successful academically, another may be athletic" (p. 118).

Other research has illustrated this principle of distinction in the sibling grouping. Morawski (1992) found that a fifteen-year-old male's resistance to participate in reading and writing activities was a direct response to his sixteen-year-old sister's above-average performance in the area of literacy. As stated by this boy, "my sister is the best reader and writer..., but I am the smartest in mechanical stuff" (p. 89). Leman (1993) noted that "parents tend to spend more time reading to their first-born children" (p. 286). Consequently, this child, rather than the younger sibling, acquires a head start on becoming the scholar in the family.

Although trends regarding the firstborn child as the more proficient reader have emerged, other studies revealed different literacy behaviors relative to sibling configuration. Dreikurs, Grunwald, and Pepper (1982) presented a case of a third-grader who developed reading problems after the birth of her baby brother. Up to this point she had been a model "only" child, never causing her parents any aggravation. This child's

reading difficulties allowed her to compete with her brother for their parents' attention without risking her status as the "good" sibling in the family.

Beecher (1947) analyzed the situation of a fourteen-year-old girl who was reading without retention and little concentration. He found her two younger male siblings to be active competitors who caused the girl to be on guard constantly with small hope for success. Ferguson (1984) stated that "in some families the oldest girl may be constantly discouraged and belittled while a later-born male is given wide rein" (p. 18). In this situation it appears that the girl may have assumed the role of a younger sibling.

A case study by Lieben (1967) focused on an eleven-year-old male whose reading difficulties demanded and consequently received a large amount of attention within the family. Interestingly, it was the other sibling, a nine-year old male with above-average reading abilities, who was experiencing emotional difficulties. According to Milstead (1988), "the brother or sister of an LD child may actually feel guilty for achieving academically while the LD child falters" (p. 538).

As this review indicates, there are many different factors stemming from perceived sibling relationships that influence individuals' interpretation and application of their literacy abilities. The recognition and reconstruction of these factors can help individuals engage more consciously in productive uses of reading and writing. (Morawski, 1992). In the case of educators, the knowledge of their own literacy stories from a sibling perspective can illuminate and strengthen their current practices related to content area reading. The present study was conducted to begin to investigate the application of perceived sibling position to reading teacher education in the content areas.

METHOD

Participants

Two hundred and seven preservice teachers voluntarily completed a questionnaire regarding perceived sibling position and reading development. This study concentrated on the analysis of 188 completed questionnaires. The two main reasons for the elimination of the remaining questionnaires were: (i) the omission of vital information, such as demographics and perceived sibling position and (ii) participants' self-identification as "only" children, a category that had insufficient numbers to include in the analysis of data.

Recruitment of participants took place in a one-year Bachelor of Education program at a Canadian university. To be eligible for this program, prospective teachers needed a minimum of an undergraduate degree. Seventy-three percent of the teacher participants were females while 27% were males. The age range was early twenties to mid-fifties with a mean of 28. They represented three established teaching divisions for certification: Kindergarten to grade four (48%), grades four to ten (23%), and grades seven to thirteen (29%). A break-down of teaching majors reveals one (general) for primary-junior and four (language, social science, math/science and arts) for the latter two divisions.

Procedure

During a 45 minute period in class the teacher-subjects responded voluntarily in writing to a questionnaire. A trained research assistant administered the questionnaire and read the contents to the teachers before they began writing their responses. The assistant also answered pertinent questions and explained key concepts such as perceived psychological position.

In particular, the questionnaire requested: (a) pertinent demographic information including age, gender, teaching division, and teaching major; (b) their perceived sibling position ("first born", "middle", "youngest", "only") and an explanation for their choice; and (c) their perception of their reading proficiency ("high", "average", "low") within their sibling context. The above four categories used for identifying perceived psychological position are well-established ones within the research literature, particularly associated with Individual Psychology (Campbell, White, & Stewart, 1991; Melillo, 1983; Pilkington, White, & Matheny, 1997; White, Campbell, Stewart, Davies, & Pilkington, 1997).

Analysis of data

Teacher subjects were first grouped according to their perceived sibling position in the family constellation ("first born", "middle", "youngest", "only"). The numbers in the "only" category were not sufficient to take into account in the analysis of data. Therefore, the analysis concentrated on the remaining three groups--"first born", "middle", and "youngest". A chi-square analysis, using the probability of equal to or less than 0.05, determined if significant differences among the three groups existed for perceived reading ability ("high", "average", "low").

RESULTS

Distribution according to Perceived Position

The distribution of teacher participants according to their perceived sibling position was 41% for "first born", 19% for "middle", and 40% for "youngest". No significant representation existed among the three groups for gender, teaching division, and teaching major. Some specific examples of statements that documented the teacher participants' choices of sibling positions are as follows:

Oldest

- I am the oldest sibling in my family and felt very much that way... I'm a take charge kind of person.
- I am the firstborn and the oldest. I was born first and that is the way it is.
- I was always the oldest. I didn't learn of my older brother until I was 6 or 7 years old.
- My sister was younger so I had a certain responsibility to look out for her.

Middle

- Second born--always felt like the meat in the sandwich.
- I always have viewed myself as being "the middle child".
- It is interesting because I always saw myself as the middle child. For a long time it was just the 3 of us and then my parents had 2 after-thoughts.

Youngest

- I have always perceived myself as being the baby because I was always labeled as one.
- And in fact, I still remain the baby of the family.
- I perceived myself as the youngest in the family even though I have a twin sister.
- She's a few minutes older than me.
- Definitely the youngest! The baby of the family--everyone's younger sister!

Differences in perceived reading ability

The analysis regarding perceived reading ability yielded significant differences among the three groups. Teacher subjects from the "first born" group viewed themselves primarily as "high" proficiency readers

(83%), rather than "average" (9%) or "low" (8%). A similar but less pronounced pattern emerged in the "youngest" group where teacher subjects also perceived themselves as "high" proficiency readers (63%) more often than "average" (20%) or "low" (17%). In contrast, the teacher subjects from the "middle" group viewed themselves as "average" proficiency readers first (50%) followed by "high" (36%) and then "low" (14%). ($N=188$, $X^2 30.6$, $p \leq 0.000$). No significant differences for perceived reading ability were found for gender, teaching division, or teaching major.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

First born

Perceptions and reading development. The research literature supports the "first born" teachers' perceptions of themselves as "high" (83%) proficiency readers. The findings from the administration of a questionnaire to 170 children indicated that "first" children rated themselves higher in eleven traits including "intelligence", "high standards", and "hard worker" (Lohman, Lohman & Christensen, 1985). Investigations into the actual intellectual and academic performance of this sibling position reinforce this perception. In a study involving 615 junior high school students, Oberlander and Jenkin (1967) found that "first borns" surpassed "later borns" in intellectual ability and academic achievement. McGlynn (1969) found that first borns were over-represented among 306 students in a specific college and 23 students obtaining a grade of "A" in a psychology course at the same school.

Two factors, parental expectations and the birth of subsequent siblings, appear to play integral roles in the development of perceptions and related actions associated with this position. As noted by Dreikurs, et al. (1982), "first born children represent their [parents'] dreams and ambitions" (p. 59). Consequently, parents tend to concentrate on discovering and actualizing these children's potentials to learn and perform. In relation to reading, many teacher subjects who identified themselves as "first born" noted that their parents placed great emphasis on literacy acquisition.

The birth of other siblings often leaves "first born" children feeling dethroned and subsequently motivated to reestablish their place of significance in the sibling constellation (Perlin & Grater, 1984). The oldest sibling, consequently, competes with the younger ones to be first in all activities (Angers, 1974). According to Forer (1977a), "the arrival of a second child seems to intensify...anxiety about performance, and

thereafter the firstborn struggles to regain parent approval and love" (p. 66). Leman (1993) offers that compliance and love secures such approval. For example, "first born" children are more likely to adhere to the political and religious views of their parents. Wisdom & Walsh (1975) point out that such actions contribute to "first borns" being "more dogmatic or rigid in their beliefs as a group" (p. 35).

"Firstborns" striving for status in the sibling constellation can transfer to other settings where they tend to seek approval through compliance and academic accomplishments. Phillips, Bedeian, Mossholder, and Touliatos' (1988) assessment of 835 professional accountants' personalities showed that "firstborns" scored significantly higher than "later borns" on measures of "dominance", "good impression", and "achievement by conformity" as assessed by personality inventories. When placed in the situation of learning to read, such characteristics could govern the participation of "firstborns".

Possibilities for application. According to the research, there are two considerations worth discussing regarding the implementation of content area reading in the classrooms of "first born" teachers who perceive themselves as "high" proficiency readers. First, the need for affiliation and the dependence on approval of others such as administrators and parents, could influence the extent to which these teachers might use content reading practices. For example, if the subject department coordinator encouraged teachers to employ content area reading strategies, then a "first born" teacher might feel compelled to comply with the coordinator's recommendations. On the other hand, an absence of administrative directives could lead to "first-born" teachers maintaining a more traditional approach to subject instruction with the inclusion of content strategies seen as an obstacle to covering the course material.

A second consideration for "first-born" teachers who view themselves as "high proficiency" readers is the above-average perceptions that they hold about their own reading abilities. These perceptions would be particularly relevant to the situations of challenged readers. Not being able to identify with such readers, one could speculate that "first born" teachers might misinterpret these students' lack of progress and other behaviors as apathy, defiance or inability. Consequently, content instruction might become more teacher directed and focused on conveying specific content information as the "first born" teachers mistakenly attempt to direct and remediate students' learning and related behaviors. As a result, opportunities to help students develop content reading strategies could decrease while situations that reinforce

their faulty perceptions as problem readers could increase (Morawski & Brunhuber, 1995).

Youngest

Perceptions and reading development. "Youngest" siblings are in a distinct position as they never experience displacement by a younger brother or sister. Rather, their predecessors have already established the standards and degree of competition within the sibling constellation (Adler, 1970). The "youngest" may become the speeder and surpass all others, or may become the most discouraged and feel inferior to the others and expect consideration and service from them (Dinkmeyer, Pew, & Dinkmeyer, Jr., 1979; Dreikurs, et al., 1982).

The "youngest" teachers, who as a group perceived themselves as "high" proficiency readers three times as often as "average" or "low", appear to represent the former type. "Lastborn" youngsters, according to Forer (1977a) will have high estimates of themselves if reared in a benign environment and not suppressed by parents and other siblings. In a study that focused on the sibling position of teachers, Northcutt and Newlon (1985) surveyed a group of elementary school teachers regarding sources and degrees of perceived encouragement related to their work. They found that the "youngest" group of teachers perceived themselves as being the most encouraged, particularly by their students and other teachers. Siblings in this "youngest" position often receive the benefits of extra parental time, more lenient child rearing practices, and sibling interaction.

In comparison to the first born, the "last boy or girl may avoid handicaps, like anxiety about achievement...because less is expected of the baby" (Forer, 1977a, p. 69). Hence, a less intense atmosphere in the home coupled with sibling interaction and a more relaxed set of expectations on the part of the parents could very likely explain the differences in the perceived "high" literacy ratings between the "youngest" (63%) and the "oldest" (83%) groups in this study. That is, the "youngest" teachers perceived themselves as "high" proficiency readers; however, this was to a lesser degree than the "first-born" teachers. Being less concerned with the approval of others (Forer, 1977b) and more independent (Weiner, 1973), the teachers in the "youngest" group may not have felt as compelled or anxious about developing their potential to read.

Possibilities for application. In view of the research, two factors would merit attention regarding the application of content area reading in the classrooms of "youngest" teachers who may strive to reach ahead in

their practices. First, it is possible that their lower need to seek approval through conformity combined with their less structured experiences in the family would make them more open to trying and even developing new content area practices. According to Forer (1977a), "later children have their life roles less clearly structured by parents and are freer to indulge in fantasy, to pretend and play" (p. 78). Consequently, they are able to cultivate their creative side (Eisenman, 1964). Rather than being motivated by the department administrator to employ content strategies in the classroom, it is conceivable that these "youngest" teachers would independently use them for improving and varying their instruction in the classroom.

The second factor concerns these "youngest" teachers' background knowledge regarding their sibling position that they bring to the instructional process. "Youngest" teachers who choose to be strivers may become goal-oriented as they urge their students to develop their literacy potential in the content classrooms. For those students who are not able to respond positively to such encouragement, "youngest" teachers, however, may be in an advantageous position to understand these students' particular needs. Starting out at the bottom of the sibling hierarchy, "last-borns instinctively know and understand that their knowledge and ability carry far less weight than that of their older brothers and sisters" (Leman, 1985, p. 104). Hence, it is possible that a combination of content strategies and affect would govern the instructional agendas of the "youngest" teachers.

Middle

Perceptions and reading development. Not having the advantages of the oldest or the benefits of the youngest, "there is no inherent uniqueness in the position of the middleborn child, whose role in the family is consequently less well defined" (Kidwell, 1982, p. 225). Preceding children usually influence subsequent ones as they attempt to develop their own style of life (Leman, 1985). In the area of reading, if the older sibling is a proficient reader, then the next one will select another avenue to find a place of belonging in the family. As their "average" rating (50%) of themselves as readers indicate, this set of circumstances could apply to the "middle" teachers in this study. From an Adlerian perspective, one could assume that they saw many of their older adjacent siblings as stronger readers.

It is worth noting, however, that a more proficient sibling does not always precede every middle child. For example, in the case where there are four siblings in a family, a third child immediately follows a sibling

who may be a less able reader. Consequently, this third child forms a self-image as the more capable reader. According to Leman (1985), there is no way to predict which way children who perceive themselves as middle born might develop because they "bounce-off" the ones directly above them. Although half of the "middle" teachers in this study saw themselves as "average" readers, there were 36% who viewed their reading proficiency as "higher" than their other siblings.

Possibilities for application. The research suggests that there are two basic matters that deserve further thought while considering the use of content area reading in the classroom of a "middle" teacher. To begin with, "middle" individuals tend to be free spirits who often have new ideas and the independence to try them (Leman, 1985). For instance, Lieberman, Shaffer, and Reynolds (1985) found that there is a tendency for persons who are of intermediate birth order to be more likely candidates for participation in scientific revolutions. "Middle" individuals tend to be more original in approaching life tasks, especially if their preceding sibling exhibits more "firstborn" behavior in the form of dependency and affiliative responses (Eisenman, 1964). In the classroom setting, therefore, it is possible that "middle" teachers would employ a variety of alternative instructional strategies such as teaching through multiple intelligences (Pirie, 1995). Employment of such strategies would be especially beneficial for the students of those "middle" teachers who may lack the confidence as readers to make direct use of content area literacy in their courses. That is, these alternative strategies may not formally fall within the area of content area reading instruction, but they can still enhance literacy development.

It would be reasonable to speculate that the "middle" teacher would challenge any questionable directives from the administration, such as a requirement to use only one reading program for all students in a junior high school. Experienced in the "middle" role, these teachers would be in an advantageous position to identify those students who are experiencing literacy difficulties, including lower self-esteem. According to Kidwell (1982), "achieving status, affection, and recognition among siblings and feeling special in the eyes of one's parents is apparently more difficult for the middleborn and is reflected in overall self-assessment" (p. 234). One could hypothesize that this situation would also include reading proficiency.

NEXT STEPS IN RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

Although the limited number of cases analyzed and discussed in this study prevent firm conclusions from being drawn, the preliminary findings contain valuable considerations for future application and investigation. Included below are possibilities for practice followed by directions for future research.

Possibilities for practice

Used in combination with existing knowledge and practices, teachers' examination of their sibling positions could provide further knowledge to help them understand their acceptance and use of content area reading instruction in subject classrooms. For instance, a "first-born" teacher with "high" reading perceptions may benefit greatly from participation in class meetings where students with reading difficulties express their concerns about learning in subject classes. A team involving teachers of various sibling positions and reading perceptions could offer support and insight to each other as they attempt to implement content literacy instruction in their school. Tutoring a discouraged reader may help overachieving "youngest" teachers to set more realistic instructional goals that take into account the varied reading abilities of their students. On the other hand, some "middle" teachers could come to recognize that their lack of confidence as readers stemmed from a myth created in their own sibling context.

The combined use of specific methods and tools in the teacher education program could assist teachers in reflectively constructing their content literacy autobiographies by way of perceived sibling position. Verbal interaction in the form of dyads, small group and whole class discussions complemented by journal activities have the potential to act as the vehicles for this construction (Morawski, 1995). Pertinent activities taking place in both the teacher education classroom and on-site settings, would generate the working material for critical reflection. Specific examples of such activities are bibliotherapeutic exercises (Morawski, 1997), co-listed and team teaching situations (Davis, 1990; Grubb, 1991), teacher-student meetings (Morawski, 1992), and field experiences with readers in difficulty (Memory, 1983).

Directions for future research

1. Increase the sample size of teacher subjects surveyed to: (i) help determine if their perceived sibling positions in the family constellation

reveal similar patterns to those found in this study and (ii) help ensure the inclusion of "only" teachers.

2. Look for between group patterns related to such additional factors as gender and teaching major designation.

3. Administer an attitudinal scale or questionnaire on content area instruction so that the results can be examined in relation to the information on the teacher subjects' sibling configuration.

4. Explore the relationship between the distribution of sibling positions found within specific subject areas and the frequency of use of content reading instruction in those subjects.

5. Conduct a case study of the application of sibling constellation to reading teacher education and content area literacy. Employ a variety of data collecting methods such as focus group interviews, pre- and post-questionnaires, and follow-up conferences to clarify responses and obtain additional relevant information from the teachers who participated in the course.

As part of the study, select a group of these teachers to maintain journals in which they include their thoughts and feelings regarding their experience with the construction and application of their literacy autobiographies by way of sibling configuration. Ask teachers to consider such factors as experiences of significant moments as well as learning structures and activities that fostered these events.

To obtain the course instructor's perspective, she or he would need to regularly record and critically examine notes pertaining to the implementation of practical recommendations regarding perceived sibling position. This phase of the research would focus on such factors as the suitability of the activities for guiding teachers in their construction, reflection, and, subsequent instructional modifications concerning subject literacy.

6. An important extension of the investigation would concentrate on the long-term effects of teacher education practices related to content reading instruction by way of perceived sibling configuration. Interview teacher participants after a specific period of time to determine the impact that their exposure to sibling configuration was making on their instructional perceptions and practices concerning subject literacy. For example, toward the end of the school year, interview those teachers involved in the course during the previous fall term. Questions would focus on such issues as the impact that their own sibling autobiographies are having on instructional responses to students' literacy needs in their subject classrooms.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

As suggested by Vacca (1994), "developing insights about ourselves as readers can prompt us to think about the connection between the role of reading in our personal lives and the messages about reading telegraphed to our students" (p. 673). In the subject classroom, such communications have the potential to promote or hinder students' participation in the learning process. It is important, therefore, that teachers critically examine their reading perceptions in relation to their classroom practices. The concept of perceived sibling position from an Individual Psychology perspective offers an important theoretical and practical focal point for facilitating such active reflection. The findings of this study contain valuable working material for conducting further research on the application of perceived sibling position to reading teacher education in the content areas.

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Young children's written response to text

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ABSTRACT

Although elementary teachers are encouraged to use reader response strategies in their work with children, many questions remain about the nature of young children's response. This study is part of a year-long naturalistic exploration of second and third grade students' written responses to text. Entries from children's reading logs constituted the primary data source for this study. Analysis focused on two different assignments or writing tasks: "Write what you remember" and "Write what you think or feel." The children responded to four different types of texts (two per task). Task and text differences were found in children's personal statements, the nature of those personal statements, and the relationship between children's written statements and information from the text.

Mitch, a third grader in Gretchen's classroom, shared his ideas about writing in his reading log:

Interviewer (I): Sometimes Gretchen will say, "Today we're going to learn about [something]," and she has you write down everything you know,... and then she'll read to you and she'll ask you to write more... Does that type of writing help you understand?

Mitch (M): Yeah ...because you can put down whatever — more than what she reads. I like it because you can put more down.

I: Do you see any difference between that writing and just writing after she reads to you?

M: You don't know as much at first. You write. And then after she reads, you can add more... It helps me understand better when she's done reading it... I like putting it down first.

When this interview took place in March, Mitch and his classmates were accustomed to responding to reading by writing. Reading response logs had been routine in Gretchen's classroom since October. Gretchen used the logs to promote students' written responses to text in order to help them explore the distinctive nature of their meaning-construction processes. Response theories allege that a reader's construction of meaning from and with print is influenced by many factors, including feelings and beliefs, the structure of a particular text, and the context in which a reading event occurs. Moreover, a reader's responses may change frequently and dramatically during a reading event.

As conceived by Rosenblatt (1983) in 1983, response referred solely to the solitary transaction of reader and printed text. She wrote that readers establish tentative notions of a text's intent by infusing "intellectual and emotional meanings into the patterns of verbal symbols" (p. 25). Those symbols then channel a reader's thoughts and feelings. Ultimately, from this "complex process emerges a more or less organized imaginative experience" (p. 25).

Rosenblatt later (1978) introduced the concept of stance, arguing that readers approach text aesthetically or efferentially. Aesthetic stance is the province of literature, since it invites the reader to savor the emotions prompted by the text. Efferent stance is the province of exposition, with its emphasis on information-gathering. Recently, Rosenblatt (1993) has cautioned against a dualistic view of stance, noting that many readings are on a continuum as readers bring multiple purposes and shift stances during each reading event.

Rosenblatt's seminal work has spawned dozens of response theories, each weighting the relationships among reader, text, purpose, and context somewhat differently (e.g., Beach, 1993; Mailloux, 1990). Much of the original work behind these theories focused on high school and college students' transactions with literary texts (Petrosky, 1982; Purves and Rippere, 1968; Squire, 1994). But in recent years, the term "response" has been expanded to describe how readers of all ages engage with both literary and expository text (Squire, 1994).

Early studies of children's response found a relationship between their responses to fictional texts and cognitive development (Applebee,

1978; Cullinan, Harwood, and Galda, 1983). Hickman's (1981) ethnographic study indicated that children's responses were also influenced by features of the classroom context. A later qualitative study of sixth grade language arts students (Guise, 1995) observed that children respond to texts "differently, according to particular context-specific activities" (p. 386). In that classroom, silent reading, book selection, writing situations, and aesthetic activities each became opportunities for socially constructed interactions among children who consistently sought "authentic audiences" for their talk about books (p. 395).

In addition, response has now embraced a variety of literacy interactions, including listening to the oral reading of a single text (Enciso, 1994), responding to illustrations as well as printed symbols (Madura, 1995) and synthesizing multiple readings (Poe and Hicks, 1997). Response modes through dramatic presentation (Davis, 1997; Enciso and Edmiston, 1997), drawing, and art (Altieri, 1995; Whitin, 1994) have also been explored. In one study, Smagorinsky and Coppock (1995) analyzed the choreographed dance of two young men and used this art form to demonstrate their understanding of the relationship between two characters in a short story.

Classroom use of more conventional oral and written response activities continues to be explored (Altieri, 1995; Hancock, 1993; Kelly, 1990; Vacca and Newton, 1995). The impact of multicultural literature on response has been examined (Altieri, 1996; Reissman, 1994; Wilkinson and Kido, 1997). Like the progenitive theory of response, studies of response to these variations in text and task view reading and writing as organic and learner-driven processes.

Research in response theory has resulted, then, in a myriad of instructional strategies that invite learners to draw on and explore a range of meaning-making influences (Karolides, 1997). Many of these strategies use writing and discussion to explore a range of thoughts, feelings, and associations provoked by textual engagement in order to build or extend understanding. Naturalistic descriptions of response-based classrooms are also beginning to appear in the literature. Wollman-Bonilla and Werchadlo (1999), for example, have explored the nature of first graders' written responses and the scaffolding role played by the teacher and peers in promoting extended response. Yet, although elementary teachers are encouraged to use response strategies for many instructional purposes, Langer (1994) believes many teachers remain "uncertain about the place of instruction" and the "role they should play" when using response strategies (p. 203).

And although research in this area has expanded our understanding of the role of the reader, the nature of the text, and the influence of the classroom context, it has also raised additional questions. Purves (1993) expresses a concern that studies of response have not fully recognized the impact of school acculturation into "habits of reading" that result in "response preferences" (p. 349). He also cites Langer's (1989) comment that "the difference between efferent and aesthetic reading in school lies less in the way we read than in the follow-up to reading" (p. 352).

Some research on the concept of stance may underscore these concerns. In a quantitative study of aesthetic response and teaching methods, Many and Wiseman (1992) used three instructional approaches, literary experience, literary analysis, and no discussion, to probe written response among 120 third grade students. They found that teaching approach did affect stance; students taught from a literary analysis approach were more likely to write about conventional elements of story structure. In a related study, Wiseman, Many, and Altieri (1992) found that students taught from a literary experience approach were the least likely to write efferently. The authors noted the need for teachers to be "aware of the differences" involved in different teaching approaches (p. 283). They also called for future research to examine the effects of teaching approaches on both "immediate free response" and on "student responses to subsequent work" (p. 283). Similarly, Hynds (1990) writes that teachers often unintentionally suggest "correct" interpretations of literary text, although researchers have not yet explored the implications of this for response-based learning.

Such focused studies are informative and add to our understanding of the nature of response, but at present many questions remain. Understanding more about the influence of the texts children read and the tasks teachers use to prompt responses seems an important step in answering questions about response-based instruction in elementary schools. Accordingly, this study examined how one group of students in a multiage second and third grade public school classroom constructed meaning from fiction and nonfiction when asked to respond in writing to different instructional tasks. Although data were collected from 22 students over one academic year, in this article we focus on patterns that emerged among eight of those students through four assignments. After sharing background information about the teacher and students and the data collection and analysis procedures, we will discuss the intriguing meaning-making patterns that emerged from the children's written responses.

THE CLASSROOM, THE TEACHER AND THE STUDENTS

Gretchen teaches in one of five public elementary schools in Kent, Ohio. The student body of this neighborhood school is diverse culturally, racially, and economically. During the year of the study, the district used Gretchen's classroom to pilot multi-age grouping. Her students came from traditional first and second grade classrooms and ranged in age from 7 to 12. Their reading and writing fluency was varied; two were from homes where English was not the primary language.

Gretchen's classroom is a literature- and print-rich environment in which children have many opportunities to read, write, and talk about what they have read and written. Gretchen designs instructional tasks that integrate language arts with content area subjects. In planning for this multi-age group of children, Gretchen often used a thematic approach, which she believed would blur age and grade distinctions.

In early October, Gretchen introduced reading response logs as part of her language arts instruction. Her students spent 1.5 hours each day in a writer's workshop where they created texts of their own choosing using process writing procedures. When she introduced the reading log, Gretchen carefully established different purposes for this type of writing. She encouraged students to use the logs as a place to explore their own thoughts and feelings about what they read. Students were assured that they did not have to worry about correct spelling or grammar, there was no final grade; they could write freely and in forms of their own choosing.

Students wrote responses about three times a week to a variety of fiction and nonfiction texts throughout the year of the study. Before children read a nonfiction selection, for example, Gretchen sometimes asked them to write about their topical knowledge (e.g., "Today we're going to read about bones. What do you already know about bones? Make an entry in your reading log.") After reading, children added new information— what they had learned— to their log entries. On occasion, children were asked to make notes as they read or to jot down predictions.

Other times, Gretchen's suggestions for response log entries were more open-ended. She occasionally asked children to "write what you remember," particularly after they had read a nonfiction selection or as a summary activity for a thematic unit in social studies or science. Another example of a more open-ended response task was "Write what you

think or feel.” Thus, Gretchen provided a variety of response tasks over the year of the study. Responses were often shared in class discussions.

DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

Our purpose in this study was to describe the effects of naturally occurring classroom events. We made no experimental manipulations; we did not change or attempt to influence the instructional environment in any way. The study design is based on the belief that human behavior is multi-faceted and contextually sensitive. In order to fully understand how these young students were engaging with response strategies, then, we needed to observe their behavior as it evolved over time in their classroom setting. Thus, we analyzed our primary data source, student writing, within the context of naturally occurring events in the classroom. Qualitative research methods are also compatible with the view of reading and writing as interactive, dynamic, learner-centered processes upon which Gretchen’s classroom instruction is based.

Evangeline observed in Gretchen’s classroom one afternoon each week throughout the school year. She kept extensive field notes about these observations and occasionally talked informally with Gretchen about classroom events. In March, Evangeline conducted audio-taped interviews with each child about a variety of literacy-related issues, including opinions about the response-based strategies Gretchen was using in class. Our entire data set, then, included the children’s reading response logs written over eight months, the audio-taped interviews, and our own field notes.

The Tasks and the texts

The focus of this study is students’ written responses. Two research questions guided the analyses: 1) What is the influence of task on students’ written responses? 2) What is the influence of text on students’ written responses?

Although Gretchen provided several different prompts for students’ written responses, for this study we focused on two: “Write what you remember” and “Write what you think or feel.” We chose these tasks because their open-ended nature invited free response. We examined two sets of reading response log entries for each of the two tasks, all written between November and February. This timing was purposeful; we wanted to examine entries that reflected some experience with reading response logs, but we did not select entries written so far apart in time that our interest in text and task differences would be

complicated by changes in children's writing ability. We also limited our analysis to reading response log entries only from the eight children in the class who had written in each of the four situations. Data for this study, then, consisted of 32 reading response log entries, four responses each from the eight children.

For "Write what you remember," children wrote in response to two social studies units. The first, the Native American unit, featured Susan Jeffers' *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky* (1991) as a centerpiece. Two examples of children's written responses to the Native American unit follow:

I. The Indians preserved the land by giving back whatever they took. They also respected the land and treated it like their family. When they cut down a tree, they planted an acorn in its place. They didn't even think they owned the land. Indians thought the gods and nature owned the land. They thought that nobody could buy land from anybody because nobody owned the land. They never hurt the land or animals. Indians thought the animals were their brothers and nature was their sister. White men did not keep their promise to Chief Seattle. White men said that they would take care of the land, but they didn't. White men kept cutting down trees and killing animals. We still cut down trees.

II. The Indians preserved the land by replacing everything. They didn't pollute the rivers and air. They treated the land like they wanted to be treated. They never thought they owned the land. They only kill[ed] as many animals as they needed. When they killed an animal, they used all the parts of the animal. White men promised to take care of the land; they lied.

The second "remember" response occurred at the end of a unit about the Underground Railroad. Students had read several trade books, including Debra Hopkinson's (1993) *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt*. Here are two entries from this assignment:

III. The underground railroad was not a railroad. Really it was where slaves traveled to Canada so they could be free. One man right when he stopped into Canada, he

looked back and saw his master behind him. He looked into his master's eyes and grinned at him [be]cause he now knew he was free. If you are wondering why they were traveling to Canada because the country of Canada is free and America was not free at that time. I think there was no reason for slavery.

IV. The underground railroad was not a railroad. It didn't have any tracks. It was probably just a circle of dirt. Harriet Tubman was a slave that got to Canada She had a job that she gave herself. It was when she got to freedom she would go back and save other slaves so they would be free. She was so slick that no one or nothing caught her. There was a rule that a master could get their slave back. The rule was if the master could find [them they could] get them back.

One set of "Write what you think or feel" entries reflected children's responses to Langston Hughes's poem, "Mother to Son." Two examples follow:

V. In the poem Mother to Son, it seems that the mother had a hard time getting through life. The poem kind of makes me feel sorry for the mother. I think that the mother is trying to tell the son to get through life better than she did. It was a good poem.

VI. I think this poem is telling you to never give up. When she said there had [been] some tacks in it, I think she meant there had been some tough times in her life.

The second "think or feel" task was the result of an unplanned read aloud. Gretchen explained what happened: We had been discussing the Revolutionary War, and the students were very interested in the topic but had no real first-hand experience with war. I asked my students to write anything they were feeling concerning war or what they felt the effects of war would be on the whole world... It was clear, by the speed with which they wrote, that most of the children had not written much... As a way to bring this issue to life for them, I then read aloud the story *Faithful Elephants* (Tsuchiya, 1988) to the class. This is a true story that describes how the animals in Tokyo's Ueno Zoo were put to death by their

keepers for fear that the bombing of Tokyo during World War II might set these animals free in the city. The story is a very emotional one, and the children became saddened as I read. Following the read-aloud, I asked the children to continue to write..., adding any new thoughts after hearing this story. This time their writing took more than 10 minutes.

Here are two examples of what children wrote:

VII. I think there are too many wars. There is too much violence. I would hate to be in a war. If I were in a war, I wouldn't kill anyone. I don't feel very proud to be an American. STOP THE VIOLENCE! STOP THE WARS!

VIII. There is too much violence in wars. It seems like people are getting killed every day in wars. I wish instead of having wars the people would just patch things up. Sometimes wars get so bad that at the end everybody dies. I saw a war movie and I cried almost through the whole movie because it was so sad. Right now I feel like bursting into tears. They had to kill three elephants because of the bombs. If a bomb dropped on the elephants' cage, they would run loose in the town and could do a lot of damage to the town. I didn't know that they had to kill them. That is very sad! I cried because of it!

Data Preparation and Analysis

Data preparation began with entering all student log entries into the software program *The Ethnograph* (Seidel, Kjolseth, and Seymour, 1988). We then determined the length and calculated the T-units (independent clauses); (Hunt, 1965) for each of the 32 entries. T-unit calculation is a commonly used alternative to counting sentences in students' writing. We also calculated a words/T-unit ratio for each entry; this is a widely accepted indication of the syntactic complexity of a piece of writing (Hunt, 1965).

Next we reviewed the log entries inductively to search for patterns across them. At each stage of data analysis, we identified patterns independently and then met to resolve discrepancies between observations. As is frequently the case, this inductive analysis was rather messy. For example, we began by searching responses to expository

text, looking for evidence of aesthetic or efferent response. This framework did not appear to represent most responses.

However, some differences in text and task seemed significant. For example, we were struck by the frequent references to self and by the strong voice in children's responses to *Faithful Elephants*. This assignment appeared to have evoked a qualitatively different kind of response than the other three assignments. Moreover, it seemed that the "think or feel" assignments, in general, provoked more emotional responses from children, and the "remember" assignments, in general, yielded more cognitive responses.

To capture these differences, we located, counted, and listed all "personal T-units" within the children's log entries. We defined "personal T-unit" as any T-unit containing a first-person pronoun (e.g., "I" or "we"), and we included the verb attached to the pronoun in our lists (e.g., "I think" or "we feel") in order to capture the cognitive or emotional nature of children's personal statements.

Some statements seemed closer to the text and others more distant, but we were unable to generate categories that concretely represented this phenomenon. Finally, it struck us that some T-units were essentially literal restatements of the text while others were expressions of personal opinion. Although these differences might be classified as "reader-centered" or "text-centered," this dichotomy does not account for distance from the text. Consider, for example, these two T-units: "It was a good poem" and "Right now I feel like bursting into tears." Both express feelings or opinions, but the latter comment is more distant from the text. So we eventually used the three comprehension levels described by Pearson and Johnson (1978) — literal, inferential, and applied — as an analysis scheme. Literal T-units were statements or restatements directly tied to the text. Inferential T-units offered interpretations of the text but stayed close to the issues and ideas mentioned in the text (e.g., "It was a good poem"). Applied T-units were related to but beyond the scope of the text (e.g., "Right now I feel like bursting into tears").

RESULTS

Descriptive information about children's written responses to the two "Write what you remember" tasks is provided in Table 1. Inspection of these data shows a wide range in the length of individual responses, both in terms of word count and in terms of numbers of T-units. On average, children's responses to the Native American unit

were longer than their responses to the Underground Railroad unit; syntactic complexity (words/T-unit) was similar.

Table 1
Write What You Remember

	Native American Unit	Underground Railroad Unit
Words		
Range	38-146	28-130
X =	93.4	76.6
T-units		
Range	4-14	2-13
X =	10	7.6
Words/T-unit		
Range	6.3-11.2	7.3-13.3
X =	9.6	9.7
Personal T-units		
Range	0-6	0-1
X =	1.5	0.1
List	I learned (3) We cut (1) I bet (1) I know (1) I will try (1) I should sue (1) We did (1) We threw (1) We knocked (1) I hate (1)	I think (1)
Literal T-Units		
Range	0-7	2-13
x	2.6	7.4
% of total	24%	91%
Inferential T-Units		
Range	0-11	0-2
x	5.6	0.5
% of total	52%	6%
Applied T-Units		
Range	0-13	0-1
x	2.6	0.1
% of total	24%	2%

Children made more personal statements in response to the Native American unit (12) than they did to the Underground Railroad unit (1). As can be seen in Table 1, most of these personal statements reflected cognition rather than affect or emotion. The relationship between children's statements and the texts they had read is also summarized in Table 1. About half of children's T-units for the Native American unit were classified as inferential; literal and applied T-units were evenly divided and constituted the other half. Almost all (91%) of children's statements about the Underground Railroad unit were classified as literal; they made very few inferential (6%) or applied (2%) comments.

Similar information about the "Write what you think or feel" assignments is provided in Table 2. Here, too, a wide range of individual differences in length is apparent. Children's responses to *Faithful Elephants* were longer in words and T-units than their responses to *Mother to Son*. Although the number of personal statements was similar in the two assignments (16 for *Faithful Elephants*; 13 for *Mother to Son*), children's personal statements in response to *Faithful Elephants* were more varied than their responses to *Mother to Son*. Among these varied responses were personal statements that reflected emotion (e.g., "I cried," "I would hate").

The relationship between children's statements and the texts they read shows that very few statements in response to the "think or feel" task were classified as literal. More than half of the T-units written in response to *Mother to Son* were classified as inferential, and about a third (30%) reflected applied-level issues. In contrast, for *Faithful Elephants*, the overwhelming majority (88%) of children's T-units were classified as applied.

Table 3 isolates comparisons among the four assignments. Task differences are apparent in the extent to which children wrote personal statements, which accounted for 15% and 1% of children's "remember" T-units and 41% and 26% of their "think or feel" T-units. Some text differences are likely as well, as the differences between entries within task (e.g., Native American vs. Underground Railroad) are substantial. Moreover, *Faithful Elephants* prompted more emotional or affective response from children than did any of the other three texts. This, too, is a likely indication of text differences.

Table 2
Write What You Think or Feel

	<i>Mother to Son</i>	<i>Faithful Elephants</i>
Words		
Range	26-53	43-144
X =	40.8	77.4
T-units		
Range	2-10	4-13
X =	3.9	9
Words/T-unit		
Range	5—22.5	5.3—16.3
X =	12.9	8.9
Personal T-units		
Range	0-3	1.6
X =	1.6	2.3
List	I think (9) I feel sorry (2) I know (1) I did not like (1)	I don't feel (4) I cried (2) I didn't know (2) I wish (2) I think (2) I saw (1) I liked (1) I would hate (1) We should (1)
Literal T-Units		
Range	0-1	0-2
x =	0.3	0.6
% of total	7%	8%
Inferential T-Units		
Range	1-5	0-1
x =	2.1	0.4
% of total	63%	5%
Applied T-Units		
Range	0-3	3-11
x =	1.0	7.3
% of total	30%	88%

Table 3
Comparisons

	Remember		Think or Feel	
	Native American	Underground Railroad	<i>Mother to Son</i>	<i>Faithful Elephants</i>
Personal				
T-Units	15%	1%	41%	26%
Literal				
T-Units	24%	91%	7%	8%
Inferential				
T-Units	52%	6%	63%	5%
Applied				
T-Units	24%	2%	30%	88%

Task differences are also apparent when children’s responses are analyzed for their relationship to information presented in the text. The “remember” prompt was far more likely to generate literal information than the “think or feel” prompt, which tended to invite nonliteral response. Text differences are revealed as well, especially among T-units classified as inferential or applied (see Table 3).

DISCUSSION

Our exploration of these students’ written responses supports the growing practice of inviting young children to write in response to what they have read. The complexity of the response process, so evident in studies of older students, is also apparent in young children’s responses. For example, we found diversity among individual responses, and the texts children read seemed to prompt qualitatively different responses. In addition, the children’s responses were influenced by the instructional context, in our case the tasks assigned by the teacher. Primary-level teachers need to understand both the response process and the potential influence of the tasks they assign in order to support children effectively. More research is necessary in this area.

The second and third graders in Gretchen’s classroom did not need a great deal of scaffolding or direction from the teacher in order to craft effective responses to single or multiple texts. Directions like “Write what you remember” and “Write what you think or feel” were more than adequate. Elementary teachers, then, might consider use of reading response logs, perhaps using similar writing tasks, as a means to encourage children’s written response. Results of this study amply

demonstrate that young children are capable of providing rich written responses to what they read.

Moreover, since children's written responses showed evidence of their comprehension, we believe that elementary teachers can use children's log entries for assessment purposes. Most teachers are already aware of the "three levels of comprehension"; our work with these levels indicates their utility as a tool to analyze children's written products. Thus, analysis of children's reading response log entries can be an alternative or supplement to direct questioning, retelling, or other forms of evaluating literacy learning. In using logs for this purpose, however, we recommend that teachers remain sensitive to the likelihood that task and text will influence how children choose to respond.

Among the questions to emerge from this study is one that centers upon the constructs "efferent" and "aesthetic," which have dominated rhetoric about response to literary and informational text. When we began our analysis, we attempted to identify these constructs in the children's responses. Although it was possible to identify efferent and aesthetic portions of children's responses, this typology was not helpful in exploring all dimensions of children's meaning-construction. Like Langer (1989), we believe that the picture of children's responses to reading in school is complex, both the follow-up to reading and the nature of the texts themselves influence children's responses. Future research should investigate the efficacy of "aesthetic or efferent stance" for informing instructional practice.

We began the study with questions about the influence of text and task on children's written responses. Our exploration of naturally occurring written responses reveals that there are indeed differences among texts and between tasks. Like others (e.g., Guise, 1995; Hickman, 1981), we believe both task and text influence children's responses. Asking children to write what they remember prompts one sort of written response; asking them to write what they think or feel prompts another. In other words, the children in Gretchen's classroom did what she asked. Although more research is certainly warranted, we believe that an old adage reflects an important conclusion from this study, "Be careful what you ask for." The teacher's directions to children appear to influence what they write. If their writing reflects their thinking about the texts, these task directions will ultimately influence children's comprehension or learning.

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Due to several substantive errors in the previous (39, 2, pp. 131-152) printing of this article, we are reprinting it in its corrected form.

We love to read — a collaborative endeavor to build the foundation for lifelong readers

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a model of a reading motivation project for a group of fourth grade students. The project incorporates strategies shown to promote engagement in literacy: opportunities for choice, reflection and social interaction. It features the use of metacognitive activities where students set weekly goals and reflect upon how they are growing as readers.

“My favorite part was setting the goals. I liked that part the best because then with the goals, I had a reason to read!” remarked Kati. Kyle was equally enthusiastic about goal setting, “I think the best part about our reading project was accomplishing 50,000 minutes as a class. It really made the class and me feel good,” he commented. Eleni just plain enjoyed digging into good books and affirmed, “I want to read as much as I can so that is why I liked this part the best.”

While these remarks are representative of the majority of students in Kathi’s fourth grade classroom at the conclusion of their special reading motivation project, this enthusiasm had not always been the case. Teaching in a middle class community that comprises students from blue collar to professional households, Kathi sensed that her class had not consistently been “turned on” to reading. “While there were a handful of

students who loved to read, the majority of kids only read what I assigned," she explained

Working together in a professional development school collaborative effort, Marjorie Hertz (assistant professor, Muhlenberg College) and Kathi Swanson (teacher, Lincoln Elementary School) felt it was important to encourage more students to read beyond obligation. This article will describe the reading motivation project they developed. The project was designed to encourage intermediate grade students to choose to spend more time reading beyond the classroom walls. Margie and Kathi were anxious to see if the use of goal setting and self-monitoring techniques would motivate students to read more frequently on their own. The project used primarily observational techniques to assess the impact of the motivational program on the reading lives of the students.

DIMENSIONS OF MOTIVATION

Research provides insight into how to engage and motivate children, specifically how to plant seeds for lifelong reading. Teachers have long maintained that motivation is crucial if we are to set our students on the road toward becoming lifelong readers (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling and Mazzoni, 1996).

Children's motivations for literacy are multidimensional. Motivation is based on both internal and external factors. Internal or intrinsic motivation relates to inherent interest in a task (engaging in an activity due to natural interest in the activity itself). On the other hand, external or extrinsic motivation relates to doing something in order to earn a reward or a grade. Extrinsically motivated students are not necessarily interested in the activity for its own sake.

It is important to encourage intrinsic motivation, as the quality of task engagement is higher when students are involved in a task for their own reasons. However, extrinsic motivational strategies can also be effective under certain conditions (Brophy, 1987; Fulk, 1994; and Tripathi, 1992). Opportunities to compete can add excitement to the classroom, and when used judiciously, rewards can motivate students to try that much harder. Brophy proposes guidelines for supplying extrinsic motivation. Rewards should be used in ways that support learning. In addition to drawing attention to the reward itself, teachers should encourage students to value their growing knowledge. Therefore, when integrating competition into instruction, Brophy suggests that teachers stress the content being studied rather than highlight who won and also lost.

Teachers must also make sure that the rewards are used as incentives for everyone; all students must have at least an equal chance of winning.

Educators should recognize examples of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, specifically as they relate to the field of reading. The dimensions of children's reading motivations have been identified (Wigfield and McCann, 1996/1997) and a number of them relate to the amount of reading that students engage in during a school's reading program. The frequency with which children read is affected by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors: social reasons for reading, reading efficacy, reading curiosity, reading topics aesthetically enjoyed and recognition for reading. Wigfield and McCann point out that overall, the intrinsic factors for reading correlate most strongly with the frequency of students reading.

Motivating children to engage in sustained literacy activities is a continuing challenge for teachers. Many students feel they are "too busy" for free-choice reading (Whitney, 1991). Others are regularly attracted by modern technology, involved in outside activities and frequently have no one with whom to share books (Lange, 1994).

GOAL SETTING STRATEGIES

Goal setting and self-monitoring of behavior are effective strategies to help motivate children. Locke, Shaw, Saari and Latham (1981) describe a goal as what an individual is trying to accomplish. A key premise of goal setting theory and research maintains that human actions are directed by conscious goals (Locke and Latham, 1990).

A powerful tool, goal setting directs students to focus their attention, motivates them to persist in meeting the objectives and helps them to formulate strategies for accomplishing a goal (Locke, Shaw, Saari and Latham, 1981). As students progress toward their goals, their sense of self-efficacy or belief that they will be successful increases. Students who feel that they will be successful often choose to engage in tasks, put forth more effort, and persist when they encounter difficulties (Schunk, 1994).

Two types of goals are identified: product goals and process goals. Product goals emphasize what will be accomplished, whereas process goals stress the steps that students will take toward achieving their goals (Johnson, 1990). Teachers should encourage students to consider how they will achieve their product goals. For example, they might have them plan how to attain their goal by first answering the questions "how, where, when and who" (Piirto, 1987).

The positive effects of goal setting are influenced by the types of goals that students set. Goals exert their influence through three properties: specificity, difficulty and proximity (Locke, Shaw, Saari and Latham, 1981; Schunk, 1991). Specific goals provide clear indications of what is required. Goals that are difficult or challenging require effort or skill to accomplish. Finally, proximal goals can be reached relatively quickly whereas distal goals are accomplished farther in the future.

In addition to providing specific, challenging and reachable goals, there are several other factors that make goal setting effective. One is for teachers to be certain that students receive feedback. Feedback can be given by the teacher or monitored directly by the students (Johnson, 1990). Second, for goals to be effective, students need to accept them and commit to them. Teachers can promote goal acceptance by supporting students in the goal-setting process, listening to their thoughts about the goals, and encouraging them to ask focused questions (Johnson, 1990).

Teachers need to encourage students to establish their own appropriate goals and then fully support students in their efforts to meet their objectives (Marzano, 1992). Goals that students set themselves are often more effective than those mandated by the teacher (Spaulding, 1992). Once students have set their own goals they must be shown how to monitor their progress. Self-observation combined with appropriate goal setting has the potential to change student behavior (Mace, Belfiore and Shea, 1989).

Goal setting gives students a purpose as learners. Studies have also shown this intervention to provide a positive influence on students' academic motivation and learning in the classroom. Recently, Jenkins (1997) describes how she incorporated goal setting into her fourth grade classroom reading program by asking students to set goals as they read from books each month. Jenkins reports that when the students designed goals for themselves, their reading became more intentional as they learned about themselves in the process.

Carroll and Christenson (1995) describe a fifth grade classroom where student goal setting and self-evaluation are an integral part of the language arts curriculum. In the beginning many students had difficulty setting appropriate goals. The classroom teacher realized that she needed to help students by modeling those goals that she felt were important. In time, the fifth grade students found that they could set reading and writing goals for themselves and attain them. The goal setting process brought a focus to their learning. The students were increasingly motivated to meet the very goals that they had set themselves.

Schunk (1985) finds that participation in goal setting enhances the self-efficacy and skill development of learning disabled children. Sixth grade children who received subtraction instruction and subsequent practice over five consecutive school days were assigned randomly to one of three treatment groups. One group set their own proximal performance goals; the second group had comparable proximal goals assigned; students in the third treatment received the training but no goal instruction. Participation in goal setting led to the highest self efficacy and subtraction skill for students. Schunk concludes that allowing children to participate in setting their own goals may enhance both their skills and sense of efficacy as they apply these skills.

A study by Bandura and Schunk (1981) demonstrates the advantage of setting proximal goals. Elementary school children ranging in age from 7 to 10 years old were given seven sets of subtraction problems to work on over seven sessions in a self-directed learning format. These children had been identified as individuals who displayed both a deficiency and low interest in math. In the proximal goals group, the examiner suggested that the children complete one set of problems for each session, whereas in the distal group the examiner suggested that the students complete all seven sets by the end of the project. Children in the third group were asked to work on the problems with no mention of goals. Bandura and Schunk found that providing children with proximal goals increased their motivation, self-efficacy and subtraction skills when compared to children who were given distal goals or no specific goals. In their discussion they noted how children who set attainable goals not only became more proficient academically but also became more engaged in activities for which they initially had little curiosity.

Schunk and Rice (1989) investigated the effects of setting process and product goals on fourth and fifth grade remedial reading students' self-efficacy and skill performance during comprehension instruction. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions: process goal of learning how to use steps of the reading strategy; product goal of answering questions; general instructional goal of simply doing your best. All the students received 35 minute training sessions over 15 consecutive days. Analyses showed that students in the process and product goal conditions judged self-efficacy significantly higher than did students in the control condition. Those students who pursued a learning process goal had the highest comprehension. The authors speculate that the product goal students did not place as much emphasis on learning to use the steps of the reading strategy and therefore might not have applied it as diligently on the skills post-test.

READING MOTIVATION PROGRAMS

The research details successful reading motivation programs at the elementary level. If teachers are committed to having their students become lifelong readers, they must adjust their programs in order to motivate students to read for pleasure both in school and at home. Teachers might consider serving as reading models, building on experiences with familiar books and providing appropriate reading-related incentives (e.g., the books themselves). They can also provide opportunities for students to interact socially with others as they share books, and create environments in which a variety of books are readily accessible in classroom libraries (Gambrell, 1996; Palmer, Codling and Gambrell, 1994).

Calkins (1996) suggests the following ideas to promote literacy engagement in the classrooms: giving new attention to independent reading time; having students share responsibility for arranging the classroom library; inviting students to leave stick-on recommendations on the covers of books; and setting up partnerships of student readers to discuss the pages they read at home the night before.

THE PROJECT — AN OVERVIEW

Our four month reading motivation project implemented in a fourth grade class of 24 students, incorporated child-centered strategies shown by research to promote engagement in literacy: opportunities for choice, reflection and social interaction (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde, 1993). A distinct feature of the project was the incorporation of metacognitive activities where students set weekly goals and monitored their progress as they reflected upon how they were growing as readers.

Each Monday morning from February through May, students spent approximately one hour in class participating in project activities. At the beginning of the class period, they were asked to evaluate their success in reaching two goals they had chosen on their own. Their goals fell into two general categories: time goal (minutes spent reading) and *who, what, where, when, and how* goal (the specific manner in which one reads). See Figure 1. The students were asked to read a minimum of fifteen minutes for at least four days of the week, yet they were free to go beyond the minimum requirement whenever they desired. In line with goal setting research (Johnson, 1990; Piirto, 1987), the goals chosen by our students included both product and process goals. Students could strive toward accomplishing objectives relating to content (e.g., books

chosen and minutes spent reading) as well as process (*where, when, with whom, and how* strategies to use when reading at home).

Figure 1. Possible weekly goals

Time Goal

I will read for – minutes for at least four days this week.
(15 minutes or more)

Who, What, Where, When How Goal

Who I will read to/with my mom, dad, brother, pet etc.

What I will choose a new type of book to read at home.
I will read – (e.g., mystery) books for the next few weeks.

Where I will read where no one can find me!
I will read outside on my back porch.

When I will read when I have dessert each night.
I will read right before I go to bed.


How I will read with more expression.
I will write about what I have read by filling in a post-it slip from my teacher.
I will P-mail my teacher.
I will tell my mom/dad about what I have read each day.
I will call up my friend/grandparent and talk to them about what I am reading.
I will write a short letter to my friend telling him/her why I like my book.
I will draw a picture of the favorite part of my book.

The fourth grade students recorded their two weekly goals on a specially formatted sheet that they kept in their reading journals. See Figure 2. Students were asked to circle the days on which they read and indicate the number of minutes they read on each of those days. Their journals and books remained at home throughout the week. Each Monday morning they carried them back to school in their personally designed canvas reading bags which they had made as the kickoff to our project.

The students fell into a predictable routine for each session of the project. Without having to be told, they distributed calculators among themselves in order to determine the minutes spent reading that week.

The students posted their cooperative groups' reading minutes on the board, and these were then totaled. Having students count and graph their reading minutes provided a natural way to integrate the mathematics curriculum with language arts instruction.

Figure 2. Kristin's goal-setting sheet

Name Kristin We  To Read!

Week	Goals	Accomplished
<u>2/24-3/2</u>	1. I will read <u>40</u> minutes for at least four days this week. (M) T W (TH) F (S) S [*]	<u>KPH</u>
(5) <u>CA</u> Parent Initial	2. I will write a few sens. on a post-it for my teacher. 240	<u>KPH</u>
<u>3/3-3/10</u>	1. I will read <u>35</u> minutes for at least four days this week. M (T) W (TH) (F) S S [*]	<u>KPH</u>
<u>CA</u> Parent Initial	2. I will read a poetry book for the week. 210	<u>KPH</u>
<u>3/10-3/17</u>	1. I will read <u>40</u> minutes for at least four days this week. (M) T W (TH) F (S) S [*]	<u>KPH</u>
<u>CA</u> Parent Initial	2. I will talk to my parents about what I read. 360	<u>KPH</u>
<u>3/17-3/24</u>	1. I will read <u>40</u> minutes for at least four days this week. (M) T W (TH) F (S) S [*]	<u>KPH</u>
<u>CA</u> Parent Initial	2. I will call up a friend and tell them about my book. 400	<u>KPH</u>

By the second week of the project, the students decided that they would try to attain a collective goal of reading for 50,000 minutes by the end of May. A huge paper bookworm was posted with each segment of its body representing the amount of minutes the students had read that week. The suspense had begun! Next, the students shared their successes in achieving their individual *who, what, where, when or how* goals. Volunteers discussed the manner in which they had read at home that week. They occasionally displayed a visible product that they had created (e.g., posters, pictures, letters, poems, etc.).

A vital component of our project was allotting time for students to think about their at-home reading. They were given the opportunity to reflect upon their reading experiences by responding in their journals to a specific prompt. Here are some prompts that we used. "Why would you recommend your book?" "How did you accomplish your goal this week?" "Why is reading a good thing?" and "What happened when you read with someone at home?"

The students shared their responses orally by participating in the "hot seat." Small groups took turns sitting in the hot seat by forming a circle with their journals in hand to discuss their written reflections. The rest of the class gathered around the inner circle and were encouraged to submit their own questions written on small index cards. Toward the end of the activity, hot seat members took turns responding to these questions.

Students selected their books for the reading motivation project in various ways. The fourth grade students either read selections that were in line with the monthly book theme promoted by their teacher, or they chose another selection that interested them. Kathi exposed her students to such themes and genres as historical fiction, nonfiction and biographies. Students were free to choose books from the classroom, school or public libraries, or from their own homes. Kathi made time to conference with her students in order to guide them to appropriate books based on their interests and abilities.

Throughout all segments of the weekly project both Kathi and Margie served as role models as they demonstrated how they participated in the very same activities. During each session they shared their own at-home reading goals. With time for reading at a premium, both explained that they read professional journals along with the newspaper, newly published children's books and other personal selections. To personalize their outside interests, Kathi brought in her cooking magazines and Margie shared anecdotes and illustrations from David Halberstam's *The Fifties*.

At the close of each weekly session, the students were asked to choose a new set of personal goals. They either chose their goals from those listed on several large charts posted on the walls or they were free to choose a separate goal of their own. The students had time to discuss the selection of appropriate and realistic goals. Likewise, the researchers shared their own goals for reading in the coming week.

METHODOLOGY — HOW WE ASSESSED THE PROJECT

To what extent did the children's attitudes and thoughts about reading lead them to become more committed to reading at home? The data that revealed this came from four sources: 1) oral and written comments of students; 2) written and oral comments of classroom teacher; 3) students' responses to a reading motivation survey; and 4) a concluding open-ended question.

Each week students respond in their journals to one of the "specific prompts". Information from these weekly written reflections, as well as class discussions, provided a well-rounded picture of the students' thoughts about reading. The students' written reflections seemed to be a good indicator of their mind-set towards at-home reading and of their understanding of the best ways to approach this activity. Additionally, student comments shared during the hot seat and panel discussions helped in gauging the classroom climate for independent reading.

Kathi, the classroom teacher, kept anecdotal records containing her observations of the reading motivation project. She conveyed her ongoing analysis of project events during weekly discussions with Margie.

At the beginning and end of the reading motivation project, the class completed the *Motivation to Read Profile* (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni, 1996) to the class. This survey is a self-report, group-administered instrument that assesses two dimensions of reading motivation: students' self-concept as a reader and value of reading.

STUDENTS RESPOND TO PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The students' desire to read for pleasure along with their understanding of how best to approach at-home reading can be gauged by their responses to the various activities of the reading motivation project. Goal setting and reflective journal writing were at the heart of the project's endeavors. However, students also participated in "hot

seat” and panel discussions and responded to open-ended questions and surveys.

Types of goals chosen by students

As documented on their goal setting sheets, students chose a variety of goals throughout the project. Over the four month period the where goal was the most preferred, although the what and how goals were close favorites. A popular example of the where goal, picked by virtually every student was, “I will read where no one can find me!” Curiously, among the goals chosen by students from the first through the second halves of the project, there was a considerable increase in the use of only one particular goal — the *what* goal. The incidence of *what* goals nearly doubled from being chosen 25 times (18% of the goals) during the first half of the project to being chosen 45 times (32% of the goals) during the project’s second half. Later in the project there appeared to be a greater interest in choosing goals relating to the types of books being read. Frequently appearing examples of what and how goals were: “I will look for something different to read, like an adventure story”; “I will read a chapter book, a good one”, “I will e-mail my teacher”; “I will call up my friend and tell him/her about my new book.”

Journal reflections

The students’ weekly journal reflections served a dual purpose. First, they encouraged the students to think for themselves about the *what, where, why, when and how* of reading at home. Second, the written reflections gave us a feeling for their attitude toward and understanding of this endeavor.

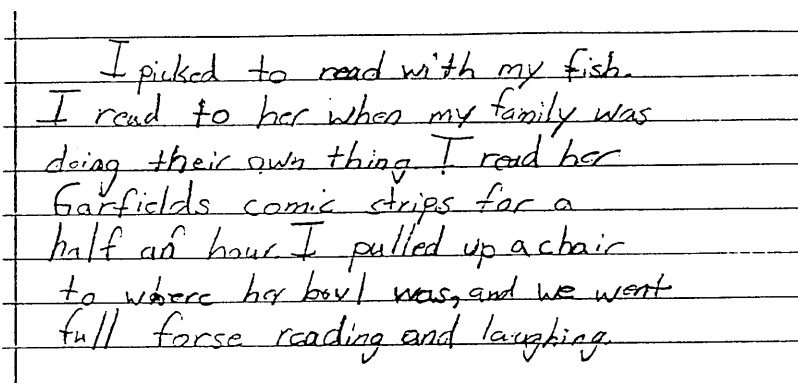
One series of prompts asked the students to think about goal setting: what goals worked well for them, how they actually attained their goals and how their goals changed over time. The students’ responses were quite revealing. Some students felt that the goals they chose were just right. Savannah claimed, “My goals were perfect for me. It was easy to read 35 minutes. It was also easy to keep a log. After reading I went into my journal and wrote what happened in the story.” On the other hand, other students realized that they needed to modify their goals. Nate explained, “One goal was hard for me because I can’t read a ‘grown-up’ book. I didn’t understand some of the words in it... I think I just went too far.” (This led to a class discussion of choosing appropriate books.)

Journal writing heightened the fourth grade students’ awareness of how best to read at home. Responding to the prompt “How did you

accomplish your goal?", the students relayed how they had maneuvered to find the best place and right time for their at-home reading. Kim seemed to enjoy companionship while reading, at least in the form of a family pet. See Figure 3. On the other hand Kyle explained, "I usually read at nighttime so no one will bother me. I read in my room because I have a sign, 'Do not come in without knocking!'"

Figure 3.

Kim's Journal Response: How Did You Accomplish Your Goal?



I picked to read with my fish.
I read to her when my family was
doing their own thing. I read her
Garfield's comic strips for a
half an hour. I pulled up a chair
to where her bowl was, and we went
full force reading and laughing.

Several students realized the value of changing their goals occasionally. Kim put it this way, "I have been picking goals that have been too easy for me... Since we were having a long weekend I picked harder ones. I am selecting more challenging books and they are much more interesting."

It became important to encourage the students to assess the content of their stories in addition to the processes they used when they wrote in their journals each week. Of interest, during the project the students frequently chose books in keeping with the literary theme of the month. Historical fiction was clearly the most popular theme. Specific titles that truly engaged the students were: *To Be a Slave* by Julius Lester; *Runaway to Freedom* by Barbara Smucker; *Year of Impossible Goodbyes* by Choi SookNyul; *Behind the Attic Wall* by Sylvia Cassedy; and *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry.

Two journal prompts relating to story content asked the fourth graders to respond to the following: "Why would you recommend your book?" and "Tell us about what you read." The students' genuine

enthusiasm for the stories came through loud and clear in their responses. For example, in keeping with the monthly theme of historical fiction, Scott read *To Be a Slave* and explained why he couldn't put his book down. "I liked this book because I love history and slavery is fun to learn about. History is cool because you get to learn about what you couldn't explore because you weren't born yet," he said.

Kristen was equally enthusiastic about her book, *Behind the Attic Wall*. She recommended it because, "It will keep you in suspense until you hear chattering behind the wall. It gets really exciting when an orphan girl named Maggie moves in with her two aunts and meets their talking dolls named Miss Cristabell, Timothy John and Juniper."

The students wrote honestly about what they had been reading and supplied logical reasons for why they did or did not like their selections. They defended their opinions in an intelligent manner. For example, after reading *Runaway to Freedom*, Stephanie claimed, "I don't like the book so far because it is sad. People ran away to freedom from slavery and got caught, whipped or shot. Then the people were lonely because they were getting hurt. That's why the book is sad in the beginning. Now at the end it's not sad anymore. Lots of slaves are running to freedom."

In their discussion of why they would recommend their books, the fourth grade students explored what they had learned, while at the same time citing details showing knowledge of content. After reading a section of *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George, Brian explains, "So far this is a really good book. I read a part that told me that a boy lived in a treehouse with a fireplace and a hawk and he called him Frightful. It's very exciting because Sam and Frightful are trying to survive after Sam ran away and captured Frightful. I did not finish my book but so far it is really good. I even learned how to season my food."

In her journal entry, Danica seemed impressed with what she had learned when she stated, "I read half of *Come This Far to Freedom*, by Angela S. Medearis. It told a lot about when Rosa Parks was arrested for not giving up her seat for a white man to sit and when Martin Luther King was shot... and a whole lot more."

Panel discussion: Why reading is a good thing

Midway through the project, when it seemed their interest might be waning students were asked to consider "why reading is a good thing." To cultivate intrinsic motivation, the students searched within themselves and decided what they truly valued about reading.

The students responded with numerous ideas. Many shared that they loved the time “to be alone with yourself”; “to improve your work skills... and get another ‘wrinkle’ in your brain”; “to learn how to make things”; “to learn about new people, places and things in history”; and “to have a chance to relax.” Shane’s poem, “Reading is Good” said it all. See Figure 4.

The students also identified four of their classmates whom they considered to be the most interested in reading. This afforded the students an opportunity to choose role models from among their peers. Then a panel of the top four vote-getters discussed why they valued reading while acknowledging the distractions of television and after-school activities. They also offered their advice for readers who were “on the fence.” In the words of one of the panelists, “Just start and try to read more and more. Maybe you’ll like it!”

Hot seat activity.

One aspect of the project that the students particularly enjoyed was the hot seat activity. This gave them an opportunity to chat about the ideas that they had first written about in their journals. While the inner circle shared their responses, many enthusiastic questions emanated from the outer circle of students as well. These questions included: “Why did you want to pick harder goals?” “Can you explain more about your book?” “Why did you finish the book when you just said you didn’t like it?” and “Are you going to read more books by this author?”

Kristin expressed her classmates’ sentiments regarding this activity when she stated, “I liked this part the best because you got to share interesting or exciting things you learned. Also if you were in the middle circle you were the only ones who could talk!”

Students’ overall attitude toward reading and goal setting.

At the beginning and end of the project, the students completed a survey, the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP), a measure of their self-concept as readers and the value they placed on reading. Their response on the MRP showed no significant difference between pre and post-test means ($t=1.31$, $p=0.205$). Eleven students (approximately half of the class) did increase their scores on this survey. However, statistical analysis revealed normal fluctuation of data (see Table 1).

Figure 4.

Shane's Journal Response: Why Reading is a Good Thing

READING IS
GOOD

Reading is good because it
improves your brain.
reading is good even in the
rain.

Reading is good if you're driv-
ing out of town.
reading is good if you're
just sitting around.

Reading is good whether you
like it or not.
reading better than winning
the jack-pot.

Reading is good whether it's
raining or snowing,
whether it's sunny out or the
wind is blowing.

So when you are bored and
you have nothing to do,
don't just sit there. Read!!!

The students' ongoing written and oral responses were more indicative of how their interest in reading had grown. Toward the end of our project, they described how they felt about reading for pleasure at home by answering the question, "Has our project made you want to read more, the same, or less than before. Tell us why."

Table 1

Pre-Post Test Comparison of Total Scores on Motivation to Read Profile

Pre Test		Post Test		P.<
Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	
63.04	(7.38)	61.57	(10.22)	0.205

Approximately three-fourths of the class (17/24 students) replied that they now thought they were reading more. They provided a variety of explanations. A number of students cited the "push" to reach their goals as their prime reason for reading. Goal setting seemed to give the vast majority of the fourth grade students a sense of purpose. As they met with success, many felt empowered to "climb higher" by reading more minutes, choosing different books or finding new places to read. Explained Danica, "Reading at home has made me read a lot more than I did before. I'm trying to reach my goals. We started reading at home because we were supposed to read four days a week and now I do!"

Others noted that by choosing interesting goals, they now had some compelling reasons to pick up a book. Tiffany remarked, "I read more because I pick fun goals. I have a rope swing that I love to read on." Some students seemed to realize that reading can actually be a viable alternative to the numbing distractions of modern technology. Stated Davin, "I hated to read. Now it is OK because of the goals I pick and the fun we have here. I think this project helped a lot. Now I understand that reading books is better than just sitting around and watching TV!"

A few students appeared a bit anxious about the requirement to set weekly goals. They preferred to read only what and when they wanted to read. As Bethany expressed, "Setting goals hasn't helped me much. I do plan to continue reading but not setting goals."

Many students became enveloped in the world of books. Two examples follow. Hubert maintained (accurate or not), "Now I'm reading 'millions' of books. I bring more books home and don't want to stop. Last night I stayed up till 12:00 reading *George's Marvelous Medicine* (Dahl, 1982)." In the same vein Mark shared, "I'm reading more in bigger books like *White Horses Running*. I really get into bigger books. They get so interesting and I can't stop reading them." Hubert's and Mark's realization that they could successfully complete several books and read "bigger books" appeared to impact on their reading attitudes and habits. The two boys' growing sense of self-efficacy seemed to hasten their desire to read for pleasure.

Yet, there were a handful of students who felt they were still reading the same amount by the end of the project. One student actually claimed that she was reading less. The explanations were two-fold. Some felt that they had always read a lot in the beginning. "So it's hard to read more than I had." Others specified that they did not like feeling that reading was required. Explained Eleni, "I read a lot before... it's like you're making me do something I am already doing."

Record-keeping snags.

While the students as a whole felt that they benefited from keeping a record of their weekly goals, they needed to be reminded to return their journals with a complete and accurately recorded goal sheet each week. Even with class discussions about the importance of being prepared for class, there were invariably a few students who either forgot their journals or only completed part of their goal sheets.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The “I Love to Read Project” was a positive experience that impacted on the reading lives of the fourth grade students in Kathi’s class. The project involved several requirements along with incentives to instill motivation. Students were expected to set weekly goals and record the minutes read. They had many opportunities for choice and, each week, determined their own goals. The class also decided to set a group goal of reading for 50,000 minutes. Indeed, what better endorsement for student choice than the fact that many students established time goals that exceeded the 15 minute requirement!

We maintain that under certain circumstances carefully selected external requirements and incentives are necessary to pave the way for more intrinsic reasons to read. There simply are times when nine and ten year old students may need some external structure and incentives to pique their curiosity before they willingly tackle new projects on their own. Clearly, Kathi’s students would not have read to such a degree and enthusiastically reported their reading had it not been for the parameters we established for the project. As Brophy (1987) explains, well-conceived extrinsic motivational strategies can be effective under certain conditions.

By the end of the project, many of Kathi’s students were showing signs of reading for intrinsic reasons. This was quite evident in a number of ways: students’ weekly journal responses and “hot seat” discussions; “Why Reading is a Good Thing” panel discussion; the end-of-project poll; and the accompanying open-ended question, “Has our project made you want to read more, the same or less than before? Tell us why.” By the conclusion of the four months almost three-fourths of the students reported that they were reading more than they had been at the beginning of the project. Furthermore, the fact that the *what* goals were chosen almost twice as frequently during the second half of the project is testimony to the heightened interest students showed in the content of their

books. The students' journal responses also demonstrated genuine excitement for their books and when applicable, frank interest in the subject matter — certainly intrinsic reasons for reading (Wigfield and McCann, 1996/1997). Many students were able to discuss the plot knowledgeably and analyze thoughtfully why they did or did not enjoy their books.

Equally important, virtually all of Kathi's students had a clearer personal understanding of why it is important to read and a more defined approach toward how, when, where and with whom they might read at home. Their journal responses and oral discussions were indicative of more reflective readers who understood and valued the activity in and of itself. The students were able to articulate why they felt they should read for pleasure, note the types of books they enjoyed and explain how they preferred to read at home.


By the conclusion of the project, Kathi felt that her students' literacy growth was evident when she cited what her students were actually doing, not merely saying, about reading. Kathi explained, "By the end, the students were beginning to select their own books based on content and author as opposed to the number of pages (i.e., the shorter, the better). When they came to me asking for suggestions of books on a particular topic or author, I knew that they were developing an interest in reading for its own sake. I could see my students beginning to become more mature, self-directed readers."

Goal setting is a powerful motivational tool (Locke and Latham, 1990; Locke, Shaw, Saari and Latham, 1981). When students set their own goals, they are more focused, assume more responsibility for their own learning and enjoy themselves in the process. Kristin, is perhaps, the best example of how goal setting can have such a powerful effect. In response to the end-of-project question, she explains what the project meant to her. See Figure 5.

We were initially puzzled by the results and the lack of a significant difference on the mean scores of the Motivation to Read Profile. However, a large percentage of students had initially responded in February with high scores to many of the questions which created a ceiling effect. Of note, the initial survey was administered during a particularly high-interest literature unit on slavery which might have inflated the students' pre-project responses. The students' journal responses and discussions expressed over time turned out to be better indicators of their changing attitudes and commitment to at-home reading.

Figure 5.

Kristen's Explanation: What the Project Means to Me

Goals help or encourage you by letting your imagination run free. If you just read because someone tells you to, you're not really going to be happy and you will not enjoy your book. By using goals it lets your mind come out on paper. It's also fun to make goals. You can read outside, inside, in the car, and anywhere you can think of. I  will keep reading over the summer with my handie reading bag.

A few students reported feeling pressure to meet their goals. In retrospect, perhaps we overemphasized recording the exact amount of time they read. It may be more productive to have students focus more regularly on an aspect of reading that is intrinsically motivating — the content of their books. Perhaps they might describe in their journals one episode of their story that they could discuss at the following class session. Additional time for oral discussion is warranted. Teachers should allot time for students to share the content of their books with each other.

Here are our recommendations for motivating students to read. Goal setting and reflection should be included in reading motivation projects.

- Students should record their thoughts about a story episode in their reading journals that they would subsequently like to discuss in class.
- Allot plenty of time for students to share the content of their at-home reading books with each other via oral discussion.

- Students should read at least four days per week, but do not have them record the amount of time they read at home each evening.

This reading motivation project fulfilled our hopes of building a foundation for reading for the students in Kathi's classroom. In but four-months' time, we were able to influence many enthusiastic, knowledgeable, committed young readers. We heightened the students' awareness of how to have fulfilling experiences with reading. Hopefully, Kathi's students will choose these experiences, the ones that point in the direction of lifelong reading.

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Children's literature: What's on the horizons

Lauren Freedman
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Aliki. 1998. *Marianthe's story one: Painted words and Marianthe's story two: Spoken memories*. NY: Greenwillow. ISBN: 0-688-15661-4. 64 pp.

In this beautiful picture book, Aliki offers the reader, through the character of Marianthe, a somewhat autobiographical narrative in two parts. In One, we learn about Mari's experiences as a *new* immigrant starting a *new* life in America at a *new* school. Through drawing and painting, she communicates with her new teacher and classmates and begins to understand the "...sticks and chicken feet, humps and moons" of written English and the "...sputters, coughs and whispering wind" of spoken English. She makes friends and through the wise words of her mother deals well with the children who are not yet able to be friends. In Two, Marianthe shares with her classmates the story of her birth in her native country and the whys of her family's eventual move to America. Aliki's dedication reads, "For those dedicated, unsung teachers who change and enrich lives."

Coleman, Evelyn. 1998. *The riches of Oseola McCarty*. Illustrated by Daniel Minter. Morton Grove IL: Albert Whitman & Co. ISBN: 0-8075-6961-5. 48 pp.

In this biography of Oseola McCarty, a washerwoman from Hattisburg, Mississippi who endowed a scholarship fund at Southern Mississippi University, we learn the values that have allowed her to lead a simple, yet, long and fulfilling life. Hers is a life dedicated to family, hard work, church and community. By 1995 Oseola McCarty had saved enough money from her small earnings to start a scholarship fund of

\$150,000 for deserving African American students. Illustrated with black and white block prints, the reader experiences with Ola (as her family and friends called her) some of the amazing changes she witnessed in the United States from 1908 when she was born until 1997 when this book was completed. She experienced life under the southern Jim Crow laws as well as the Civil Rights Movement. When asked what she would tell children to always remember, she replied, "If you do work that you're proud of, you will always have self-esteem. There is nothing more important than getting your education. And you should always do the work that you love." In a note at the end, the author reminds us to remember and applaud the work of "The day laborer, the construction worker, the service station attendant, the grocery store clerk — even the teacher — (who) seldom gets more than a nod and a thank you." The four chapter book is reader friendly to beginning chapter book readers. It also includes information for starting a savings plan and a list of resources for further information.

Hoban, Tanya. 1998. *Of colors and things*. NY: Tupelo. ISBN: 0-688-16389-0. 11 pp.

An ALA Notable book, this board book provides young children with eleven pages divided into four squares each. Each page has an object in each square. Three of the four objects are of the same color while the fourth object has multiple colors. For example, the page with three orange objects includes a fourth picture of a set of six keys each one a different color. The colors represented in the book are yellow, red, green, orange, blue, grey, brown, yellow, green, red, and black. It is a book that will capture the interest and imagination of preschool children and provide the stimuli for wonderful conversations.

Hobbs, Will. 1998. *The maze*. NY: Morrow Junior Books. ISBN: 0-688-15092-6. 198 pp.

In this compelling novel, Will Hobbs shares the experiences of fourteen-year-old Rick Walker who escapes from a juvenile detention center. Rick stops running when he finds himself in The Maze which is a cluster of canyons in Utah. Rick is befriended by Lon Peregrino whose remote camp he stumbles upon. Lon is a loner whose job it is to monitor the reintroduction of a pair of California condors into the region. The condors are threatened by two ruthless and unscrupulous men who are robbing Indian artifacts from the canyons. Through his friendship with

Lon and their mutual concern for the condor, Rick discovers a great deal about himself and life in general.

Simon, Seymour. 1998. *Venus*. NY: Mulberry. ISBN: 0-688-16161-8. 32 pp.

Once again, Seymour Simon has compiled a collection of extraordinary photographs young readers will find intriguing. The book itself not only offers information about the planet Venus, it also provides information about the ways in which space photography is done. For example, various pictures are derived from the Orbiter spacecraft radar maps and others from the Soviet Union's Venera spaceship which actually landed on Venus. The book ends with questions the United States hopes to answer using the Magellan spacecraft's radar photography. The Magellan was launched in 1990.

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